CHAPTER 6, MEANINGS OF THE CITY
11th CTV

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UTOPIA AND IMAGINATION

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Abstract
The most important aim of the “Back to the Sense of the City” International Conference is to draw attention to the city and the sense of its being, the fact that a city seen as a heterogeneous entity is not only a work of its direct creators: architects, engineers, civil servants and municipal services, but all who “fill” it, primarily its inhabitants. A particular role is attributed to artists. It is the artists’ duty not only to shape it but also creatively criticize and contemplate.

Labyrinth 1 /a.g.bilińscy/
Artistic actions understood as the city’s activity and activity in relation to the city have certain qualities of utopian events, manifesting in the unattainability of a goal, idealistic activity base, transience of events and the type of references to it/to the city. The paper focuses on such interpretative approach to these actions. The meaning of this notion is usually interpreted as a place that does not exist, "... from the Greek outopos (gr. ou - no, topos - a place, non-place, place that does not exist, non-existent) and the eutopia (good place)".

Our statement, built on an idea of an internal dialogue, a dialogue between the main text and the footnotes and quotations, focuses on the changing of the ways of thinking about the city as a work of active art, on the role of an artist, architect, town-planner in this process and their activities seen as special intellectual contribution to the development of this kind of space. It is also a kind of provocation relating to the description of similarities of the artistic and architectural activities in the context of the space of a city.

**Architecture**

Architecture is a somewhat separate field of art. It is more difficult to attribute it to the field of fine arts nowadays, as it used to be the case in the past. It also doesn't seem to fit the visual

1 By the City we understand all space-time-behavioral events directed at the space of residing, using sensorics, all the senses for its receiving and shaping, namely the senses of sight, touch, hearing, smell ...., all of it, together with our presence and the presence of the Other /animals nature/, who also serves the city and builds it according to certain rules and performative structures, we will call the City.

2 Not to be confused with the concept of Non-Space /Marc Auge, "Non-Places", PWN, Warsaw 2011/

3 https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia

4 By an artist, a creator, I do not only mean here professional architects, urban planners, artists as the only "shareholders" of the process, but also all active people declaring participation with action and thought in such a process and their activities, that meet the criteria of the present definition. While the former are required to be there during the stage of formation /materialization/ of the city as its creators, the latter are essential when the city is alive, forming a specific, active part in its bloodstream.

5 The essay, which we would like to introduce as a handful of thoughts of a person working on the border of these activities seen as special intellectual contribution to the development of this kind of space. It is a work of active art, on the role of an artist, architect, town planner.

6 Renaissance attributed architecture to the realm of visual arts through a drawing as a "communication" binder. Not depreciating the traditional conceptual hand drawing as the language of the agreement in the sphere of architecture, it is clear that modern CAD technology and digital rendering slightly change this paradigm. See Gabriela Świtk "Games of Art and Architecture", ed. Fundacja na rzecz nauki polskiej, Toruń, 2013; It should also be noted that the techniques of modeling and computer rendering are gaining more and more opportunities for individualization of artistic/shaping expression, they take into account the individual characteristics of the "operator - creator" and are increasingly becoming autonomous from the architecture itself, with the possibility of replacing not only the architectural drawing but also conceptual author’s idea of the project, represented, up to now, by the original, hand-drawn concept drafts. A drawing, regardless of the media, which we use in its creation, appears to be a part of the discourse in the process of creation of space.

Returning to the password "plastyka" (Polish: "plastic arts") on Wikipedia, we will find under this entry also the information about architecture being the art of shaping spatial forms. It is an oversimplification and a misunderstanding of the nature of this art. Particularly divergent is the definition of the Urban Planning, see https://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sztuki_plastyczne.

Encyclopedia PWN describes the architecture as "the art of creating order in the environment, in order to adapt it to meet multiple physical material and cultural needs of the people .... various task of contemporary architecture arise from the complex forms of organization of life, and from the rapid socioeconomic changes and technological progress. "(Encyclopedia PWN, t.2, Warsaw 2001). Since architecture builds the order, the primary question now seems to be the problem of order itself, what it is and what it is not, where are its limits, is order determined by aesthetics, function, civilizational, cultural paradigm?....?

It is possible that the post-contemporary brings with it also a redefinition of the concepts concerning the plastic arts, or visual structures, if only because there are now tools that are expanding our perceptual abilities on one hand and limiting them on the other /Myopia as a civilization disease, the same with the hearing, etc ..../. The origins of this type of
Inscription /a.g.bilińscy/

thinking can be found in the classic writings by an architect Oskar Hansen, a psychologist Rudof Arnheim, and others. It seems that today the authors would define some of the issues in a different way.

Auguste Perret, a French architect of the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, a so-called “father of reinforced concrete”;

“Direction of Space” Anna Franta, ed. Krakow University of Technology, Kraków 2004;

Architecture includes a number of areas, in addition to commonly understood architecture – the art of creating structures and their forms, also the architecture of landscape, the so-called interior design, urban planning, communication, virtual worlds including architectural utopia and so on.
City as an Art Installation

When we talk about architecture, we should not forget the spatial relationship between a person - user and the environment created by architecture /with architectural methods/. Art nowadays brings forth the experience, which helps us to explain these phenomena from the point of view of the fine arts. One of such phenomena is an art Installation. Depending on the relation of a person /participant/ - space, we can distinguish an installation of architectural or sculptural origin. The architectural type aims to create an immersive space, surrounding and filling all objects and subjects that fall within its range. It can be a provocation or an observation, it can also be purely artistic activity, without any social or political overtones. The first and fundamental act of building installations of the city is the act of its demarcation, an event which has always, even at present, had a sacred nature. This has been the case since the beginning of the Conscious building. Art installations often refer to this phenomenon, particularly in the context of land art, or the city art itself. While an art installation uses a metaphor, an architectural installation, so without a doubt also the city itself, is a direct experience.

Installations, such as those in the form of wrapping of the City, created by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, are good examples of action with the urban space with the more reflective - aesthetic approach. However, if we assume that the installation is the architecture itself, and it is undeniably so, then also the city installation becomes the architecture at the relevant time. Within the visual arts, Installation is a space-time limited formula in terms of development and space expansion and is rather single-direction in ideology, even if it is interactive, but architecture /urban planning/ as installation has an open and interactive structure, resulting from the nature of these events also in the limitlessness of space. Urban planning, and consequently the city, which it relates to most frequently, seen as a work of art, so in accordance with the contemporary paradigms of art also an installation, is in its nature an open structure. The happening of a city has no intentional artistic ending, and only a possible death assigned by its nature. This death occurs when the human interest in the active and passive involvement in a specific architectural space ends or the creative possibilities of the place are denoted by its nature.

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10 The factor of participation of all participants in the creation of space was pointed out by many artists and architects. Architecture considered in terms of an event is discussed by a Swiss architect Bernard Tchumi cit. "this is not a monument, which froze, it must also be an event ..." Ewa Rewers, "Event in Urban Space", an article on the web http://bylecoq.w.interiowo.pl/text/zdarzenie.htm/, in a similar way we presented our thoughts during our exhibition "I am a point in space," SARP, Kraków, 1986.

11 Visual arts have also "upgraded" in terms of ideas and forms of expression. One of the main currents of contemporary art is the creation, a creation which allows artistic expression through action with space. The difference between architecture and installation lies in intentionality, and while art installation generally refers to the memory, the architecture as an installation refers to the present or the future, and consequently the relational semantic of components or the "immersing in ..." of the participant and the quality of the forming matter is different. It is worth mentioning that the issue of the new concept of "plastic arts" was considered by a large group of artists - modernists, for example Henryk Stażewski, Władysław Strzemieński ...

12 It is impossible not to mention here the video actions by Józef Robakowski, or fragments of the lecture preceding a performance of Ewa Partum in Berlin in 1983, in which the artist draws attention to the street, communication events in the city as a work of art, revealing thus a completely different perspective of perception and artistic reflection. (http://artmuseum.pl/en/filmoteka/praca/partum-ewa-hommage-a-solidarnosc)

13 The tradition of setting Roman cities is well-known and embedded in the universal awareness, for example through a myth of Remus and Romulus. For example, one of the many architectural installations of this type: "Municipal water sculpture in Warsaw, which is based on the architectural paradigm of creating the space and it is, by itself a temporary architecture as such." /installation by Ewa Rudnicka, Warsaw, 2011/14. On the other hand, volatility and a kind of temporariness of events characteristic to architectural installations is present in the projects of Jean Nouvel. For example, the building of the Radio Copenhagen, with its walls-displays, or the vertical gardens, changing according to the seasons and time, and many others. One of the essential objects in this field today is the Blur Biling by Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, realized at one of the Swiss lakes.

14 inter alia: "Color, sound and rhythm," Izabela Franckiewicz, Wydawnictwo Neriton, Warsaw 2010: An important notion here is the one saying an art installation activates the participant towards the space they are occupying.

15 The issue of interactivity is defined and discussed in a book "Interactive Art" by Richard W. Kluszczyński, Wydawnictwo Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warsaw, 2010; Sensual immersion and bodily immersion appear to be basic experiences of interactivity in reality of architecture, including the reality of the city. It should also be noted that the city, like any architectural space, has its own values and virtual reality.
exhausted. It should be emphasized that the actual death that results from a different time horizon, when considering architecture as installation, does not change the values of the urban system as a work of art but only reevaluates them. Good examples of it happening is the city of Detroit, or the dying of the post-mining settlements, such as Ujków Stary in the Lesser Poland province, and many others. But before the city dies, very often attempts of its resuscitation are being made. Phenomena of resuscitation of cities often takes place through the use of activities of a happening or installation art. This is what was and is still happening, for example, in Łódź and such kind of activities try the “resuscitation” through artistic activities in Detroit. It is also what has happened during the reconstruction of Warsaw, where it’s hard not to regard the reconstruction of the Old Town and Royal Castle as a great act of an artistic event, and where the objects themselves lost its historical value with the expense of the installation one. In such cases, often the actions of artists and architects enable us to go back to the sense of the city, allow to draw attention to the topics essential for the life of cities through referring to the people and the basic concepts that unite a city, such as history, memory, ecology, a human being .... . This aspect of action in relation to urban space is supported by all active participants of architecture. It formally adopts the rules of a dialogue through actions and installations. It is those that become a platform of understanding and the language of dialogue. In view of the changing perspectives on the ontology of experiencing space and the human factor altogether, architecture is often faced with the problem of the fragility and transience of existence. It is treated as a transient type of space, associated with only one generation and sometimes even with one particular event.

Distinct examples in the current times are stadiums, exhibition spaces, or the “single-use” housing estates, all built with huge effort, and many times abandoned just after the end of the life of an “event” they have been created to facilitate. It is important to go back to the issue of utopia, which often occurs in such activities. In these types of projects, their creators tend to refer their work mostly to the realm of ideas, or contents with no real possibility of their materialization either as a whole or even in part. A blueprint of a city, during the process of demarcation is merely an idea which will later be destroyed by reality, the layering of events that lose its original memory. Moving on to the political, social art, being one of the essential contents of urban space and architecture and not intended to be a part of art collections, its visual and material side is not its most important element, but only a method used. The existence of this art form makes sense and is only performed in a course of a happening. This does not change the fact or the meaning of existence of art characterized by a greater degree of visual and aesthetic reflection, based on a different principle of materialization of the meaning of its existence, so a type of art that is closer to the traditional painting, sculpture and graphics.

