Warsaw is a city that goes through the most dynamic process of spatial changes out of all Polish towns and cities since early 90ties. It is true that it is predestined for a rapid transformation as a capital city of a country in undergoing economic transition. But the real reason comes with a very specific cultural heritage and with the fact that it is a center of the political life of the country. It is a city with many different 'faces' formed nowadays and in the past. Authorities of the city work on the external image of Warsaw trying to build a new, modern and attractive shell. It is quite interesting how the culture of the society helps and disturbs, at the same time, these efforts. Not less interesting becomes influence of politics on new visions created for development of the city. These two conditions sometimes start to interact with each other multiplying effects. The article is an attempt to classify phenomena in that area and to show the importance of politics and culture and their influence on the urban form that is created respect-less to up-to-date planned and well organized strategies. The aim of the article is to point out possibilities that come out of these spontaneous phenomena that should be used in the urban designing process instead of trying only to fight with causes and results. The example of Warsaw is only a basis for the inquiry, as a very distinct and vivid case. Similar observations can be made anywhere in an urbanized and democratic environment.

Keywords: urban design, spatial planning, democracy, participation, Poland.

Introduction
For urban planners, as for professionals, it is quite obvious that a city is designed and built according to some plans. It is also obvious that these plans should be prepared according to the up-to-date knowledge, needs, prognoses etc. Why it happens sometimes that our living environment does not resemble a planned urban layout, despite of efforts that has been made? The Author of this article examines reasons that implicate the process of urban design and execution of plans. The statement is that culture and politics of a given society have a tremendous influence that prevails actual goals of planning. Sometimes they even preclude an
achievement of the state 'as of course it should be'. It is so, as urban planning is a process-oriented activity. The process has to be conducted in an 'environment' of a specific society. Therefore it is highly depended on local political and cultural circumstances. Urban planners should be aware of ways that local communities are organized, how they function, what values are most important for them and how they tend to solve their problems. All these circumstances derive from local culture and are expressed by the community through its political organization. It uses different political instruments to control all fields of its life. Urban planning, as a part of 'its life', becomes a focus for some part of political activity, regardless to the will of urban planners. Thus it is useful to know these instruments and apply them according to the best benefit of a planning process. Whenever one tries to use political instruments to control a chosen field of human life, the most important issue applies to conformity of political aims and needs of the particular sphere of life. As far as the spatial planning system is concerned it is clear that it is highly determined by the political system. Especially in the democracy similar instruments are used to achieve goals of politics or goals of a spatial policy. The democratic political system is discussed here-beneath as phenomena described were observed in this environment.

The capital city of Poland is one of the most interesting fields for investigations within the subject. Warsaw is an 'unfinished city'. After its historical development had been disrupted by the II World War, it experienced a sequence of rebuilding and redevelopment periods: historical reconstruction, social-realism visions, modernism developments and post-modernism approach. Yet its post-war recovery has never been completed. Still it is a city of urban 'black holes' – where great development opportunities are lost through the permanent rule of 'impossibilities'. Thus Warsaw is a scene of a constant and rapid change in the spatial form - not always in a positive direction. If we add to that political and administrative reforms since early 90ties, the scene becomes even more interesting to study. Constitutional changes, followed by the local government reform, led to a new form of the spatial planning system. The new system was decentralized and the community, as a subject, gained full legal prerogatives to act in the field of spatial planning of its own territory. It seemed that the new system was aimed at fulfilling the requirements of a market economy. On the other hand it was clearly intended to make the character of planning as democratic as possible, mostly by introducing procedures including and involving local inhabitants. A very important goal of changes was also to take into account the rights of land owners, which was often omitted in the former political system. It turned out, however, that positive changes were not carried out in a way that could be satisfactory. Since 1994, when the new law on spatial planning was brought into effect, an incessant debate on new solutions and reforms has been continued. On the one hand, there is a tendency to facilitate the planning activity of communes by the liquidation of formalities and improvement of the law. On the other hand, a lot of arguments are based on the idea of creating economic and legal mechanisms that would force local government to prepare spatial plans. There is also another view that emphasizes the role of
creating friendly conditions for investments. This option sets the priority of facilitation for an investment over the effectiveness of the spatial planning system. Such reasoning results in a simplification of plans, allowing developments without a spatial plan or even any control (Lasocki 2007). All these ideas have deep roots in political views of different parties. It is important so that any solution undertaken would preserve conformity with the democratic system. Thus it is worth to remind what basic values are connected with democracy and how they can be represented in the system of spatial planning. The whole dispute in democracy concentrates around a few goals that should be achieved in political organization of the society. As it was noticed by Alan March and Nicholas Long with a reference to Jürgen Habermas' theory, these objectives interfere with each other – also in the field of spatial planning (March 2004). Urban planners, like politicians, are bothered by the dilemma: whether some of their goals should be privileged over others or a compromise always lays in the middle?

