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**Aleksandra Kunce**

# **A Place that Invites Dwelling and Reconciliation Back: On the Anthropology of a Post-Industrial Place**

## **1. A place whose existence is closely connected with the idea of dwelling**

What is a post-industrial place? By striving to take root, we do not wish to celebrate shapeless space; we are instead willing to identify it as a place and home, even if it seems to be evading our attempt at positioning. To focus on the post-industrial *place*, and not space, is to locate it in the context of oikology,<sup>1</sup> a unique way of knowing that treats the *oikos*, home, as a task and commitment confronting a human being. This oikological knowledge allows us to think again in terms of the gravity and discipline

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<sup>1</sup> Oikology is a recent coinage that refers to the unique cultural experience of the inhabitants of Silesia (a borderland in Central Europe, currently in Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic, and differently distributed across history) and the region's peculiar narrative of home and dwelling.

behind the idea of a place as home without toying with the notion of dictatorship or ill-conceived familiarity. There would be no dwelling without the fissures and gaps that make home discontinuous and open. When Martin Heidegger in his 1951 lecture calls for the re-examination of the relationship between dwelling and building, he makes a case for a greater recognition of home: “To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell. The old word *bauen*, which says that man *is* insofar as he *dwells*, this word *bauen* however *also* means at the same time to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for, specifically to till the soil, to cultivate the vine.”<sup>2</sup>

This admonition is phrased at a far remove from the dominant narrative of utility; instead, it highlights fissures, cracks and whatever undermines the sense of homeliness. By pointing to the connection between the activity of taking care (*colere, cultura*) and erecting an edifice (*aedificare*), it leads to the discovery or rediscovery of the essence of dwelling: “Man’s relation to locations, and through locations to spaces, inheres in his dwelling.”<sup>3</sup>

The Heideggerian conclusion that “[mortals] *must ever learn to dwell*”<sup>4</sup> should be conceived as an ever repeated call that has already become distorted. The distortion is especially significant with respect to the experience of a place as home, and even more so with respect to the experience of a place which has become distanced by the very use of “post-,” as in the case with a post-industrial place. Our dwelling, no longer offering permanent residence, being in fact more of temporary abode, remains a commitment that binds being, place, home and taking root.

In this investigation of the meanings of “post-,” the oikological mind would find some hope for the imminent return of the experience of emplacement and the notion of home. This is an immense task for our restless, information-laden and cybernetic times: to discover anew the

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<sup>2</sup> M. Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and introduction A. Hofstadter, New York: Harper Perennial 2001, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 159.

importance of our attachment to a place which is not just a visible and palpable material scene but a complex reality which unfolds in us as an attachment to the landscape, to things in our environment, to the experience of the communal and private ways of being, to the unique quality of culture and to the metaphysics of our inhabiting and embodying concrete notions of time and space, necessity and contingency, essence of things, freedom and commitment and so on.

## **2. A place that has been hit by a sandstorm**

A sense of living in the post-industrial times marked by the presence of the services that make us live among other people is the reason why, as Daniel Bell puts it, we “live more and more outside nature, and less and less with machinery and things.”<sup>5</sup> At stake in retreating from this position is something much more profound – the restoration of the experience and uneasy knowledge related to the post-industrial place. Former factories, mines, steel plants, commodity exchanges and goods stations appear both to lure and bother us. They have been converted into something else: a museum, a heritage park, an art gallery, a café, a meadow, a path on the tourist trail, a golf course, a loft apartment, a terrain redesigned for sports or other cultural activities, or a lost-in-space and abandoned monument of industrial architecture. It looks as if a sandstorm had surged through, burying the place together with the previous experience of a human mass who once lived there in the disciplined way by humbly following the rhythm of work and rest within the allotted time and striving to persist, endowed with a sense of responsibility for the communal work, and with an understanding of the need for planned solutions and routine activities being performed with high precision, day in day out.