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17 This relates not only to artistic possibilities but also social, political, industrial, etc ....
18 The case of Ujków Stary, a village deserted due to mining damage is an example of an attempt of artistic and scientific restoration of the place, through numerous installations and artistic activities of students of the Faculty of Intermedia at the Academy of Fine Arts, scientists and researchers from Universities: Silesian and Jagiellonian. This has been done since 2015, that is, until the death of its last inhabitant, when the town moved to a stage of agony.
19 An element of such activity is for example the “Heidelber” project. Example of description: http://6757km.com/2015/06/detroit-miasto-powstajace-z-popiolow/ It has engaged a community in artistic interventions in the dying city, in order to activate it. Coming from a completely different but also a very important type of activity in relation to urban space is the placement of the palm tree in Jerozolimskie Ave. in Warsaw, the project by Joanna Rajkowska.
20 Settlements built for refugees and victims of natural disasters, field schools for example in Africa, outdoor exhibition pavilions, and finally military camps of expeditionary units /iraq/ etc ... The actual methods of construction have also changed, and today they allow for printing of spatial structures thanks to the 3D printers. We can print a house, furniture and many other items without leaving our homes, even the parts of our body to be used as prosthesis. If so, it means that it is easy, temporary, dynamic in the variability, widespread.
21 In 1981, the UIA Congress of the International Association of Architects took place in Warsaw. It was then decided to set up the so-called Warsaw Charter. In a formal sense, the ambition was to come up with a postmodern response to the modernist Athens Charter. One of the claims it was making said that architecture is alive, as long as there is a person who fills it. This fact, forgotten today, I am quoting from memory as a participant of these events. Perhaps it is too loose an interpretation of the statements made in the Charter but it has stuck in my memory for years, almost as a paradigm. The realization of these claims is strengthened by a technological and aesthetic development, so powerful and dynamic at the present time.
This type of art is not a direct emotional response, but more a reflection, closely related to the aesthetics and its experiencing, as a natural human need. In this case, the city and the architecture is not a participant of such activities but, above all, it is the object of such a reflection, often losing its subjectivity to the subjectivity of the artist, who is expressing it.

The Image of Architecture. Passive shaping of the city.

The city seems to function in such situations more as an object and a pretext for inquiry, it is giving up its subjectivity. Although this thread is secondary in the realm of issues concerning the image of a city, it should not be considered only as an aesthetic event, where “nice” pictures become the essence of these activities. I am interested in the author’s personal approach to the artistic analysis of the phenomenon of the city’s space. These images are, above all, a reflection and often a critical materialization of observations, thoughts and experience. What they cover are merely perceptions, used sometimes as pretexts, nonetheless they remain autonomous works of art. This exhibition, apart from a few exceptions focuses on this approach to the subject at hand.

A Screen of the City. Imaging of architecture, image as a screen of the city

The action of imaging, which builds a specific language of understanding, a communication between the subjects of this action. The city, in all its dynamic sphere of existence, is revealed through screening. Sometimes these are actual displays showing what is happening in the city: from different kinds of action to the technical data, eg. air pollution. Sometimes it is great murals.

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22 In his book, "Interactive Art", Richard W. Kluszczyński writes: “The relationship between an image and an imaged world: from difference to identity.” It seems this passage reflects most adequately the relationship, which I describe in this chapter, and which by paraphrasing, I would like to treat as a description of the essence of the difference between the city-installation and the city depicted in painting, graphic ... fine arts, plastic arts, as artistic activities from and towards urban and architectural space.

23 It is worth to mention here the paintings of Arthur Przebinowski, the painterly utopias by Adam Wasiolkowski, Joseph Gielniaik, or the "Red Cities" and "Blue Cities" by Alicja and Grzegorz Biliński (our own works), etc.
Commenting on reality and sometimes just the facades of the buildings, paving on the streets, recreation areas, public squares ... Always, however, it is a kind of a city's dialogue with itself. Screening is also a personification of the city through the people that speak artistically on its behalf, and so filling it, being the City itself.

**Utopia, the image of the future, unfulfilled dream of the city.**

I would like to conclude my reflections on art and architecture seen as artistic installation, in the context of a return to the essence of the sense of the city, with reflection on utopias as a specific form of artistic expression of an unreal city in an unreal future. This kind of utopia, which I would call an artistic utopia, focuses its attention on the image of the impossible city, especially on its form. Utopias, as non-existent Worlds, obtain their images in artistic visions, images not always visual. A strong position is being held by acoustic imaging, or touch-related imaging ... In the case of actions relating to statements of urban utopia, the essential form of expression is visual imagery, but there is also another one, the experience. It is realized by building of a model, using a different scale, simulating phenomena, operating on a detail. It is impossible not to mention here the architect and discoverer of such lands, Zbigniew Oksiuta who, with his futuristic experiments with biological tissues, attempts to build a future vision of Cities in the context of AstroNature.

Reflections on utopia, the future of cities in the utopian vision, applies not only to the cities imagined but also the cities of today and it has an impact on what contemporary urban planning has to offer.

To conclude discussing the utopian city, it is impossible not to mention modern activities within the city, that aim to build a fearsome system of communication and control over the City. Such an approach, dangerous, possible to try to implement, and even partially already introduced thanks to the modern, technological electronic means, is being put to our attention by, among others, Sławomir Gutowski. "At the same time, creating a vision of an ideal community, a perfectly shaped urban space, the architects had in mind a definition of an appropriate framework for forms of human coexistence, and not a model of urban planning implying any particular faith. However, it is important not to ignore the opinion voiced by Herbert Marcuse, who described the means of communication as a system of mass production, aimed at imposing a particular social model by inspiring and satisfying false needs. Technical..."
rationalization and instrumentation of thinking through language of the mass media finds a fertile ground in a one-dimensional society, in which the individual loses their critical sense.\(^{30}\)

The presented considerations lead to the conclusion that a return to the sense of the city can happen through art, the one subjected to a reflection related to the Memory, as well as one living the contemporary ardor, active and immersing in the urban space, frequently based on the expressive reaction to reality, or that which goes far ahead in its vision and reaches the Utopia. The binder of these activities, however, will always be the anchoring on the ground of sensitive humanism, the good of the people in the context of the good of Another, who co-creates the environment of the city, so the return to the base of archetypal paradigms.

This statement is probably not innovative, but well worth of constant reminding and redefining. It requires a continuous examination of our Consciousness and our cultural-civilization maturity, of which the Art is the most important achievement. That is the intention of this argument and, as we think, an essence of a return to the sense of the City.

\(^{30}\) It is worth to quote here the author’s own work, in collaboration with Alicja Duzel, “Blue Cities” /Krzysztofory, Kraków, 2003/;
Abstract

“Pakuska” is a book about one estate, quite small and perhaps not different from other similar estates created in Poland in the time of the construction boom of the seventies. But for that very reason, as all of them were the same, it is a book about Poland.

Pakuska - what it was like then and what it is now

Pakuska was a city and at the same time it was not. Pakuska was a new world which emerged from nothingness and spread. In this context, it was anything and nothing at once. Was it the return to the meaning of city? Whoever knows what the meaning of city is?! Maybe a city which makes no sense makes more sense? If so, Pakuska is an ideal city.

Pakuska, like a medieval village, was not founded on a “raw root”. People were not there, but the forest was. Soldiers, as usual, appeared first, like an invading army, even vanguard, or a reconnaissance party of progress. They combed out the area, marked it, cut down the trees, built blocks and moved in with their families. Then, civilians of all sorts came along. Everything had been precisely planned. Today, we would recognize the concept of dividing people according to their occupations or workplaces and allocating blocks accordingly. Hence, there were blocks occupied by doctors, teachers, working class etc. In those times, future residents were genuinely engaged in the construction process. They would rush to Pakuska - the estate after work and support the builders with their own hands. Let us think what would happen if a today’s developer asked a businessman to pop in in the evening and whitewash the loft’s walls.

Everybody was a stranger there. There were no indigenous people, Native Americans or Aborigines to eradicate. The houses have never belonged to evicted or dislodged residents. Therefore, nobody had a feeling that the property was taken off somebody, that a resident is unwelcome, an invader and has everything prepared without lifting a finger. Pakuska was an attempt to reconstruct the world which was supposed to be permanent, but turned out to be temporary. It was the time of makeshift structures and carelessness. Who would dare to break
construction health and safety regulations this way nowadays? New residents had just moved into finished blocks while just metres away the work was progressing at full speed. Cranes and bulldozers were operating and new blocks were being built. Those areas weren’t even separated from the rest and children were roaming everywhere, so it is a miracle that none of them were killed. Still, what was called “finished” was not in fact completed at all. Already inhabited flats were full of defects and practically needed renovating straight away. Some blocks were not even rendered and a few were left that way for years, waiting for their turn. Young ones integrated first. Children, if not spoilt, have no prejudice. Up to a certain age at least, they are tolerant. Then, they embrace human nature. Leaders appear. There is violence and cruelty towards weaker or not physically or mentally adjusted - swots, fatties, red-haired ones and those wearing glasses. This is how the structure of the estate was created.

Yes, my book is an attempt at describing new social structures. People who had been moved from villages, towns and different communities, worked out new relations. They were adjusting, fighting and sometimes crushing one another. Not everybody could stand it, conflicts and even suicides occurred.

In the background, we look at typical social and political circumstances of that era-socialist morality with its “saints” (Lenin, Świerczewski) and leaders with their emotionless looks (First Secretary Edward Gierek, General Wojciech Jaruzelski). All is seen through the eyes of a child soaking it up. That child, just like many others, still enjoyed immense personal freedom which today’s kids can only dream of.

Has Pakuska changed?

It is a rhetorical question as everything is changing according to principals of modernity fluctuations. Pakuska is transforming as well which I observe, not with anxiety but for sure with disgust. Firstly, the estate has become “a ghost town”. The young are leaving in search for work and better prospects as those at the estate are bleak. Apart from that, the estate is growing older which manifests itself through adaptation of former creche into offices of Zakład Ubezpieczeń Społecznych (Social Insurance Institution). The Factory is dying. The use of a capital F is justified here, as Olkuska Fabryka Naczyni Emaliowanych (the leading Polish manufacturer of enamel goods) was like “a mother” for inhabitants of Olkusz. You either worked there, or your family members did. You could have used services provided for workers - holidays (at the seaside - Władysławowo or the Masurian Lakes - Dębowa), summer camps for children in Jelitkowo or infrastructure created by it - health centres, swimming pools and the cinema. Now Pakuska - the estate, turned its back to the factory. The estate lives at a different pace.

Apart from that, the esthetics is failing. Filip Springer, author of books on contemporary architecture, calls it “pastelosis”. The phenomenon is, in short, frighteningly consistent redecorating exteriors of blocks and insulating them with expanded polystyrene and then painting them bright, sometimes unmatched colours. Springer blamed the situation on the chairmen’s of estate managements secretaries’ taste as they choose the colours. Of course, the insulating has advantages - lower energy use, but it affects the residents’ taste and instills wrong esthetic concepts in the young generation. One can wonder - which is worse - sitting in an old block, not painted in pink, or in the space so degraded.
“Pkuska” is a book about one estate, quite small and perhaps not different from other similar estates created in Poland in the time of the construction boom of the seventies. But for that very reason, as all of them were the same, it is a book about Poland. Should somebody look for more information about that strange country - PRL and want to get to know everyday life there, I hope that book will help them.