Public participation against the effectiveness of spatial planning in Warsaw.

When one thinks about the democratic system, it is clear that decisions should be made there by the majority of citizens. According to the decision-making model more or less direct participation of citizens is provided in the process. However direct participation is not a must in democracy, though there is a tendency across democratic countries to assure maximum inclusiveness of all interested parties in decision-making. This approach remains in a clear discrepancy with a pursuit of decisiveness. The more participants in a procedure, the more time it takes to complete it. Where simple but important questions are concerned and decided by a community, direct participation will result in a quick and indisputable decision. But whenever complicated issues are on the table – these require an advanced knowledge possessed only by experts. Then a direct participation has to be preceded by information, learning and dispute stages. Spatial planning is evidently one of the most complicated issues that bother local governments. In addition, it originates conflicts by its nature. It means that conflicts have to occur even if planning is conducted properly and a spatial order is quite acceptable. People do have contradictory interests in managing their space, but the space itself is one, non-multiplicative and has to be shared with others. Therefore participation reveals such conflicts and requires additional time to find a consensus between opposite parties. The problem becomes even more serious when citizens oppose main objectives of local plans and start a conflict with administration officials or developers. The dilemma here lays in a difficult assessment whether it is more reasonable to spend time solving problems while preparing a plan or to have the plan first and deal with emerging problems later. The first choice seems to be questioned by the fact that there is no way to make ever all parties satisfied. The second one, by the circumstances in which the enacted plan has to be updated always in a complicated time-consuming procedure. In Warsaw one can observe that officials, developers and urban planners are reluctant to public participation in planning. Their position
is not official and is not expressed in public as it opposes political correctness. On the other hand, most citizens has deep disregard for public activities with the lack of belief in their power and possible influence on results. Only well organized groups of ecologists want to make their statement in every case, trying to satisfy sponsors. Therefore the climate for perfect inclusion of citizens in decision-making is unpromising. This situation deepens the problem of effectiveness of planning, as it follows the pattern where plans do not solve problems but rather avoid them. Sooner or later the need of an update arises and, with inflexible local plans, Polish spatial planning system is jammed with continuous procedures. Some of urban planners seem to admire this situation though, as it creates better business opportunities. However their satisfaction is limited by the fact of abandonment of planning by large part of communities.