Business and military empires are based on the sense of service and devotion. There is also a lot of suffering behind them, yet the story of

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<sup>5</sup> D. Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, New York: Basic Books 1976/1978, p. 148.

a plant has never been that of individual fulfilment translatable into self-congratulation. Fulfilling one's duties was closely connected to the sense of communal being of those who had come to the centres of civilization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to factories, steel plants and mines, in order to experience the urban way of living, its freedom and prosperity – though defined otherwise than today. Fulfilling one's obligation was ultimately understood as the service in the place and for the place, a notion extended to include one's plant, home, environment, landscape and region. This obligation, due to politics and capital management, sometimes turned into slave labour for the property owner, family, state or ideology, but these larger references were somehow less significant than the everyday commitment to the place and home, to what was immediate and close at hand.

Owing to the addition of the “post-,” post-industrial places have been restored from social oblivion. After the sandstorm has surged through, after the hustle and bustle of factories has long been silenced, after the former rhythm of the place has all been forgotten, the stumps of the previous life-experience are starting to protrude from post-industrial places. And these are the places that always remain bruised and inert, even though they seem to flourish again with tourist life and impress us with their design, as in Essen, Ostrava or Zabrze. Strolling through the new lustrous museums and tacky shopping centres, built on the territories of former large industrial facilities, one may ponder for a moment how easy it is to reach their hidden substratum, which is the sense of an end, also an end to being-at-home. Are we thus destined to view a mere spectacle of posthumous existence, following the end of what was once so carefully raised and cultivated? Or can the post-industrial places be inhabited anew?

### **3. A place that has to be transformed into a symbol**

To make a post-industrial place inhabitable again, what is needed is a distanced look at and renewed experience of the factory – if we allow

the notion to encompass not only former production and steel plants, but also mines, railway, goods station, and commodity exchanges: all the areas that once contributed to the making of the industrial epoch in our history. It is thus essential to render the former factory symbolic, to relate to the idea anew, to regain the sense of being part of something great again. Scattered somewhere in space, strolling around, encountering or passing other people, in passages and flows, we discover again that what invigorates our being is the gravity of the place. Having replaced the gravity of things with immaterial services, knowledge and information, we suddenly realize that we are in need of a palpable material scene.

The loss of a machine means a painful loss of the sense of materiality. We always gravitate towards some place even if it seems to be evanescent, ever moving or flowing. We need the force of gravitation. In this way we feel that we again keep our feet on the ground. The post-factory, construed as the space of a former factory that has been subject to material, functional and experiential transformation, would be such a place that brings to us back a lost sense of gravity. It does so not just by redescribing and redefining the former plant – which may not be serious enough – but by bringing the place back to our experience, by recovering its palpable presence in that it makes us repeat some movements, put our feet on the very ground, touch the machines, fill the space with our activity and inhabit anew the idea that we have just called into being. The post-factory is an already transformed experience that still pervades us and an idea that we wish to relate to in order to make it inhabitable.

As Juhani Pallasmaa reminds us, architecture locates us in space and time by operating at a human scale: “It domesticates limitless space and endless time to be tolerated, inhabited and understood by humankind.”<sup>6</sup> In relation to the architecture of houses or cathedrals we have no difficulty

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<sup>6</sup> J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and the Senses*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons 2005, p. 17.

in connecting the form of a building to a sense of home. Yet we may have more difficulty with reference to the spatial coordinates of former factories, despite their sometimes elaborate functional designs. It may seem that their purpose was not to make us feel at home, as they were mainly aimed at producing profit. If we have a closer look, though, we will observe that behind the operation of factories there was a notion of connecting a human being to a place, which found its expression in the fit between the architecture and the place, in the activity of shaping the environing space of working-class residential areas and public buildings used every day by the local community (such as railway stations, schools, hospitals, department stores, post-offices, shops, gardens, parks, restaurants, inns, bath houses and laundries), but also in sharing the responsibility for the place bestowed upon people geographically and historically by shaping the common way of living, the place's cultural imaginary and its repertoire of aesthetic and moral values. The factory is not just about architecture and urban planning, it is a complex cultural reality that is able to produce motion, to usher in new behaviour and thinking, to impose meanings, to establish social relationships, to connect and separate people, things and localities, and to introduce some principles of coexistence, or the art of living, by teaching the discipline of staying in the place. The factory embraces people and binds them to itself even though they may be dimly aware of this overarching framework.