The blocks

The blocks under construction are the best ones. Cause, what can be interesting in an inhabited block? Even if there is, nobody will let us in to browse. An unfinished block is at our disposal. We’re running around undecorated rooms, freshly concreted stairs, we go on balconies still without bannisters or recently tarred roofs. We’re trying to imagine what it’ll be like when the residents have moved in. A home without people is something incomprehensibly empty. Running like that, we often risk our lives, but we’re immortal anyway, so nothing bad can happen to us. From time to time the guard catches us, but he does it somehow not convinced, we’re little which means a small problem to him. In the past every guard had a thick moustache and wore a cap, but this one is hatless. We’re running away, laughing loudly. He refers to us as “brats” and “pups”. He shouts that he’ll kick our asses. We’re not offended. Let him shout.
The Factory

My parents and uncles work there. I wonder if I’ll be employed there one day. My dad says that if I don’t study, I’ll land up there one day - at planishing machines. It’s strange as dad studied and he still landed up in the factory. True, not at planishing machines, but still. What do they planish anyway and what’s so awful about it?

You can’t normally enter the plant, there are guards and IDs. Only on the 1st of May, on account of the holiday, the management let our parents take their children to the factory. I don’t go to the planishing machines department, but to bath department cause my dad works there. The factory produces pots, sinks and baths. I personally think that baths are the most noble products and I’m happy that my dad is a foreman there. He’s respected at his workplace since a big photo of him was carried at the parade. I like the plant, but the parade is boring. You’re supposed to walk slowly, mustn’t run or be overly cheerful. Is there a reason for joy anyway?

That you have to get up early and slave in dirty halls. The parades aren’t for me. The factory is a bit scary. There’s a big furnace with red fire blazing. Hell must look like that. The factory is a huge animal which lets us know that it needs us from time to time. It resembles a cow which moos in the field while grazing. The farmer needs to milk her or take her to the barn. Three times a day the sirens hoot, workers walk in like a wide stream and disappear for 8 hours. Looking at the crowds, I get the impression that there are too many workers in proportion to the factory’s size. What are they all doing there? Maybe half of them do nothing. It’s all so strange to me.

The girl

We’re in love with the same girl. Actually, I don’t like her that much, but a few of my close friend’s are in love with her, so I’m sort of pressurised into it. We’re standing in front of her entrance: Marek, Adam and I. We’re looking longingly at the window on the fourth floor. The light went on, so she’s in. Our excitement is growing. We wonder if we’re lucky enough and she’ll go to the skip with her bin. Of course, she’ll pretend that she doesn’t see us and we’ll pretend that we’re standing here purely by chance. What kind of coincidence is it if it happens every day? More like a habit. There’s still a chance she’ll be sent to the shops by her parents. Then, we’ll follow her, a few or a few dozen metres behind, laughing loudly and showing off. We’re continually pondering on who she loves more than the others. We’ve analyzed her gestures and words. Even her accidental glances haven’t been overlooked. It led us nowhere as everything indicates that she loves us all the same.

One day, an old dog with eczema turns up. And then - another one. The following day there are three at once. The reason is that the bitch form the third floor is on the heat. The dogs growl at us. We chase them with stones. But they come back and so do we.

The central heating

A sheer early warning system. Thanks to radiators, information flows fast and reaches everybody. Nothing can be hidden. Neighbours’ arguments above and below. Every single sound gets into my ears. I hear crying and cursing. Somebody’s unhappy. I’m lying on my bed, thinking how it is to be
unhappy. Maybe I am, not knowing about it yet? Perhaps you've got to be grown up to be miserable? Are my parents then?

The garages
The garages provide us with the minimum privacy. We're playing football and suddenly somebody needs to pee. What is he to do? He runs and hides behind them. The older boys meet their girls there. We don’t even look at what they're doing. You can get your ass kicked for spying. They’re probably kissing or even sticking their willies into the holes girls pee through. The garages are built from bricks, wood, some of them had been parts of refrigerator lorries. Gradually, new ones appear, made of welded radiators. They all look shabby, rusting, with the paint peeling off and plaster coming off, turning into junk. We aren’t bothered. The main thing is - we have somewhere to do our dirty deeds. Somehow, the garages suit the purpose.

Drunkards
They make themselves heard at night, wandering among the blocks as if they were looking for the way out of a dense forest. Completely lost - they laugh, sing, call out the names of the women they love or hate. Sometimes aggressive towards one another. They undo their zips and pee at the wall of the block at exactly the same spot as dogs. Do drunks mark their territory too?

The key
I'm attached to it. The red tape cutting into my neck. At the end - it. The key to my crib, or our flat. I mustn’t lose it or take it off or give it to anybody. Maybe the key is even more important than me. You can tell I'm a child cause adults don’t wear them round their necks. I got used to it and it got used to me. I’ve heard that some keys fit other people’s locks but I don’t know if mine does, as I’ve never tried to unlock other doors with it. I sometimes open a bottle of mineral water though. It’s gold and it’s got “yeti” written on it. I wonder why it’s called like that creature from the Himalayas. I only know one word beginning with a letter y.

A queue
It’s also called “a tail”. The longest one is to the butcher’s. With time, the queues are everywhere. Standing in them is something of a mystery as you don’t know what you’re waiting for. And after you’ve waited, you often don’t get what you’ve expected. Apart form that, a queue is a form of celebrating boredom. I hate queuing. After just a minute, I’m already fed up. Even school seems better! Surprisingly, some “queuers” seem happy as if standing for hours in one place was the meaning of their lives. Will we queue after death too? Probably yes. We’ll be standing in two queues - one to purgatory and the other to hell. The hell queue will be much longer. But there shouldn’t be one to heaven - everybody will be privileged there just like pregnant women, women
carrying infants or like veterans. Cause - if you need to queue to heaven, what kind of heaven is it?

**The neighbours**

It’s the central heating. It carries it all: unidentified noises, voices and whispers. Unselfishly and unwillingly, we participate in our neighbours’ lives: somebody’s beating somebody else, somebody’s drilling holes in the walls with a power drill, somebody’s yelling, installing wooden panels, a baby’s crying, somebody came home drunk, staggering into the furniture, throwing off objects, then swearing. But there’s nothing to be ashamed of. Tomorrow they’ll be in our shoes, listening to us, and looking at the walls, the ceiling and the floor and cursing us, shaking their fists at us. My neighbours are naive people who don’t realize how much I know about them.

**The cleaning lady**

Apparently, a cleaner can rule a country, but ours can’t even clean the staircase properly. Can’t or perhaps doesn’t want to. Our parents get really upset about the unwashed stairs, but they’ve never said a bad word. The residents backbite the cleaning lady, but on seeing her - they smile and say hello. It’s good to be a cleaner. You don’t have to study and then, for the rest of your life, don’t need to overwork either. Such a pity that a man can’t become a cleaning lady, cause if they could, I’d like to be one when I grow up. I wouldn’t do anything and the estate management would pay me for my inefficiency. And my father says that doing nothing doesn’t pay off. He’s blabbing as if he didn’t know our cleaning lady.

**The keys**

Why is it always sunny? It’s got to be rainy sometimes! Meanwhile, the sun’s shining. No, it’s an understatement - not shining, it’s blazing. It usually happens in the second half of June. There’s real shambles in front of the block - a lot of construction equipment and unfinished pavements. But there’s also a desk here with a large notebook on it. Next to the notebook, somebody had arranged some brand new, shiny keys in a row. The man sitting a the desk stands up, puts the glasses on and gets that serious look on his face. At first he’s talking about something boring and incomprehensible to me - about some sort of celebration, some volunteer work and then he calls out the names. The person called out comes up to the desk and is given their key. There is a round of applause and the smiling receiver steps back, making room for another one. I wonder, is it enough just to come up to the desk to get a flat. The block seems so big. There should be enough flats to go round. But not everybody comes up and not everybody’s happy. Some people in the crowd have grim faces and are murmuring under their breath. I don’t think they’re sharing the joy of the receivers. Fortunately, my dad was given the key. When he was back with us, we cuddled - overjoyed. Then we went to see if it the key would fit the lock. When we were leaving, I crossed looks with a woman I didn’t know. I looked down. I don’t think that lady liked me.
back to the sense of the city
THE FRAGILE HEART OF THE CITY. THE CASE OF RAGUSA, SICILY

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Abstract
The conference introduces one of the international workshops we organized in 2014-15 about urban regeneration. The selected theme for the Ragusa Workshop concerned the regeneration of the historic centre of Ragusa Superiore, the “new town” built on a higher plateau after the earthquake which destroyed the old city in 1693. The historic centre, shaped with a compact gridiron plan, embeds several late-baroque monuments for which was declared an UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002.

The denser part of this fabric, made of an extensive grid of small blocks, each composed by tiny lots, has gradually proved inadequate to accommodate the new housing needs, forcing residents to look elsewhere for more sustainable conditions. The strict regulation imposed on the whole historic centre has strongly contributed to freeze this condition, by preventing the necessary renewal process. The consequence has been a gradual depopulation of the old town that led to a large urban and social decay.

Using a multidisciplinary approach, the Workshop aimed to test “on-site” strategies for urban renewal that could suggest integrated solutions, to these several issues: preservation of architectural and urban character of the site, building and public space renovation, upgrading to current housing and circulation needs, creation of safety areas for both seismic and hydrogeological risks. In the conference we shall also introduce 3 Diploma Projects presented by our students in 2015 and 2016 in our school of Architecture in Milan Polytechnic University.
The question of Southern Italian historical centers

The abandonment of the urban space is always a dramatic event. If we can understand the divestment of the former industrial areas and installations whose life is bound to end with the completion of a production cycle, it is more difficult to accept a process in which urban communities progressively abandon the heart of their city, areas and locations where they were born and have been formed over the centuries by cultivating the common way of living that is the very reason for their identity. Here there is not only a decay of utilitas, there is a much more serious and irremediable loss of social life, memory and culture.

The weakening, bleeding and abandoning of city centers has followed the long phase of development of our country since the second world war, it's been in a certain way its negative footprint. For several decades a slow and relentless process of erosion has deeply consumed the social structure and the physical fabric of our cities, triggered by an idea of progress that moved the inhabitants to migrate to the suburbs, at first to approach new working places, then to settle in less congested areas looking for more suitable housing conditions, characterized by more efficient accessibility and more comfortable private sphere. This promise of improvement, fueled by a gradual growth of economic well-being, has encouraged urban communities to shift outside the center their housing and the other utilities. Here started a fatal decline of both private and public space in historical center. In this way started an inversion process between center and periphery: instead of developing as an organic extension of the ancient city, the modern city grew in opposition to the old one, replacing and appropriating its values and its functions, so that city centers were put aside and rejected.

In a contemporary view this phenomenon, whose catastrophic signs still afflict the hearts of many Italian cities, seems a paradox. Facing the widespread approval of contemporary urban territories, it's out of doubt that the compactness of the historical centers is the most authentic expression of sociality and urban vitality, the site where people settled and developed their common values of citizenship, in opposition to the sprawl of the recent urban districts. These districts are often disjointed and characterized by mono-functional residential areas, grown according to the real estate profit and land consumption, in a lack of public space and utilities, above all unable to provide the residents with that sense of belonging which was the main value of ancient settlements.

So, how can be possible that many historical or pre-industrial centers with their intrinsic morphological and landscape quality cannot yet find the way of redevelopment and reuse?

Despite the intense activities promoted by Italian and European urban culture and local communities, despite the many experiences and investments that tried to build new living conditions in the oldest urban contexts, today, more than fifty years after the publication of the first Gubbio Charter (1960), the problem of historical centers still remains in many cases an open "question".