One of main objectives of a democratic system (as of any system in this case) is to provide an efficiency of instruments and procedures used. The system is efficient if procedures are possible to be completed within a reasonable amount of time. Also results are supposed to be relevant to awaited goals of a performed procedure. Usually, such procedures would apply to decision-making. Actually, that is what politics is all about. In a democracy it is important who and how will make a decision. Generally, the question is answered: all of grownup members of a community bothered by the decision with the majority of their votes. Though, there are different political instruments to perform such a democratic decision. Some of them are more efficient, some – less. Whether it is a direct voting of all citizens, or a voting of democratically elected council, or maybe a decision taken by a single person, possibly elected in some way, it does not matter how long it takes to make a decision. More important is how much time will be consumed in a consequence of the decision being made. The proper form of the instrument used depends on the matter that is being disputed. As far as spatial planning in a democratic political system is concerned, there is no well examined or elaborated one method of decision-making. The planning process consists of many stages where different bodies and numerous individuals make a sequence of separate decisions. And these are made often in a different way. All of them find a confirmation in a plan that is enacted and becomes itself a final 'decision' taken in a longer process. Such a decision usually is made before a need for it really occurs. Any plan is a set of spatial arrangements that anticipate a forecast of future needs. Of course it is important how long it takes to prepare a plan and make it valid in law. But even more important is the time needed to adjust an existing plan to changing criteria. The more flexible planning system is, the more effective it becomes in unexpected development of circumstances (Albrechts 2003). The planning system of Poland, as it has been designed, was supposed to be reasonably flexible. Unfortunately, it became radically inflexible, as local government's officials had a serious trouble to use flexible type of documents (structure plans). The mentality of a clerk needs a clear instruction what is “forbidden” or what is “allowed”. In a consequence, the inflexible attitude to planning has
met free market demands. At that point the formal system of planning started to be perceived by pro-development circles as “useless”. Some communes abandon spatial planning and try to found occasional spatial developments upon individual administrative decisions. This way a parallel informal system has been established, that provides flexibility to some extent. Arbitrary decisions are sometimes limited by the binding law. Though the law is unprepared to deal with such a system in most cases.

Observations described here-above can be illustrated well with an example of the recent development at Wilanów district. It is the only development executed in Warsaw on such a large scale during last 20 years. Its urban plan has been developed as a result of the competition. Wilanów used to be an expensive district with predominance of single family houses, with high percentage of agriculture and natural landscapes. On one of big areas of former agriculture land a new, high-density, low-rising settlement has been founded. At the beginning of the process of planning the municipality had an ambition to prepare a local plan that would cover the whole empty area of the western part of the district. It meant that it should cover also a strip of waterlogged land on the western border of the area that was supposed to be left as a nature-protection zone. Unfortunately it happened that this strip belonged to private owners who wish to sell their properties with a profit. They claimed to be harmed with any restrictions imposed by the local plan. To fight restrictions, they have used all possible legal ways causing huge obstacles for the procedure. In these circumstances the municipality decided that it will be easier to start preparing the local plan anew and exclude all problematic land properties. In this way spatial planning on a large portion of the district has been abandoned – just because citizens had used their legal rights to protect their interests. On the one hand it was possible to start the development, but on the other hand the public participation was severely limited while the municipality was not able to solve the problem. It seems that decisiveness has won over inclusiveness in this case, but on the negative and very low level. How improper this approach is can be observed now. Some of newly designed streets are discontinued wherever they are supposed to cross excluded properties.

**Private interests faced with the public good in Warsaw.**
The democratic system has been invented to protect rights of every individual in a society. There are human rights that are not questioned in the democratic world. They do not interfere with the public good or they are conforming with it. But individual rights may be interpreted broadly and then they start to interfere with rights of other individuals. The interference may occur directly when two persons claim their rights to the same resources. It may happen also that individual claims collide with a public good that belongs to the whole community. So here democrats find themselves in front of difficult choice between individual rights and the public good. The dilemma will never be solved as there is no way to mark a just border
between two values. Democracy should provide legal instruments to judge the matter in all individual cases. Spatial planning does bother individual rights, however awareness about it is rare among public. Important events happen not often and it is difficult to understand them and take under consideration in everyday life. Most people treat spatial organization of their surroundings as something given, constant and durable. Sometimes though they are surprised that their vital interests have been threatened years ago by an unfortunate planning decision.