We turn to the post-factory having undergone an essential transformation which has removed us from the industrial experience. We make an effort to forge a bond with what is distant and even already alien to us. We perceive the post-factory not just as an area which has been subject to ongoing erosion but also as a factor in redeeming our sense of being-at-home in space and time at the moment when our home and our memory are at risk. The post-factory allows us to understand who we are to escape the formlessness of the incessant flow of reality and its evanescence. Wandering around the space of a former factory, present experiences mingle with past images, photographs, family stories, press

reports and radio broadcasts. In the post-factory memory and imagination have been coupled. Reminiscences and evocations, acts of creating and conjuring up the past constantly contribute to the erection of this immense place which is filled with our presence but also maintained by the mighty framework of a former plant. There is no possibility of unfounded experience here. In the post-factory we find a solid foundation by looking into the depths.

#### **4. A place where we look into the depths of experience – only to find out that we are in the familiar post-industrial Europe**

There are many useful activities that stem from penetrating the depths of experience – one of them consists in following the Industrial Monuments Route, which documents the culture of industrial heritage and creates links between monuments, values, industrial art and the art of living. The Industrial Monuments Route in the Silesian province was the only such route in Central and Eastern Europe to become, in 2010, part of the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH).<sup>7</sup> This tourist and cultural trail connects industrial facilities associated with the industrial heritage and is a well-recognized tourist brand, as its originators write on the project's official website.<sup>8</sup> It presents the facilities related to mining and steel industry, power and textile industry, railroading, telecommunications, water management and food industry. Former industrial facilities very often amount to real works of art, like the 1806 metallurgical buildings of Königshütte (Royal Steel Plant),

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.erih.net>. Currently the European route is made up of eighteen regional trails (one in Austria, eleven in Germany, one in Holland, one in Spain, three in Great Britain, and one in Poland – Upper Silesia). The European trail includes 1410 post-industrial facilities, with 74 located in Poland [information obtained on July 14, 2017].

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.zabytkitechniki.pl/Pokaz/27320/opis-szlaku> [accessed April 10, 2017].



where the elements of Gothic style can easily be spotted and which, as Henryk Waniek puts it, could be assumed to be a palace or abbey were it not for the smoke. The same applies to other industrial facilities to be observed on the photographs featuring landscape views of Silesia produced throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Reiden & Knippel lithographic company in Schmiedeberg (currently Kowary): “Steel plants, mines and other facilities were all modelled on medieval strongholds or temples.”<sup>9</sup>

The trips recommended as part of the Industrial Monuments Route, which help people rediscover post-industrial places in Tarnowskie Góry,<sup>10</sup> Bytom or Gliwice, are aimed at raising the inhabitants’ and visitors’ awareness of the richness and variety of the region but also at expanding their receptivity to the civilizational and ethical values behind the industrial places. Referring to another such place, Liverpool, similarly based on the foundation of industrial revolution, Erik Bichard wrote that it is vital to pay attention to “the innovative way in which Liverpool has used its legacy of culture and celebration to help visitors and its own population rediscover the value of the city.”<sup>11</sup> From our perspective, however, something more important and deeper is at stake – the narrative of the city becomes transcended by the story of the region and home, one that is truly receptive to cultural values.

