

Design as A Catalyst of Transformation

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Abstract:

Contemporary urbanism is increasingly confronted with a paradox: while cities are meticulously planned through formal instruments, their most transformative dynamics often emerge in spaces that remain invisible to regulation—spaces of interaction, affect, and everyday practice. In this context, design is no longer merely a tool for shaping form, but an epistemic medium through which urban reality is explored and redefined.

This paper investigates design as a catalyst of transformation through the experimental project *zróbMY MIEJSCE*, developed within an academic campus as an open urban living laboratory. The project employs spatial installation as both a research instrument and a transformative intervention. Its central element—mobile urban furniture constructed from brick—reinterprets a traditional material as a participatory and reconfigurable system, collectively shaped by users.

This minimal gesture produces a significant shift: spaces previously perceived as neutral or residual become sites of encounter, negotiation, and emerging identity. The research, based on surveys, workshops, and prototyping, reveals a gap between the formal openness of the campus and its limited social activation. In response, the installation acts as a catalyst—activating social relations and testing alternative scenarios of use.

The study argues that the transformative potential of design lies not in producing new forms, but in reorganizing relationships—between people, place, and the invisible dimensions of urban life. In this sense, design emerges as a method of inquiry: not only shaping the city, but enabling it to continuously reimagine itself.