As it was mentioned above planning decisions are made prior to the moment that needs would occur. For that reason there is a problem how to forecast individual interests. It is much easier to forecast public interest as it fluctuates slowly and within predictable limits. At that point a solution comes with public participation and brings again all adjacent problems. Another choice is a judicial decision settled at a court. If the planning system allows judicial cases during the process of plan-making, the process itself may become long-lasting. If there is no such possibility, individual rights may be defended afterward, when they already have been threatened. In Poland there was a change made to the system and the situation from the first case was exchanged with the second arrangement. It makes the system oriented on the efficiency and the public good. Disregard for individual rights is increased with an ineffective judicial system that requires time and money to defend somebody's interests. But of course plan-makers are also bothered with time-consuming trials and eventual defeats. It is worth to notice that a defeat when a plan has been enacted is much more costly than in the situation when it happens during the process of planning. Weak position of a citizen in the planning procedures changes when it comes to implementation of the plan. At this point it is the system that seems to be helpless when individuals block developments with no good will for a compromise. An ineffective judicial system now works in favor of a citizen. The protection of individual rights in Poland is uneven and varies according to stage of a planning procedure.

There is another goal of a democratic system that seems to be forgotten nowadays. With a neo-liberal ideology saying that there is no public good – only a sum of individual interests, protagonists of an old idea remain in defense. However it is not imaginable that democracy would secure only interests of the strongest political party or a major political coalition, because every political system would do the same. Democracy is about achieving a compromise – acceptable by majority of citizens. This political issue is especially vivid in spatial planning. A well prepared local plan contains an uniform concept of development of a given area. Uniform means that all spatial decisions are coherent and adjusted to public interest. Even if all parties could satisfy their interests by themselves (also those interests that are shared by the whole community like road access or ecological sustainability) there is still a public good not achieved yet. It is the coordination of all activities and developments that rises the local plan to dignity of the public good itself. Thus liberal ideas do not function well in the area of spatial planning – that is clear. But here one should ask a question: does a spatial planning system function well in a liberal economy? For sure it should and it can, but
does it for example in Poland? It seemed in the early 90-ties that there are good foundations for protection of public good. If there had been something protected in socialist central planning it was more or less the public interest (of course adjusted to the communist regime interests) with complete disregard for private ownership. But things has changed over the years. Strong position of developers and weak public participation and control produces plans that are relevant to interests of individual land owners and investors, who gained strongest political support (Lasocki 2009a). It is possible because most politicians deeply believe that liberal economy should solve all problems with no intervention of the state. And they tend to treat spatial planning in the same manner. There is little understanding of benefits that are raised by spatial planning. No matter how much one would trust developers it is naive to think that all of them care about something else than their income. Especially in economies that remain in a permanent crisis. Rules of a perfect free-market economy do not function here very well. Developers have to save their funds lowering standards. Their clients choose economical solutions despite poorer conditions they receive. There is a lack of long-term thinking that could reveal irreversible results of substandard developments. It is quite hard to fight against economic issues to achieve some public good. There is always a risk that a plan will find no investor to implement it. But on the other hand there is no replacement tool for a spatial plan to take care about the spatial order. In Poland quite often the spatial order, the main goal of spatial planning, is associated by politicians with its aesthetic meaning. And as such disrespected as some kind of extravagance of hypersensitive urban planners. Only some politicians and citizens are aware of influence that the order has on economy, efficiency, ethics, ecology etc. In these unfavorable conditions the matter is still highly depended on the human capital. And thus situation in communities alters together with responsible officials that are driven by different values.