Looking at the recommendations offered by the Route we can for example choose the 68-kilometre trail by following in the footsteps of two eminent architects, the cousins Emil and George Zillmann, who carried

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<sup>9</sup> H. Waniek, *Rozszarpany krajobraz* [A Landscape Torn Apart], *Fabryka Silesia*, no. 3 (5), 2013, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> In 2017, 28 facilities in Tarnowskie Góry were included in the UNESCO’s World Heritage List – these are lead, silver and zinc mines together with the underground water management system in Tarnowskie Góry. Post-industrial buildings of Tarnowskie Góry joined the UNESCO sites of the Royal Salt Mine in Wieliczka (entry in 1978) and in Bochnia (entry in 2013).

<sup>11</sup> E. Bichard, ‘Liverpool: Case Study,’ in: *Remaking Post-Industrial Cities: Lessons from North-America and Europe*, ed. Donald K. Carter, New York & London: Routledge 2016, p. 152.

out most of their projects in Upper Silesia. The route includes: the District Disability Health Care Unit in Rokitnica (established in 1902–1904, since 1948 part of the Silesian Medical Academy), the buildings of two mines based in Gliwice: Sośnica and KWK Gliwice, the latter also housing the Branch of the Artistic Casting Museum, the workers' housing estate called Giszowiec, a unique settlement combining a town and a garden (built in 1906–1910 for the workers of the Georg von Giesches Erben mining company) and Nikiszowiec (a housing estate established in 1908–1919, with unique redbrick blocks of flats surrounding inner courtyards and connected to each other by batten plates). By visiting them, we develop a sense of being subjects of the cultural territory which exists for us, but also for other people, those who lived before us and those who will succeed us.

Another travel recommendation of the Route is equally interesting in terms of its complex layering of time and space. What the less-than-7-kilometre trail unfolds before our eyes is a set of industrial gems in Zabrze. The first stop on the way is the Guido Historic Coalmine, founded in 1855 by Count Guido Henckel von Donnersmarck and including the deepest underground post-office in Europe, 3 kilometres of underground excavation areas and passages, a restaurant and performance and concert hall, all located 320 metres underground, and the possibility to experience the mine as a rough, dark and silent place 355 metres below the ground level. The second stop *en route* is Zabrze Museum of Coal Mining, located in the former office of the county administration which houses an eighteenth-century water drainage system, the only one preserved complete in Europe. The last part of the journey is a visit to the Municipal Botanical Garden established in 1938, and to the Maciej Shaft which prides itself on the still operating and more than 70-year-old powered winding machine.

In this way we have found ourselves in the centre of civilization and its strategy of taking roots. Still more, we are now located in the centre of the familiar post-industrial Europe: it is enough to have a look around. The projects aimed at the revitalization of old water and

paper mills in the Italian province of Salerno; the idea of building a housing estate in the old Ford factory in Bucharest; the conversion of the former textile warehouses, together with cotton and corn exchange buildings, into the docking and transport centre in Manchester; the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao which has adapted old industrial areas for its purposes; the Silesian Museum in Katowice erected on the site of the former Katowice coalmine; the complete regeneration of the former mine and coking plant within the Zollverein industrial complex in Essen; the revitalization of the world's oldest glassworks in Harrachov together with the brewery set up on the spot; several well-considered adjustments of the Guido Historic Coalmine or the Silver Mine and Black Trout Adit in Tarnowskie Góry to the needs of tourists; interesting projects of making unused mines available to visitors in the Březové Hory district (Příbram) or in the Landek Park complex in Ostrava (Petřkovice); the adaptation of the Wieliczka Salt Mine for tourist purposes; the project of developing the post-industrial areas of former Norblin's plants in Warsaw; the conversion of Karol Scheibler's spinning mill in Łódź into loft apartments; the Rye Mill in Szamotuły (near Poznań) which has been converted into a family residence; the project of arranging lofts in the former paper mill buildings in Wrocław; the planned revitalization of the Powiśle heat and power plant facilities in Warsaw; the planned adaptation of the brewery in Wrzeszcz; the planned adaptation of the brewery in Cracow for commercial and residential purposes; the reconstruction of Peterson's mill in Bydgoszcz for residential purposes; the adaptation of the weaving mill in Zielona Góra; the project of establishing the Wzorcownia showroom in Wrocław, transforming the space of the former pottery factory into the facilities for shopping, commerce and recreation; the revitalization of the former Julia Mine in Wałbrzych by establishing the Old Mine Centre for Research and Art; the adaptation of the former boiler room in Gliwice or the lamp room in Bytom for residential purposes; the planned conversion of the former china factory in Katowice into a technology park – this is just a handful of examples of recent