Today we can say that from the 60s, the problem of the historical centers persistence has gradually changed. This because of the progressive shift from a more static vision of the protection focused on the mere conservation of single buildings or monuments to a more
dynamic approach, which links the problem with sustainable strategies of urban and territorial development.

In general the Italian experience of urban regeneration has encouraged over all the regeneration of those city centers that are characterized by unique and complex urban design, qualified by the presence of historical monuments and architectures. On the other hand the poorest ancient city boroughs, mainly residential and often consisting of modular fabrics with simple building types escaped the actions of protection and has been forgotten without promoting any strategic plan of urban rehabilitation and reuse.

This difference is particularly evident in many Southern cities, where the plenty of this “second class” of historical centers with a lower monumental value shows still today the permanence of a specific “question of Southern city centers”.

If the sharp opposition between the old and the new city was the most obvious effect of the territorial modification induced by industrial growth, its consolidation is the consequence of planning actions in the attempt to balance the propulsive thrust of the urban growth with a strong protection of the historic centers. But these actions produced the exclusion of the old centers from the dynamics of urban transformation. The conservative spirit of the first Gubbio Charter, spoiled by the long delay that preceded the drafting of urban rehabilitation plans, has led to the “freezing” of the ancient districts, locked in a generic obligation that condemned them to abandonment and degradation. In the meanwhile many historical centers of lesser monumental value were treated as areas of expansion, causing heavy changes and replacement of housing stock that ended up compromising the integrity and quality of the urban landscape. The remedy to this different planning treatment came too late to prevent that the gap between these two classes of historical centers could keep on until now.

In the last years, in fact, the policy of subsidies for the redevelopment of existing buildings in historical centers has encouraged the process of valorization and revitalization of the richest centers with architectural and monumental presences, certainly more attractive for tourism and real estate market, while the poorest and more residential districts, often consisting in lots of small size and without particular monumental accents, persist in a chronic state of neglect and decay. If the public subsidy policies have been successful to start the regeneration process of the monumental centers by attracting and conveying private investment, the same policies are not enough to regenerate the second type of historical centers. These less attractive, dense and poorer centers require the adoption of more courageous steps, but at first the development of a project: a bold strategic project that, moving from the analysis of the urban structure could translate its potential within a broader vision on the future of the city as a whole. A regeneration project which, operating in an integrated way on the specific strengths of the urban and social fabric, will ease the revive and re-appropriation by the urban community.

The integration between historical heritage and contemporary urban design requires a broader vision, aimed to understand the peculiarities of each specific situation and to identify the most suitable tools to support the key role that in the different cases the historic center can play as an engine of the whole urban and regional renewal process.

The most recent social and economical changes push us to look with new interest at all the historical city centers not only because they are our reserves of memory and culture, but above
all because they could be a real alternative to the waste of land and an opportunity to meet citizens’ demand for more sustainable ways of living and experience the city: a new way of life no longer based on euphoria and expansion, but on a new culture of thrift and conscious use of sustainable resources that requires more sophisticated programs of redevelopment and reuse. The unique duplicity of its historical center makes the city of Ragusa (fig. 1), in the South-East corner of Sicily, a case of great experimental interest, both for the implications linked to the different urban matrixes which characterize its centers and for the different protection policies adopted so far for both of them.

The shortage of a real overall strategy reflects the need of framing the issue of urban regeneration in a wider project widespread all over the city. Analyzing the urban fabric of Ragusa Superiore over the deceptive of the generic grid, the formal values and principles on which was founded the original plan are still recognizable: these are the proportional measures of the original grid, the inner street baroque perspectives and the relationship between the very compact city structure and the open surrounding natural landscape. Although with the confused process of enlargement, densification and speculation which took place from the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} Century until now the spirit of the original urban plan got progressively lost, the city imagined in the 20s shows us the way to a regeneration process based on its fundamental principles. This blend of vision and pragmatism which inspired it shows us the essential strategic dimension in order to transform the historical center in the development engine of the future city, which would be a more sustainable city where to reset that virtuous relationship which linked the community to its settlement.

\textbf{Figure 1. General plan of Ragusa}
Ragusa Ibla and Ragusa Superiore. Birth and development of a double historical center

To understand the peculiarities of the urban structure of Ragusa and the reasons that lead to the current state of abandonment of its old center it is necessary to provide some cognitive elements about the origins and geographical features of its settlement.

Ragusa is the chief town of the southernmost province of Italy and one of the eight towns in south-eastern Sicily that in 2002 have been included in UNESCO World Heritage List for the innovation of their urban plans and the architectural values of their late Baroque monuments.

The city’s origins are related to the different civilizations that have crossed Sicily over the centuries: Phoenicians, Sicilians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Normans, Spanish.

Until the end of the seventeenth century the settlement was mainly concentrated on the eastern hill of Ibla, surrounded by single farms (“masserie”) and fields fenced with traditional stone walls.

But the current urban structure and even the origins of its architectural image are connected to the reconstruction process started after the earthquake that in 1693 destroyed all the major towns in South-Eastern Sicily.

The quarrels for supremacy between the families belonging to the two antagonistic parishes of St. George and St. John, as well as the social conflicts existing between the feudal aristocracy and the new agricultural middle class, led the city to be rebuilt split in two parts (fig. 2). The nobles chose to rebuild their new city on the ruins of the old one, gradually raising on the medieval urban plan new Baroque architectures forming the peculiar architectural unity of Ragusa Ibla, which culminates in the new church of St. George. The emerging agricultural middle class (“massari”) chose instead to urbanize the “Patro” plateau, the highest hill west of Ibla, where they started to build a second independent core. The “new town” was planned according to an orthogonal grid. The “Mother Church”, dedicated to St. John the Baptist, was erected just in the centre.

Figure 2. Aerial view of Ragusa Superiore and Ibla (right corner)
The building process of Ragusa Superiore proceeded from east to west through two and a half centuries. The fabric is made by two different parts with different types of blocks and buildings: the eastern sector is arranged according to an approximately 90x90 mt square grid; in its central area (among Via Roma, Via San Vito, Corso Italia and Via Vittorio Veneto) are inserted remarkable baroque palaces and monuments. Westward the grid is fragmented and subdued to a more intensive construction: small blocks are parceled into many lots, sometimes smaller than 20 square mt on which more recent and ordinary buildings are standing.

The dual slope of the ground, from west to east and from north to south, warps the final shape of the urban grid. On the borders of the plateau the fabric suddenly stops along the curved edges overlooking the two valleys that surround the hill: the deep San Leonardo valley to the north and Santa Domenica valley to the south (fig.3). This one separates the historic center of Ragusa Superiore from its further south extension modern, towards the railway station, whose development was increased after the construction of the Capuchins bridge at the end of the nineteenth century.

**Figure 3. Santa Domenica valley**
The undeniable lack of facilities, squares (fig.4) and public gardens within the city centre is the result of a gradual process of extensive densification and saturation. Two interesting masterplans tried to introduce inside the isomorphic scheme of the grid hierarchies and public spaces allocated in the different districts, but they have been ignored.

Figure 4. Ragusa Superiore Ecce Homo church

The first is the city plan drawn up by G. Migliorisi and approved in 1880, which provided for an adaptation of the grid to the needs of vehicular traffic, by widening some streets and integrating new facilities (market, theater) as well as squares (Casino and Serra neighborhoods) and public gardens (Borgo Cappuccini).

The second is the project drawn up by F. La Grassa and awarded at the competition for the new city plan in 1928. Here the “thinning” and street widening operations planned for the city centre were integrated within a general development of a new scale street network, supporting the natural extension of the city southward and westward.

In the Thirties, after the opening of the new bridge over Santa Domenica valley on the axis of Via Roma and the following implementation of a new square surrounded by public buildings (Piazza della Libertà), the southern district of the "New Ragusa" has been equipped with a new core located just midway between the historic centre and the railway station. The new square was designed by the rationalist architect Ernesto B. La Padula, well known as the designer of the Palace of Italian Civilization in Rome EUR district.

After the Second World War the historic centre of Ragusa Superiore went through a gradual saturation while on the borders of the valley massive public and private buildings have been
built (as the seats of the Province and the Civil Engineering). In 1960 it was built the third bridge as an extension of San Vito Street.

The city plan approved in 1974 left the old town of Ragusa Superiore out from the restricted category of “historic centre”, so that several buildings have been torn down to house very impacting multi-storey buildings, such as the INA insurance palace in front of St. John’s Cathedral, the Bank of Sicily, the new Courthouse.

Since that moment a gradual depopulation of the old town led to a large decay of houses and commercial activities that were forming the socio-economic fabric of the centre. Symmetrically an extensive building activity has been quickly developed westward, giving rise to new housing districts with several apartment buildings and detached houses. Furthermore on the coast a lot of summer houses started to be built in “satellite” and seasonal town of the Marina di Ragusa thus leading to a new doubling of the city: Ragusa is currently the Italian city with the highest per capita real estate surface.

The more recent Masterplan of the City Centre, which was enacted to overcome the deregulation of the previous years, introduced nevertheless rigid constraints that inhibit the regeneration process wished by the citizens. If today Ragusa Ibla regained vitality as a tourist and night life entertainment destination, Ragusa Superiore (fig. 5) needs the launch of a new and extensive regeneration process that requires the set up of complex planning strategies and strong economic subsidies.

**Figure 5. Compact morphology of Ragusa Superiore**
Towards a project for Ragusa Superiore

The need to frame the issue of recovery of the old centers within a broader urban reform strategy had already been clearly expressed in the text of the so-called "Second Gubbio Charter", the document promoted by the National Historical-Artistic Centres in 1990 as an update of the first "Charter" signed thirty years before: "the recognition of the historical values must be the starting point for designing the existing city, a project that integrates the historic center with the urban periphery of the city and its territory, by uniform and integrated methods of rehabilitation."

We must therefore argue, in a comprehensive reform perspective, what might be the role that the historic center of Ragusa Superiore can play in urban and territorial context in which it appears, also in relation to the most acclaimed historical center, Ragusa Ibla, to ensure that integrated policies of territorial balance should be promoted to improve the recovery of the old town, to stop the growth of a large periphery which fails to became a city (fig.6).

Figure 6. front view: Ragusa Ibla, Superiore and the XX century city

In the horizon of a progressive rapprochement of the two historic centers (also prosecuted without resorting to artificial transport solutions, but simply by implementing the public mobility along the ridge that joins them) Ragusa Superiore regeneration strategies cannot repeat "tout court" those used for Ragusa Ibla, the way may not be the one of the duplication or the permanent competition between the two oldest parts of the city, even for their evident
differences. The support policies undertaken for the revitalization of Ibla are not sufficient to reactivate the largest Ragusa Superiore, having somehow a less attractive historical center. But the different urban and environmental topographical features of the two historical centers rather constitute a great opportunity to develop different projects, adapted to the specific conditions of the context, exceeding the historical conflict between the two Ragusa and instead strengthening the mutuality and complementarity that can result from this particular condition of settlement.

If Ragusa Ibla, crystallized in its image of monumental architecture provides for some time as a still-live scene for tourism and leisure, Ragusa Superiore must find an original vocation to renew the imprinting of its original genesis, the expression of a dynamic entrepreneurial class, and return it to represent the future of the city, a city tired of consuming soil, a sustainable city where traditional values can support new ways of dwelling and living the urban space.