One can say that Warsaw itself is a subject of the conflict between the public good and private interests. After the II World War the communist regime has nationalized most of properties in the city in its prewar boundaries. As most of buildings were destroyed by German army after Warsaw Uprising, on nationalized properties new streets were designed and new buildings and whole settlements were built. Nowadays it is not possible in most cases to return properties to former owners. But still there are vast areas that stay empty. For example, the most exposed area of this kind is Plac Defilad, a square in front of 'Palace of Culture and Science' (tallest building that has been erected in an odd social-realism style in the middle of Warsaw to mark the Soviet rule over the country). This area is predestined now to become a city core. Therefore it should be developed in harmony according to one complex plan – to suit the public good. Private interests of former owners would lead to fragmentation of development and to uncoordinated activities, as it can be seen in other parts of Warsaw. On the other hand, the unclear legal situation of nationalized properties discourage any developers that would like to invest on such grounds.
Centralization versus decentralization in Warsaw.
Modern democracies, as it was already mentioned, appreciate subsidiarity as a reasonable tool for distributing a political power among different levels of governance. Local self-governments, to be effective in handling the power received from upper levels, need either a guidance how to perform its tasks or ability to settle their own practices. The first path requires reasonable legal regulations that create chances rather that determine actual actions. The second option is much more difficult to achieve, as a commune has to be well prepared to cope with problems by itself. The choice belongs to national politicians who have to decide whether they have enough trust for self-governments or not. The dilemma is serious as in every country there are communities that are governed well and other that are out of luck to have an appropriate human capital. But legal regulations have to be equal for all. If there is an alternative left, one can be sure that leading communities will choose a better solution and these lagging behind will make the worst possible choice. Most of spatial planning systems have little problem with localization of planning. It is natural that planning should be executed on different levels of administration to coordinate lower levels. Thus a local level of spatial planning should be performed by local authorities. It allows greater public participation and adjustment to local conditions. However complete independence of a community may become a source of conflicts with its neighbors and the government administration. If there is no obligatory planing tasks for the self-government, there is a danger that local authorities would look for costless and work-less solutions with a harm to the spatial order. For that reason a supervision of upper levels of national administration is always necessary. An interesting solution to guide communities in their planning activities is to disseminate non-obligatory standards that are worked out by national agencies or associations of urban planners. It is a chance to create customary practice that is more eagerly adopted and adjusted to local needs. The role of a local expert on urban planning is crucial for a success in localization of planning. Every community do need a person that would feel responsibility for the spatial order as a host of the neighborhood. And the role of the national administration and associations here is to provide and educate a qualified staff for the job. Sovereignty of Polish communities in the area of spatial planning is a fact regulated by national law. There is no doubt that in the competition between centralization and localization the latter has won. The question is: do Polish communities use with its benefit an independence they were granted? The answer is not simple as the situation varies between individual cases. Quite common problem is the shortage of a well qualified staff. Education of urban planners has been so far a domain of architectural schools. The job of a community clerk is not the most attractive option for representatives of the architect's profession. In addition Polish Chamber of Urban Planners is not very fond of acquiring new members so the perspectives of personal career in this profession are quite blurry for graduates of architecture schools. The planning activity is different in towns and village communities and there is no
way to make an overall judgment in this matter. For other, mentioned above reasons the system does not help to perform good planning, especially in small and poor communities.

Yet there is another option in any political system. All systems tend to organize political life in a country in one unitary way. Even democrats want to exercise their political power over the whole territory with no exception for local autonomy of eventual autocracy. In this meaning political structures are always determined by criteria set up centrally. Tendencies in favor of and against centralization have their own places within democratic systems. In the European Union we can observe a serious stress on subsidiarity on one hand, but on the other there is a strong will to decide centrally what shape of a cucumber can appear on a citizen's breakfast plate. Such an example shows that the democracy's dilemma about centralization is not a theoretical dispute but the experienced reality. In some areas, like national security or flight control, centralization is an obvious solution. In others it is just an aberration of bureaucracy. The dilemma comes with the decision where to draw a line between necessary and harmful unification. In the spatial planning system centralization occurs in two dimensions. The first is planning on country or regional level. The second is centrally determined organization of local planning. Centralization in the first case is reasonable and helps to achieve effectiveness in planning. In the second case, reason prompts a quest for a compromise. Extreme solutions can only be adjusted to specific cultural and economical circumstances (Moulaert 2006). In Europe there is a variety of different solutions. One of the most centralized organization of local planning happens to exist in the Netherlands where local plans are controlled and in some cases prepared by the central government's administration. It is understandable if we combine a high density of population, a modest area of the country and a good state of the economy. The spatial planning system in Poland may serve here as an extremely opposite example. Decentralization of the country has led also to decentralization of its planning system. During the process the hierarchy of planning on national, regional and local levels has been completely lost. The central and regional administration has got little influence on what happens on the communal level, while local self-governments exercise complete sovereignty over their territory. Of course it cannot function very well as far as coordination on regional and national levels is concerned. Self-governments have a very strong position in parliamentary circles so it is not possible to limit their competences by changing the system. Therefore some provisional solutions are introduced to cope with the problem. For example, national roads and motorways are planned according to a special act of law that excludes these developments from the regular spatial planning system. In this field we experience extremal centralization as everything is controlled and executed by the central administration. An another problem lays in the fact that procedures and instruments of local planning has been centrally determined in a way that these are not flexible and adjustable to local conditions. Centralization becomes here an another reason for abandonment of planning mentioned above. Interesting that there is a
bunch of advocates of further centralization with settling unitary standards for spatial developments for the whole country.

Warsaw is the city with a long story of different administrative arrangements. In 1990, after a self-government was introduced into the administration system, each of 7 former districts of Warsaw was settled as a separate commune. All of them belonged to an obligatory union, but since everybody was enthusiastic about the new system, they became very independent and acted with not much coordination. As far as spatial planning is concerned, there was still an old law of 1984 in use, and an obligatory general plan for the whole territory of Warsaw was enacted. According to its very general character it was interpreted by each commune in a different way. It caused most problems in the central part of the city where all boundaries met. Some communes acted more expansively and attracted more developers, and other stood behind. Most spectacular effect of that time was erection of a couple of skyscrapers in random places distant to the city core. All communes focused on shaping their own centers with no regard for mutual connections and bordering areas. In 1994 along with the new spatial planning act the administrative division of Warsaw was changed. In the middle a new big commune 'Centrum' was settled with subdivision into 7 districts. Peripheral areas, mostly living neighborhoods, were divided into 11 new communes. This arrangement solved the problem of management over the central part of the city. However the problem of the city as the whole remained. New communes were even more independent in spatial planning and a new system with a weak structure plan for the city seemed to be helpless in coordination. Uneven distribution of fund between center as a place of work and periphery as a place of living yet made the situation more difficult (Buczek 2001). In 2002 a completely another solution was introduced as a result of problems with decentralization. Warsaw has become an unitary commune with prerogatives of a powiat (English 'county'). Former communes has become districts of the city with little autonomy. Especially all activities in spatial planning and even building permits are managed by central authorities. For some observers this is yet not enough, as the metropolitan area is not managed well, so they call for further centralization on a larger territory. Summing up, the idea of localization did not succeed and the return to centralization has become a practical choice.

**Liberty and equality in Warsaw.**

There is yet another keyword of democracy: liberty. The democratic system has to protect personal freedom of all citizens. People easily accept natural limitations of their freedom like limitations of time, distance, climate, age etc. Limitations that are not accepted derive from other people activities. It is hard to understand that personal freedom has to be confined with boundaries of freedom of other people. Even less understandable for some individuals are restrictions that come from necessities of public good. It is worth to notice that state activities in favor of equality lead sometimes to threat for liberty. Provision of equal chances for
underprivileged people may cause limits to the free choice of others. This sets up another dilemma of democracy. In the spatial planning system the matter of liberty is one of central points of consideration. When a spatial plan is enacted limits are settled by the nature of the plan – it is its main purpose. Any limitation has to be well motivated to gain individual and public acceptance. It is a problem to define what is a proper motivation – protection of health? saving public money? and what about the beauty of a landscape? Which values can limit personal freedom? Another most important issue here is freedom of a land owner in the sphere of land appropriation (Payne 2009). In some European systems the ownership of a land is equivocal with the right to dispose it according solely to owner's will. For example in these systems, nobody has right to build a house on his land just because of its possession. In other countries such limitation of freedom seems to be unacceptable. In Poland it is one of the most disputed questions because the matter is not regulated in a clear way. Firstly, limitations here have only weak public acceptance and in practice they are evaded with ease. Secondly, there is no general prohibition to build on empty lots without a local plan. Thirdly, it is very difficult to prove that someone has exceed limits of his freedom interfering with public good. As a result owners experience relative freedom but only in an informal way. Generally, Polish spatial planning is oriented on protection and it naturally produces restrictions that stay in opposition to the idea of liberty. It would be probably better if planning was performed with an attitude for opportunity creation. This would be a chance for citizens to look for areas where they have possibility to exercise their freedom.