The reasons that curb the natural repopulation of the Ragusa Superiore historic center are different. Some are typical of all the historical centers experience, such as difficult accessibility, presence of building units which do not fit with the current housing standards, the failure of services and parking. Others are related to the particular shape of its plan and its morphology, such as repetition and substantial monofunctionality of housing units: above all the evident lack of a urban system of squares and well defined public spaces, being the most authentic Italian expression of community life, which generally forms the bearing structure of the regeneration process and the main element of attractiveness of city centers.

The construction of new and qualified living conditions within the urban fabric of Ragusa Superiore cannot therefore became only through building restoration programs and not even through the adoption of special financial laws to promote and encourage private investment. Without designing adequate public spaces, without specific urban reuse programs it is unthinkable to succeed in the rehabilitation of such a so dense and fragmented housing morphology (fig. 5 - 7). It is mandatory an integrated and multidisciplinary approach, first of all oriented in defining a new topography of public spaces within the existing city, which allows to qualify the urban context, encouraging a new urban re-use.

Coordinating within a single program the various aspects of the problem (social, economic, urban planning, legal, etc.) It is necessary a general review of the existing urban structure, to redefine its meaning with a new urban map based on the existing strengths, but also based on a coherent new design of its most problematic places, to correct some congenital problems and to adapt them to new planning opportunities.

In particular, the fragmentation and monotony of the western districts, substantially without squares and open public spaces, partly altered by incongruous interventions which have compromised its identity, lead us to think about the purpose of volumetric subtraction, which can be planned through targeted interventions to generate a network of small essential collective services to revive the residential life and restart the deployment of a new economic and social life. The multiplicity of functions is a precondition for returning to original vitality in the old town, as well as the formation of an appropriate framework of public spaces, which is essential to preserve and safe its historical identity.
Designing a new public space topography means first of all rediscovering the abandoned, neglected or deleted places, cancelled by bad maintenance, forgotten by the common sense of urban space, starting from the ones that allow you to recompose the special relationship that binds city with its settlement.

The redevelopment of the south valley called Santa Domenica has in this plan a high priority. The symbolic and environmental value of this great natural space, interposed between the historic center of Ragusa Superiore and its modern extension to the south, cannot be dispelled by abandonment and neglect. The valley is a complementary part of the city which claims to be again part of urban settlement to renew the ancient relationship that linked Ragusa Superiore to the valley river. His recovery, now partly undertaken by some important cleaning initiatives which recall some landscape improvement interventions made for the Kolymbetra gardens in the Temples Valley in Agrigento, it could return to the city this large park, to compensate part of the shortage of public space that afflicts the urban fabric.

The recovery of the original mirroring between the city and natural landscape through the restoration of the panoramic views along the north and south valleys is as well a relevant step to give back quality to the city grid. Specific operations of “cleaning up” along the edges built illegally around two valleys allow to give back to the city its background, today denied by the curtain of buildings that disrupt the landscape perspectives; and starting at the same time a prevention program with a controlled sequence of demolition along the city edges, to create safety conditions in a location under high seismic risk as this part of Sicily is. These urban programs could over time allow the reconstruction of the perimetry profile of the city, today significantly altered and degraded by incongruous multistory buildings, and thus give new
strength to visionary intuition by ing. Francesco La Grassa, the city urban planner that in the twenties of the last Century planned the edge of town with “belvedere promenades” overlooking the surrounding majestic landscape.

Actually, is this combination between vision and pragmatism, inspiring the 1928 urban plan, which brought back to us the necessary strategic view to transform the Ragusa Superiore historic center in a new engine for the future city redevelopment.

The ambitious goal of urban socio-economic renaissance of Ragusa Superiore will take a longterms program and the use of a wide range of integrated urban policies tools, as well as the integration of the many specific skills and a close cooperation between public and private developers.

But such a complex process, which cannot ignore the reality of a difficult present situation related with local events, may not even exist in absence of a general Masterplan based on the core values that the city always expressed, consolidated and then lost in the course of its history. A great resource to be reckoned within the definition of new city regeneration policies comes precisely from the strong sense of belonging to a big part of Ragusa communities and by the constant action of awareness to the places and their history promoted and practiced by vivid associations of citizens. It is thanking to them that the awareness of the profound value of the urban experience can be reinforced, and it is with them that we can plan a topography of the future city.

Post scriptum. International Workshop 2014: RE-USE RAGUSA, Sustainable strategies to revive the city centre

We faced this general idea during the workshop “Re-use Ragusa: Sustainable strategies to revive the city center” (which took place in September 2014), where six groups of students and PhDs coming from different European universities (Catania, Siracusa, Milan, Krakow, Potsdam, Dessau) dealt with the theme of regeneration of the historic center of Ragusa Superiore and, in particular, of the most dense and fragmented part of the built fabric (fig. 8), used mainly for dwellings. The designing proposals (fig. 9) pointed out the need of rationalizing the mobility and decomposing the undifferentiated grid of the plan in neighborhood unities, provided with their own services and with a inner network of pedestrian streets or controlled traffic zones. In the continuous mass of the built environment they imagined selective intervention of thinning in order to generate a system of small squares equipped with services for the residents citizens.
Figure 8. Ragusa Superiore workshop's locations

Figure 9. The 6 workshop’s urban design districts
The typological investigation on the residential unities suggested to study a possible unification and lightening of the volumes, in order to improve the living conditions, the inner enlightenment and ventilation. Moreover, it had been highlighted the need of reactivate the previous visual relationship between the city and its panoramic landscape view, compromised by the barrier of recent buildings which occlude the view to the wide valleys. Later, two master graduation thesis had experimentally studied further the theme of the regeneration of the densest fabric, proposing (Ragusa Diagonal) to engrave the planimetric grid with a diagonal sequence of small spaces connected between them by the exiting city grid and equipped by architectures of public service, and (Regenerating boundaries) the theme of the relationship between the city and the wide Santa Domenica valley, through selective intervention of reconstruction and re-use of some hardly degraded districts.
THE REAL CITY - THE MENTAL CITY

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Abstract

The search for relationships and dependencies between the real city and its mental image, may prove to be a key to understanding and reading the needs of the residents, primarily related to safety and comfort of living, as well as the location of places conducive to the development of social bonds. One of the important elements in the structure of a city is the public space. Reproduced on the mental maps, it is the most distinctive and recurring element in its image. Not adapted to new needs and neglected, it disintegrates the local community. Erased from memory, it leaves an empty space in the notional image of the city. Students from three Kraków-based universities have been dealing with the issue of the repair of public spaces (at the stage of creation of conceptual designs) for several years, forming interdisciplinary design teams made up of architects, interior designers, sociologists and aesthetes. Practical sociological studies are employed in order to create an image of the needs of the local inhabitants, which is then translated into design visions of various types of public spaces, conducive to the realization of their needs.

The real city

The real city is an intensely built-up space, which is to ensure safety and convenience for its residents. On the drawings of urban planners it is a colorful patchwork on which residential, industrial, commercial and green areas are marked with appropriate colors. On closer inspection it reveals its fabric, made up of the network of streets and thoroughfares, cutting through more or less densely concentrated urban layouts, depending on the distance from the historical center. An immanent feature of the city are the constantly occurring social processes
which unite or divide its people, forming social groups and their subsequent divisions, affecting the development of social identity. Social relations in cities are to a large extent built through public spaces. People began to recognize their positive effect on the mental health of the inhabitants and their emotional development. The beneficial properties of locations with which we can identify and which create lasting social bonds were noticed. The way in which a city is organized has a very big effect on the formation processes conducive to collectivization. As social beings, people have a natural need for such contacts, which they realize precisely in the social spaces of cities and residential estates. We cannot clearly define what defines sociopetal space, because its beneficial features consist of many elements, i.a. the quality of the surrounding architecture, its scale, furnishing as well as the aura of a place. However, the conscious creation of opportunities for the creation of such space already at the stage of planning and later its implementation, is an indispensable cultural landscape of contemporary cities. Like the streets, squares and buildings, they are one of the elements of the architectural structure on the real map of the city. They are a testament to the residents' community involvement. Since not all cities were designed by Scamozzi, in most of them the public spaces, like architecture and even parts of neighborhoods, constitute solutions which are more or less successful. In extreme cases, they become oppressive spaces. Effectively avoided or taken over by subcultures, they create a negative image of the city. As any other metropolitan area, Kraków is struggling with many problems, which make life more difficult for its inhabitants. Outside of communication problems and life-threatening levels of smog, the city has never devised a program for the repair of the existing public spaces, which are neglected and pushed to the sidelines of public priorities. In spite of their large potential, at present they are not places which are conducive to social activity, which constitute an element of territorial identity, so

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1 Vincenzo Scamozzi - a Venetian architect, who designed many completed churches, houses of wealthy families and even squares, but is primarily known for the project of a perfect city Palmanova, which was built in the Renaissance and survived to the present day in non altered form. The city is in a way very democratic, with streets of equal width, equal access to the one common public space - the hexagonal central square. It was fully defined even before its construction, with nothing left to chance, but also without room for development. This may constitute a reference to contemporary cities in Poland. The protection of not necessarily valuable historical heritage frequently leads to the consolidation of the spatial structure and the end of its development. A city has to develop for the good of its inhabitants, frequently giving up on the understandable sentiments in order to improve the quality of life. Perhaps Jacques Derrida was right, when he condemned the process of city planning, which has now been carried out for decades by the urban planners. He rejected their working methods aimed at the creation of a finished, all-encompassing work. He suggested that city planning should be guided by the principle of "incompleteness", which should include leaving unfinished fragments of the urban space, for those who will come after us. To give others the opportunity to build their own relationship with the city from scratch. He emphasized the role of formal aesthetic and cultural dialogue.

2 Oppressive spaces were the subject of interdisciplinary student workshops NOWA PRZESTRZEŃ 2014 (New Space 2014). Young people from three Kraków universities (Faculty of Interior Design of the Academy Of Fine Arts, Faculty of Architecture of the Kraków University of Technology and the Institute of Sociology, Department of Aesthetics of the Jagiellonian University) were looking for design solutions for selected places in Kraków, which were deemed ‘oppressive spaces’ according to their selection criteria as well as the feelings of the local inhabitants (which has been demonstrated in field studies). The designated places were characterized by great diversity, from underground passages, passages under road communication overpasses, all the way to the new and latest projects implemented in Kraków. All the projects executed by students during the workshops provided interesting solutions for the repair of small parts of the urbanized space. The works presented by the students are original and unconventional solutions, surprising with their ingenuity. Some look further into the future, because that is where the designer's imagination went. That is very important, as it is them who will decide the fate of their city in the future.
important especially in this era of increasing alienation of the modern city, resulting from the properties of our postmodern reality. "This does not mean that municipal authorities and the various institutions functioning within their structure aren't taking measures in order to both symbolically "recover" the urban space or create areas of meetings and dialogue, as well as to introduce attractive forms of participation in the processes of social life". The effect of the undertaken actions, however, is too small to constitute a visible improvement. It could be assumed that this state of affairs results from the utilization of proven methods for solving spatial problems by the municipal bodies established for that purpose, whose activities are based on models tested in the past. It looks as if the social and economic developments which had taken place after 1990 and which are still ongoing went unnoticed or were underestimated. "The individual elements of culture are changing: norms, values, beliefs, ways of communicating, symbols, material creations. New artistic currents emerge. All of these phenomena are to a greater or lesser extent reflected in the space ". One example of such changes is the Forum Przestrzenie (Spaces Forum) in Kraków, a modern-day cultural center, as described by the creators of the idea, consisting in the re-adaptation of the interior and the surroundings of the former building of the Forum Hotel, a symbol of the excellent modernist architecture of the second half of the 20th century. The Forum Hotel, along with the Cracovia Hotel and the famous "skeletor" building, are examples of bureaucratic obstructionism, every once in while becoming the pretext for stormy discussions, which end without concrete conclusions and are conducted to the detriment of the local inhabitants. The long-term presence of empty spaces around the Forum has distorted our visual perception, excluding it from our field of vision as a useless place. It would be a normal occurrence if this concerned the post-industrial parts of the city somewhere on the outskirts, but not in the very center of the city. This has been a sad, long-term experience. That is all the more reason why we should appreciate the initiative of young people for the revival of this place with a unique view of the Wawel Castle.

For young people, Forum Przestrzenie has become a brand, a place of meeting and dialogue involving various communities. The Forum is not an isolated phenomenon. The club and cafe organized in the former waiting room at the Warszawa Powiśle train station is a similar place. Its building is also an architectural treasure representing the public utility buildings of the 1960s, rescued from total ruin. Similar activities are also visible in Łódź, where such meeting places are emerging in the numerous buildings of the former textile factories. These and similar activities fit in with the Europe-wide trend of young people creating spaces for their own cultural and social activity. The Forum Przestrzenie in Kraków is one of the few examples of social activity, which is a reaction to the long-term inactivity of the municipal authorities. A distinctive point in the social space of the city has emerged, which fulfills the different needs of young people. It is all the more important in the case of Kraków, as the ongoing changes resulting from the natural development of the city, more and more frequently push native inhabitants outside the area of the strict city center, which is one of the major attractions in our country due to its unique

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4 Ibidem, p.259
architectural value. "The Main Square, one of the most important places, not only in the scale of the city or the cultural areas, remains a phenomenon of Kraków. However today, especially in the opinion of Kraków’s inhabitants, it is in danger of excessive commercialization and banalization associated with the subordination of its social functions to the demands of tourism". Hence the urgent need for both architects and urban planners to create new public spaces, conducive to the development of a sense of one’s distinctiveness. Forum Przestrzenie is the best example of that. "The structure of the urban space is created by built-up areas as well as undeveloped areas - empty areas, which include public spaces with different characteristics: formal, functional and compositional, but also with different levels and types of constraints: hard - buildings, and soft - green areas. In addition to material values, the spatial and social value of a public space is also determined by its cultural values and meanings which define identity". All these types, properly processed in our imagination, form the important fragments of the mental map, where that which is unnecessary or "unusable" is rejected, and that which constitutes a significant value, leaves a lasting mark in its image. This highly selective image, constructed through cognitive processes, psychosomatic and kinesthetic sensations, is also an image of emotions in contact with space, architecture and another man. Over the last eight years, during annual interdisciplinary workshops NOWA PRZESTRZEŃ, students from three Kraków-based universities (Academy Of Fine Arts, Kraków University of Technology and the Jagiellonian University) have studied Kraków’s public spaces in terms of their spatial, architectural and social value. They looked for design solutions for poorly maintained places, which were to restore the degraded space to the residents, thus enabling their use for all sorts of social activity. The designs mainly concerned city squares and little squares, streets and even places which - for a variety of reasons, but most due to neglect - have been deemed oppressive. The selection was diverse, but in many cases obvious, especially for the city’s inhabitants who drive by or walk by these places every day. Places deemed oppressive included all sorts of underground passages, walkways and passages under road overpasses, and in one case even a location within contemporary architecture. In several projects the students, somewhat intuitively, sought spatial solutions for the Vistula boulevards, which have for many years waited for ideas for their spatial and cultural development and organization, even though they are located in the center of the city. Kraków is one of the few Polish cities so ostentatiously turned away from the river, thereby squandering the extraordinary potential of the riverside areas. Their strength is best evidenced by the positive changes in the development of parts of the city on both sides of the river, which have occurred after the construction of the Father Bernatek footbridge. This clearly proves, that despite the construction of two new bridges and the aforementioned footbridge, there is still a need for the implementation of additional communication links between the southern and northern parts of the city.

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5 Ibidem, p.268
In spite of an architectural contest, the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology, which is one of the most interesting examples of contemporary architecture in Kraków, still does not have a connection with the opposite bank of the Vistula River. Surrounded by heavily congested streets, which hamper pedestrian traffic, it effectively discourages potential clients from visiting, despite the fact that it is located opposite the Wawel Royal Castle. Two student projects were connected to this particular location and presented solutions for the problem described above. And although these are difficult design matters even for experienced architects, the youth participating in the workshops approached them without fear. They demonstrated visions of their city in the future, but with respect to the location, considering that an important element of the project, and referring in this way to the important aspect of continuity of its historical development. They presented visions of a city in which they would like to live, learn, work, meet with friends and spend their free time. In their proposals for the new life of Kraków’s famous abandoned buildings they have appreciated the good modernist architecture of the Forum and Cracovia hotels, but also approached the subject in a very ambitious manner, moving beyond stereotypes and transforming both the buildings and their surroundings. In this way they manifested their own point of view. They are not interested in
architectural "corpses", because, as they say, they do not want to live in their shadow for the next twenty years. There may not be any genius loci, or the magic of these places, because, as noted by Professor Wojciech Kosiński from the Kraków University of Technology at an introductory lecture to the subsequent workshops, "the word magic is not fitting for science". However, the sites of both the Forum and Cracovia are important places in the structure of the city, partly because of the emotions and memories from the times when they were still operating.

Figure 2. Architectural transformation of public buildings and their surroundings

![Figure 2. Architectural transformation of public buildings and their surroundings](image)

Source: 1. Project for the reconstruction of the NOT office building (1), 2. Project for the reconstruction of the NOT office building (2), 3. New image of the Cracovia hotel building and its surroundings

A second group of solutions prepared by the interdisciplinary teams were projects for the creation of new public spaces, conducive to the crystallization of contacts between different social groups, age groups, ethnic groups etc. These designs show an image of a city with which their authors identify. The most apparent, however, is the desire to escape from the clichéd dwelling patterns. "New thinking shows that many people today are looking for architecture which could live up to our biological, sensual and motoric being-in-the-world much more than..."
any rational architecture". Heidegger warned against an excessively narrow understanding of phenomena. He indicated that dwelling becomes the ordinary occupation of the built-up space and ceases to be experienced as a way of being human. The superficial meaning wins with the deeper meaning and we don't pay attention, because we're used to the excessively scant instrumental understanding of things, devoid of the wealth of references. The reduced perception of the world is not innocent, however, it has its consequences. This idea can be related to the contemporary reading of the city, in which its continuous development is conducive to the creation of new spatial values alongside those already existing, often based on emotions, positively verified by time. This encourages us to discover once more its well-known parts, increasingly comfortable, utilizing all the modern means conducive to that end. "A man always develops his personality and develops physically in some spatial and social reality". Its continuity shapes the individual identity, constructed from events in this space, and local neighborly bonds. A city is a kind of palimpsest. "In order to be able to read space together, we need a community of experiences, that is memory and knowledge - our own, or secondary, passed to us by others. Memory and knowledge are the tools for reading the signs described by Ewa Rewers." Every time, by reading the city again, we create new entries in its mental image.

The mental city

The mental city, created by its inhabitants from their own thoughts. Full of concepts, associations, symbols and slogans. Made of logical structures conducive to spatial and social identification, and of the elements defined by Kevin Lynch in the mental map. A city which does not constitute an alternative to the real world. It is a collection of notions about the city, constructed from the values assigned to its elements which shape human behavior in space. "Each of us creates a mental map of the spaces where we roam. Everyone has their own, unique map. On this map we distinguish important places based on observation and experience. We usually create our map unwittingly, in the course of daily activities, and we only become aware of our relationship with some place in situations of questions or choices or if we are about to lose the ability to go to that place." The mental city also includes non-places, which in our mental image are unnecessary, evil and oppressive. They take the form of black spots effectively deprived of their physicality. They are, however, an important information for the real city, indicating places where spatial interference is necessary, creating a new important

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12 In "The image of the City" its author, Kevin Lynch, listed five key elements forming the mental image of the city: **landmarks** - identifiable points in space, **nodes** - strategic places such as squares, roundabouts, etc., **paths** - elements of communication, roads, streets, **edges** - boundaries between areas such as rivers, railways, highways, **districts** - two-dimensional areas, neighbourhoods, residential estates.
orientation point in its space. Kraków has many such places, avoided by its inhabitants, erased from memory. They are testimony to the social gridlock, ordinary incompetence or the lack of needs on the part of the residents. This mainly concerns public spaces, transport solutions as well as public utility buildings, which, as was already mentioned, are waiting for their second life, or a bold decision on their demolition. Modern computer technology, supported by interdisciplinary knowledge, allows us to create virtual solutions which should become an element of public consultation and an important element of architectural and urban planning education prior to their implementation.

Figure 3. Mental maps - the graphical image of the sociological analysis of a fragment of a city

Source: 1. Surroundings of the NOT office building, 2. Vistula boulevards near the Wawel Castle, 3. Surroundings of the Cracovia hotel

This is a good and effective method if done properly. Although the real city and the mental city exist in parallel spaces, they form a network of connections. The skillful reading of this network will not lead to the creation of an ideal city, but it could certainly improve the quality of life of its

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14 Figure no. 1 - prepared by the student design team: P. Dziedzic, K. Jania, W. Grzybikiewicz, M. Trystuła, M. Godlewski, A. Bartusiak, J. Reka.
Figure no. 2: A. Rusecka, A. Cencora, M. Sobolewska, P. Jaworska, A. Rokicka.
Figure no. 3: E. Jończyk, A. Przybycin, M. Leśniak, M. Straszak, M. Mańka, I. Pieklus, P. Gurgul.
inhabitants, and in the modern world that has a value which cannot be overestimated. A city is a spatial arrangement difficult to define, characterized by a multifaceted structure. The networks of connections are defined by scientists from different fields of knowledge. They all agree that the interpretation of the contemporary city is not the exclusive domain of urban planners and architects. In addition to the tangible constructs such as houses, streets and squares, there are also networks of urban infrastructure, described by Chmielewski as "a system of buildings and their supporting institutions, necessary for the proper functioning of a complex organism, which is the city". He includes within this group both the technical infrastructure (sanitation, energy, telecommunications), as well as the network of service infrastructure and even the municipal green areas. 15 The intangible networks of social relations and dependencies are closer to the considerations about the real and the mental city. "The adequate tool to describe urban communities is the network model, which in sociological terms is defined as any set of social objects (social actors) considered together with a certain system of social connections between them. 16 "The nature of the objects that make up the network can be very diverse. These can be human individuals, but also all sorts of social groups: small groups, families, clans, territorial communities, organizations 17. Analyzing in depth, we can also see network structures on the cultural, economic or professional plane. "All of these categories have a role in the transformation of the city from the classical polis into a new, difficult to define entity - the post-polis [Rewers, 2005]. One of its most characteristic features is the fact that informational social networks take over the role of the public sphere, replacing the classical agora and thus opening new possibilities for the co-government of cities" [Filip, 2015].18 This negative image of the city covered by an informational web is a consequence of globalization and the pace of modern life. It is a progressing phenomenon whose limits are difficult to predict.