Another goal of democracy, sometimes a little controversial, is to achieve equality among all members of a society. In its roots the idea of equality was an answer for cases of social discrimination. People should have the same opportunities, conditions of living, access to public services, influence on political power exercising etc. The idea is controversial because realists know that perfect equality will never be achieved. People have different abilities to use their opportunities and a diversified will to access available services. Even in political voting process, when everyone has one equal vote, it is a matter of education, knowledge and experience of a voter, whether he can use his vote in an equally sovereign and conscious way. Thus a state intervention is necessary if democrats want to introduce an acceptable level of equality. However it is not easy to determine who should be supported and why or what kind of support is more effective. In spatial planning the idea of equality applies to at least two spheres and in both seems to be controversial. First of all, spatial planning is an activity in which a legal procedure leads to differentiation of space. However planners have an overall intention to assure equal conditions of living, but in individual cases there is no place for equality. It happens that one citizen receives a chance to add an extension to his house or even to earn money selling his property to a wealthy developer and his neighbor has to look for another place to live while his property will be consumed by a public road. Secondly, spatial planning may assure equality in expression of individual interests by public participation. In
practice equality here is impossible as most people do not have time, knowledge and a will to participate in public activities (Umemoto 2009). Therefore participation is abused by financially interested players that are able to buy audience support. Sometimes it seems that more equal rights would be guaranteed if public involvement would be prohibited. In Poland there are very poor conditions to seek equality in spatial planning. Liberal attitude is prevailing and there is no political climate for meaningful state interventions. The right to express private interests is ensured according to procedures of public participation that are regulated quite well. However practice is not as satisfying. Urban planners and local authorities complain about lack of compromising and constructive attitudes among citizens during public disputes. The serious role play ecologist organizations that tend to block even these developments that have not much to do with the nature. Sometimes they are blamed for “ecoterrorism” that becomes a nuisance for developers. Generally, it seems that freedom here is largely misused, abusing equality.

Problems with a proper balance between liberty and equality can be observed in many cases of preparing local plans in Warsaw. One of them, well known and widely discussed by politicians and media, is the local plan for ‘Park pod Skocznią’. The area, as its name suggests, is a pocket of widespread green properties used now for so-called recreational gardens by inhabitants of surrounding multistoreyed blocs of flats. There is also a very extensive single-family housing spread across the area. The area is located in a prestigious district very close to the city core. On the one side of the conflict, that has emerged, are local inhabitants, users of recreational gardens and ecologists. They are fighting for protection of green areas and preservation of extensive use of the land. Here the problem applies to equality of living standards and equality of access to limited green areas in the city. On the other side there are land owners (who have recently got back their formerly nationalized properties) and developers who wish to place there intensive multistoreyed living apartments. They care about their income that depends on the intensity of land use. The problem is connected here to a question of freedom of use of a land property. There is also a problem of equity of land owners: while some of them will be awarded with building permits, other will be able to sell properties for much less in order to arrange a new city park there. The local plan has been enacted, however the most controversial part of the area has been excluded from the act of local law.

As it has been shown above, culture-based political dilemmas of spatial planning in Warsaw form a complex issue. Balance between different values of democracy has not been achieved on a satisfactory level. Difficulties are caused by wrong practice rather than by wrong foundations of the spatial planning system. However details of planning instruments have to be improved to cope better with tendencies shown by politicians and administration officials.
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