The side effect of the transformation of the urban community through the possibilities of modern information technology are antisocial tendencies and alienation. There is a decreased need for integration and being together and direct interpersonal contacts are being replaced with video content on one's smartphone. Despite the fact that Polish cities are constantly transforming their image, there is still a perceptible deficit of public spaces, which would ensure conditions conducive to meetings and conversation. Their absence is strongly felt especially in new residential estates. The fact that housing developments are designed in such a poor way, in times when so much is said about the need for sustainable urban development, unfortunately shows the strength of the developer lobby at all levels of the local government administration. One sad symbol of the remedial programs created by both sociologists and architects is the bench - because due to its size, it is the only item which can fit in somewhere between the rubbish bin and the only tree still remaining in the area. Another negative phenomenon, distorting the development of social bonds and repeatedly condemned in the public debate, is

the process of appropriation of the common spaces such as sidewalks, roads and places of recreation, which has been going in Polish cities for a long time. One example is the phenomenon of fencing off residential buildings or groups of buildings, under the excuse of improving security. The paradox of such activities is the possibility of negative social behaviors emerging in the long term, wherein the common public space of the city is treated as a private property. While care for one's safety is understandable, the creation of entire parts of the city without the possibility of passing or driving through is not. The ability to move freely around the city is one of the basic advantages of urban areas. The real city is a very complex creation and the effects of any restrictions tear down its intricate structure. The networks of connections succumb to defragmentation, creating empty spaces. We lose the letters from the alphabet of the city's narrative, which enables us to make sense of the city and to understand the logic behind its structure. "The meaning of cities can be impossible to read, imperfect, but this does not mean that it doesn't exist. Maybe we're just dealing with a new type of illiteracy, a new type of blindness." The effectiveness of interventions aiming to fix the errors and excesses in its spatial structure depends on the time of reaction and the expertise. The pace of the activities is dictated by a progressing acceptance of the facts, even the bad ones, or the increasing indifference justified by the low effectiveness of actions of individuals. In turn, the constantly changing social needs require professionalism from the policy makers responsible for meeting them.

**Interdisciplinary solutions**

Over the past eight years, during the subsequent NOWA PRZESTRZEŃ workshops, students have prepared dozens of conceptual designs, visualizing a substantial part of Kraków. They created a virtual map of "their own" city, filling the empty spaces in its digital representation with elements created in their imagination. The presented solutions can be divided into ones that could be implemented and ones that are not realistic, which enter the space of academic science-fiction. The result is an extensive reference material, which provides a very convenient starting point for discussions among the residents concerning the future of their city. It focuses on the most important problems recognized by the future architects, interior designers, sociologists and aestheticians, which concern the public spaces and, what's important, it contains solutions for their repair. The issue of the selected places and spaces is remarkably well placed for such an interdisciplinary approach.

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"Every time has the right and the responsibility to create its own space. The space of a city is agreed upon by its users here and now. It is agreed upon in the framework and on the basis of the existing state. However, the existing state is transformed, new meanings and a new identity are ascribed to it by a new generation of creators - writers ". It is difficult to discuss space without its users, without an analysis of the context of architecture, urban planning, social relations. Kraków is a sentimental city, strongly connected with the past, cultivating traditions. But it is also a city open to new challenges. Annual discussions with the residents during the organized exhibitions of student works in the city’s largest exhibition rooms are the best testimony to that. The ability to freely travel throughout Europe, which is the consequence of entry to the European Union, has resulted in social education. Today everyone can see how western cities look, how they function, and how their residents live. This positive voyeurism results in an increase in the aspirations of the inhabitants of Polish cities, who want to live an equally comfortable, safe and modern life. That's why the design solutions presented by the

 Source: 1. Bridge connecting the Wawel Royal Castle with the Manggha Museum of Japanese Art and Technology, 2. Space of encounters and dialog between the banks, 3. Bridge of various fields of social activity

20 Figure no. 1 - prepared by the student design team: A. Nowicka-Antosik, A. Podżorska, T. Bosak, A. Daleska S. Kulik, M. Jania, Figure no. 2: M. Kozłowska, W. Tylec, M. Matraszek, M. Niepokój, B. Hardek, A. Pelczar, Figure no. 3: P. Zwolsk, B. Oziębło, M. Lach, M. Bajor, S. Depa, M. Klemczak,

students were so keenly approved of by the visitors representing different age groups, as they partly fit in with their notions of their own better city. The positive responses of the elderly were particularly pleasing. This is all the more important, as in the era of the progressive ageing of virtually all European countries the improvement of life in the city becomes an obligatory task for all actors involved in the process of its expansion and development.

Figure. Reconfiguration of the existing public spaces

The valorization of public spaces, especially in the ongoing transformation of cities, seems to be a necessary activity. Entered anew onto the mental maps, they will extend their logical schemes and networks of connections. A city is a comprehensive spatial environment where architecture, nature and society create a balanced structure of dependencies and links. "Architecture also fulfills an artistic function, because it provides aesthetic and emotional experiences, satisfies the need for beauty ...".

Source: 1. Wolnica Square, 2. Intersection of Karmelicka Street/Podwale Street, 3. Square at Brzozowa Street

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22 Figure no. 1 - prepared by the student design team: M. Bachula, M. Izdebska, K. Walczak, A. Mikutowicz, J. Szalkowska, Figure no. 2: A. Korzeniowska, H. Albertusiak, J. Sarota, K. Rychter, K. Becelewska, A. Zapała, Figure no. 3: D. Kurek, J. Cocerovscaia, A. Chechelska, K. Mitenkova, A. Stefańska, E. Lekka

An exhibition presenting the student projects executed during the NOWA PRZESTRZEŃ interdisciplinary workshops will be organized during the 11th International Congress CTV. The exhibition will present design solutions for the repair of Kraków’s public spaces as well as conceptual designs of new locations, prepared in response to the social demand. The works have been executed by design teams consisting of the students of the Faculty of Architecture of the Tadeusz Kościuszko Kraków University of Technology, the Faculty of Interior Design of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków and the students of the Institute of Sociology and the Department of Aesthetics of the Faculty of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University. The organizers of the workshops are: PhD Beata Gibala-Kapecka Professor of the Academy of Fine Arts and Doctor of Architecture Tomasz Kapecki (Kraków University of Technology).

References

CITY AS A WORK OF ART

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Abstract
Impressional and comparative reflection about the existence and the operation of selected cities in a context of their unique aesthetics and beauty, by a painter, draftsman and designer, the chancellor of the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow. A description of a direct experience of the city seen as an open work of art, specific in its structural complexity both in its material and spiritual atmosphere.

The common and widespread association of works of art comes with the automatic adoption of its dimensions, measurements, size. The last parameter here is more ambiguous, because it may also specify the work as outstanding and of priceless artistic value. What I am interested in, in this case, is the material scale of the object, an artifact, which we rather associate with dimensions - when it comes to painting, graphics and sculpture - from a few centimeters to five or even tens of meters in length or a few centimeters or tens of meters in height. Let me give you an example: historical paintings of Jan Matejko (up to 10 meters in length), "Panorama Racławicka" by Jan and Wojciech Kossak (the image has a total length of 114 m and height of 15 m, which occupies 1,800 sq. m of fabric), the famous "Guernica" by Pablo Picasso (size 3.5 by almost 8 meters) or even the paintings of considerable dimensions by the twentieth-century hyper-realists (eg Franz Gertsch and Chuck Close), or a huge installation, presented in the Grand Palais in Paris entitled the "Leviathan" (height: 35 meters) by the British sculptor, Anish Kapoor. Scaling up also applies to everyday objects, such as matches or chairs. There are, circulating in public, works such as the 5 meter matches by prof. Anthony Porczak of the Academy of Fine Arts and the chair by Tadeusz Kantor, the world-renowned creator of the theater of death, exhibited in the urban space in Wrocław, with a height of 9 meters!

One needs to remember the sculptures of considerable size, the outdoor ones too, with a clear example of the carved stone heads of the Olmecs in Mexico, the heads of volcanic tuff on the Easter Island (the largest measures approx. 21 m height), the "Statue of Liberty" in New York (46.5 m in height, and together with the base 93 m), the great statue of Christ towering over Rio de Janeiro (30 m in height), even higher statue of Christ the King in Swiebodzin in Poland (33 m in height) or the heads of four US presidents carved in stone rock on Mount
Rushmore, South Dakota (each with busts of presidents measures 18 meters in height, and the whole monument covers an area of 5 square kilometers).

Most of the works of art, however, are relatively small, tailored to the scale of human perception and reception, the proportion of architecture, to be experienced and observed in a public space, including the space among the buildings of the city. Work of art therefore is an object that could be located in a closet, a room, assembly hall, a mausoleum, a church, a palace, museum hall, airport hall, conference auditorium, and outside, in the open space, in a courtyard, square, street, along the avenue, in the market area, in a park, amphitheater, on a hill, at the top of the mountain, and the more surprising places ... Taking into account just the urban space there’s little doubt that almost every architectural building in every town or a spatial object of any particular use can sometimes be a work art ... Among them are outstanding and brilliant works, and so it can be the case, with the great and giant cities of the world, in all their structural complexity...

Among the examples of spaces where we can meet with a located work of art, I include the smaller components of the city such as: squares, plazas, streets, avenues, parks, etc., and thus, I found myself in a bit of a dilemma. The work of art can be found in every part of the city, also within the architecture, but the city itself, in all its complexity and under the open sky, can it be a work of art ...? Well ... I do not think that anyone would deny that!

Cities - especially those inconceivably fast-growing, the multimillion giants - are, in their structurally bound urban planning, great works of art created during the turbulent centuries by succeeding generations developing the creative thought of their predecessors!!! The city, as a giant work of art is a remarkable, very complex and complicated topic to grasp and describe, and this involves of course, one of the most powerful archetypes of the human condition, namely the instinctive need to live in the cluster, a joint settlement, village, town, metropolis, a multimillion giant as well. The first justification for the people’s desire to settle initially in a limited space - is the need for security, the common multiplying of the quality of life and social luxury, the establishment of services and the relative proximity of the commercial, cultural spheres and areas, or those facilitating travel (eg. railway stations, airports). Not without significance here is also the different, somewhat opposite archetype: the need for a change of place, the environment, the mobility between cities, which is associated with the myth of traveling and travel, mystical pilgrimage, satisfying curiosity through learning about other cultures and civilizations, discovering new lands and new living spaces. The city seems to be the essence of civilization and expansive efforts in a given era. The great conqueror of the ancient world, Alexander the Macedonian, established the cities (several of Alexandrias) in the large areas he took over and let them grow into orgiastic mix of nationalities and races. Alexander the Great didn’t generally destroy the culture and beauty of the conquered Babylon, nonetheless he burned Persepolis, the capital of the Persian Empire from the sixth century BC. But, as history of his life had shown, he had to constantly gain new spaces and cultivate the trade of war. On the back of his horse and with his sword in hand he probably won more territories than Adolf Hitler in the twentieth-century era of rapid progress of science and industry development. Each of these and other totalitarian conquerors took over the cities, because they were a symbol of concentration of everything that was the best and most valuable
in the country! Saladin, besieging and capturing Jerusalem, when asked what it is for him, instinctively replied "nothing", then quickly he turned to the Christian defenders of the city and said, "everything."

When briefly describing and comparing the selected cities as giant works of art, I will rely mostly on my own sensations, which I experienced when entering by bus or plane into those cities, living in them and walking around them. There are other wonderful cities in the world in which I have not been, and which can not be neglected because of their undeniable artistic and historical value. They are, in their complex body, packed with architectural masterpieces of art and collections of masterpieces found in the great museums and art galleries. My travels took me, in North America, to: Toronto, Montreal, Chicago, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, in Europe to: Paris, London, Amsterdam, Munich, Nuremberg, Vienna, Prague, Budapest, Venice, Florence, Rijeka, Trogir, Dubrovnik, Kotor, the small Bardejov in Slovakia. I still have ahead of me a travel to Jerusalem, Istanbul and Shenzhen, to the beautifully situated towns in the Swiss Alps. Among the Polish cities I should mention the charms of Wrocław, Gdańsk, Toruń and Kraków, but only because of their picturesque old towns, a tastefulness of their centers and the specific genius loci. The world is big, vast and sometimes difficult to reach, but today you can get almost anywhere quickly. Compared to the high mountains and the cavernous depths of the seas and oceans, cities are tumultuous, colorful and vivid. They hold many temptations, attractions and comforts. It also seems that they are safer and more interesting, more volatile and colorful, they satisfy human, individual and social needs. They guarantee a quick exchange of services, up to date information, popularization of different values and the broadcast of affairs. It is easier to grow artistically in the city and to organize the conditions to create works of art, play sports, and secure yourself against the dangers of direct contact with nature and exposure to the elements. Cities are gigantic works of art, built with an effort of human hands as a result of development, in order to tame and subdue the space to suit human needs. We feel safer in a cluster, of course, only to some extent, because the syndrome of loneliness can get to us even in densely populated areas, as within the Internet, with its millions of connections. Paradoxically, hidden in separate segments of the intimate and private space, we have close at hand all things social and accumulated over the years, like a book in a home library. We have at hand almost everything, but is it not, in some sense, an illusion, an effect that is called a "growth trap" by sociologists today. But can we fully revive the urban space and live in it with the emotional intensity and fulfillment, that can be creative and fortunate, safe and comfortable, stable and enabling a dignified living? Will we not, in a maze of buildings and streets, discover our loneliness and confusion ...? Let me remind you the first sentence of my speech: scale, scale-up, merciless expansion, and external circumstances of various kinds, such as: invasions, natural disasters, migration, climate change, that throughout the history of mankind broke down the development of many powerful and expansive cities! Sometimes, after millennia, centuries and now, these
lost and forgotten cities are being re-discovered, among them: Troy, Petra, Machu Picchu, Pompeii, Carthage, Mohenjo Daro, Tikal, Palenque, ...

Considering the gigantic spaces of big cities raises questions about their origins, the reasons for their creation, expansion, total development and prosperity. What is that great visionary and long-term task at the beginning, for the founders and developers, architects and builders of cities? It seems that the answer is simple, but not so easy to execute in reality: it takes to integrate the consciously designed architectural agglomeration in the natural open space, a work that is continued in the following years and centuries by other architects and builders. Cities - are often located on both sides of the bed of a large river, on the shores of seas and lakes, on islands, on hills, below the peaks of the mountains and on their slopes, on flat terrain stretching to the horizon and beyond. The mentioned Tikal and Palenque - Mayan cities in Guatemala, suddenly abandoned by the Indian population, overgrown and entangled by the trees and branches of wild bush. One of the wonders of the world: the stone and stepped Machu Picchu left by the Incas in the Peruvian Andes at an altitude of almost 2.5 thousand meters above the sea level. The sunken cities of mythical Atlantis, the discovered prehistoric cities of Troy, Petra, extorted from mythology and memory, the recently discovered City of Jaguar in the rainforest on the border between Honduras and Nicaragua in Central America. Cityscapes are a common theme in the works of painters. Let me just remind us: the fantastic cities in the pictures of the naive artist Nikifor of Krynica or the mystical blocks of flats and churches in the paintings by Jerzy Nowosielski, the houses in Vienna fabulously painted by the artist Hundertwasser... Ghost cities, giants, poetic villages, forts, ports and monastery complexes, working-class districts, designed globally, as for example the mining Nikiszowiec in the early twentieth century, near Katowice. I have seen various cities with my own eyes, admired their natural location and how they fit the landscape surrounding them: a tiny, medieval Trogir - made with light stone on the Croatian island, situated between the mainland and the Ciovo Island. Montenegrin Kotor, situated on the wonderful Bay of Kotor, attached to the steep slope. Venice - drenched from all sides by water, flooded by the sea, with gondolas and carnival masks, with a wonderful church of St. Mark. Paris - with the smell of cookies in the subway, stunning art collections in the Louvre, with the hill Montemartre and the white Sacre Couer somehow hovering above the city, and in the opposite direction with an iron Eiffel Tower. Amsterdam - cut by the canals, with the tenements like small pieces of furniture. Dubrovnik - in its fortified character, defending itself from invasions of foreign armies from the side of the Adriatic Sea. Vienna - with its architectural structure of centuries, a little heavy in its old buildings, with a golden ball of the House of the Vienna Secession, but reminding me that Sarah Brightman, with her miraculous voice, sang there in the Gothic Cathedral of St. Stephen, one of the most beautiful concerts. American giant cities: New York with Manhattan, where I heard from Piotr Skrzyniecki: "Let's get out of here. This is the Tower of Babel", and Los Angeles, admired by me at night from the a top of a hill, flat, illuminated with thousands of lights, as an airstrip for interplanetary spacecrafts on an alien planet. I watch the cities and explore them with open senses. I admire the location, the planning concept as a whole, individual buildings and small details. I enter the interiors of palaces, temples, museums, residences. Airports, train
stations, stadiums, amphitheaters, parks, squares, courtyards, narrow streets in Trogir and stone gaps in the tiny fishing village of Betina on the Murter island in Croatia ...

I am getting closer to the next town, coming in by plane, by a bus, by a car, on the bike, I am coming on foot. I look around. Cities and towns in Switzerland, England, Germany, Spain, France, are designed with a lot of taste, structural and functional thought, buildings designed and built in beautiful proportions, structures, walls and roofs in harmony with the environment, landscape, terrain, the vast horizon. What interests me, however, is being in the city center, walking around it, watching, breathing the city, its atmosphere, saturating myself with the view and the perspective of the streets, with the beauty of temples, palaces, museums and houses, with the decay of the old defensive walls and gates. This is how I visited Paris, Amsterdam, Florence, Venice, Dubrovnik, Trogir, Split, Kotor, Budva, Prague, Nuremberg, Munich, Vienna, Lvov, Bardieojv, Nin, Kazimierz by the Vistula River and many other cities and towns ... But it was always the return to Krakow that allowed me to sense this unique atmosphere, the magic, the genius loci of the city, which I dreamed about as a child and which I can sense with my eyes closed. When I was a student (in 1977-1982) in my mind Paris decidedly competed with Krakow, but it lost, and cities unknown become a source of constant desire to reach them. The need to travel and explore new lands and beautiful towns became the permanent hunger boosting the greedy intensity of life. So which of the thousands of beautiful cities should I choose now, where should I go? I decided on the idea of the oldest cities in the world, but those that are thousands years old! Are they still accessible? I learned quickly, by connecting my curiosity with the knowledge stored in the cloud online. It is, after all, among others: Athens and Argos in Greece, Jerusalem in Israel, Plovdiv in Bulgaria, Damascus and Aleppo in Syria, Jericho in Palestine, Cadiz in Spain, Luoyang in China and Yazd, Sidon and Byblos in Iran, as well as the approximately 3.5 thousand years old, inexplicably filled with radioactive rays, Mohenjo-Daro in Pakistan.

The cities, and their districts, sometimes different from the rest, originated from the pragmatic need of organizing social life and identity of single human being, a social unit, and even the state, because there existed throughout the history the state - cities. The entire material and defensive infrastructure, and the complex web of social relations, the exchange of potentials and continuous possibilities of enrichment in a condensed area meant the more rapid development and facilitated communication. Professional communities and groups, institutions, offices, housing estates, public buildings, museums, hotels, concert halls, theaters, railway stations, airports, stadiums, parks - were initially established in a relatively small area. The close distances allowed for intensive use of the luxury of the entirety of urban facilities, both architectural and social. With time, the cities grew to unimaginable scale and size, and nowadays we have more than 30 and 20 million giants: Tokyo in Japan (approx. 32.5 million inhabitants), Delhi in India (approx. 21.9 million), Mexico City in Mexico (approx. 20.1 million), New York in the US (approx. 20.1 million), Shanghai in China (approx. 19.6 million), Sao Paulo in Brazil (o. 19.6 million) ... about 15 million people live in Beijing and Shenzhen in China, Dhaka in Bangladesh, Calcutta in India, Buenos Aires in Argentina, Los Angeles in the USA, Mumbai in India. However when asked about the unusual, most beautiful cities, wonderful masterpieces to be built and blooming for hundreds of years thanks to the great
architects and builders, most of the travelers will point to the famous and unique: Venice, Paris, Amsterdam, Bern, Cadiz, San Francisco, Dubrovnik, Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo, Istanbul, and the charming in their small scale, provincial towns, poetic gems, such as Bardejov in Slovakia, Trogir and Motovun in Croatia, Manarola in Italy in Liguria, Krumlov in the Czech Republic, Kotor in Montenegro and many many other beautiful and specifically small architectural wonders fitted with mastery to the natural environment, the terrain, by generations of eminent architects - artists ...

To summarize my impression-like reflections on the cities - works of art, merely outlining the issues, I ask the question: what decides, which components determine that the city in all its gigantic complexity and openness is a work of art? From the point of view of a painter and a pilgrim to various cities to experience primarily artistic sensations, the basic element seems to be, first of all: the adapting of buildings to the conditions of the natural environment, incorporation of designed objects to the architectural landscape and the creative clash or harmonization with the character of the natural area, the chosen location. The second element is: the concept of the urban planning as a whole. The third - spatial, functional and aesthetic relations, between individual components, such as single buildings, special buildings towering over the city, temples, centers called the markets, avenues, streets, parks, squares, courtyards around and inside the tenements. If all this presents a high artistic level and is incorporated in an attractive environment - then such a city is an obvious work of art, in addition one moving in time, constantly supplementing its component parts, thus being a great architectural and natural organism, changing smoothly and uniquely, just as human life ...

To conclude, I will present to you, in a Cracovian way, a poetic text describing the Sydney Opera House, seen through the eyes of the unforgettable Marek Grechuta. It is a description of the world-famous architectural object, seen in the artist's imagination in a unique and special way:

**OPERA W SYDNEY (Sydney Opera House)** a song by **Marek Grechuta**

Jakby wypłynął nagle, bezszelestnie w wietrze  
Na ciemnej fali migocącej w światłach miasta  
Statek o żaglach w wielkich muszlach, metr po metrze  
Zbliżał się do mnie, wyobraźnię mą przerastał

Muszle szumiały echem pięknej kantyleny  
W żaglach trzepotał jeszcze powiew entuzjazmu  
A ja słyszałem gdzieś w oddali śpiew syreny  
To był hymn duszy oderwanej od marazmu

Ja nie widziałem nigdzie w świecie takiej zjawy
A przecież wiele miejsc na ziemi z piękna słynie
Zamykam oczy i zasypiam bez obawy
Bo ten żaglowiec z mej pamięci nie odpłynie

The longer I am involved in art, the more interested I become in what could be left by the prehistoric and ancient civilizations thousands of years ago. I am fascinated by their culture and art, architecture, scientific achievements, knowledge of the universe, their approach to the absolute, to the elements of life and the mystery of death. However, the modern, giant cities - the works of outstanding technology and ideas, the unlimited creativity and imagination of architects - evoke no less awe and admiration ... Therefore, to all the great architects and builders of human civilization and cities I dedicate my briefly written, modest admiration, tribute and the highest appreciation...