post-industrial design and artwork. As evidenced by these initiatives, there seems to be a distinct community of experience in Europe as the continent of post-industrial regions.

## 5. A place where we fall again into the eye of the storm

Due to its specific nature, by partaking in post-industrial experience we can be again thrown into the eye of the storm, into the epicentre of destruction of space, things, activities and human selves. We can experience the upheaval which causes the destruction of the order of civilization, breaks things apart, exhausts and throws a human being into the realm of the inexplicable. Such crises usually go unacknowledged since the basic principle of everyday living is being immersed in existence without giving it too much thought. Still, an insight into the post-industrial place makes us come back from the here-and-now to there-and-then, even to the point of approaching what disturbs the linear flow of time and binds the present to eternity – as in the Nietzschean “eternal recurrence of all things.”<sup>12</sup> With our own selves we repeat the gesture of calling the industrial world into being and of establishing plants, the effort to keep the production going and to maintain the harsh routine of everyday living, but we also repeat the process of destruction, of the world coming to a standstill. The eye of the storm invades us and disengages us from our daily life; in this way, it binds us to those who came before and humbly, by choice or necessity, served the needs of the place, to be finally defeated. We are continually being defeated by this combination of life and death, work and solitude that has given rise to the community; the rest is a façade of the factory which should not mislead us.

In the post-industrial place we rarely find any neat narrative for ourselves, even though it is without much difficulty that we produce

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<sup>12</sup> F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None*, trans. A. Del Caro, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 2006, p. 178.

narratives for advertising and political purposes. Still, while being close to the place in existential terms, we come across silence instead of a coherent story. In this sense, a post-industrial place is a cold and tenacious environment, indifferent to our grief and longing. It constitutes a silent mass of impenetrable substance. It declines to disclose much of its essence, or what it discloses is the very act of closure. Instead, it makes us cherish the ruin, the remains and the darkness it leaves behind. It rings and buzzes with the unknown. And yet, it may become a new home. A post-industrial place prepares the ground for the experience that is about to teach us a hard lesson: we patiently build something day after day, creating communities and erecting industrial edifices, keeping the world going with our work, only to learn that all we have made is about to vanish into thin air, and the stage of destruction is itself going to be devoured by the processes of living. In the shadow of the former factories there looms the wisdom of the Book of Ecclesiastes or François Villon's lamentations.

## **6. A place where we exist "one after another"**

A post-industrial place which has again become animated, regaining its peculiarity due to the establishment of a new art gallery or an education institution, provides a sort of a morality story. It teaches us about the imminent decline of things, people and factories but, at the same time, it offers a prospect of future regeneration. The future existence is not just about "making things happen" and "having fun" in the place which used to connect life and death through hard work. Instead of merely providing the venue for consumption, entertainment or carefree aesthetic display, the place itself should be subject to radical transformation which will bring it to light anew by emphasizing the value of many people existing in one place, one person after another, succeeding previous generations and giving place to whoever comes next. In this way, the post-factory gives rise to an uncanny exchange

of experiences. Our emotions, experiences, responses and stories are imposed on the place, which is grasped already in its post-dimension. And the other way round: the place undergoing post-industrial transformation stimulates our thoughts and actions by intertwining them with its own history and spatial organization. The post-industrial place, properly construed, makes us conceive of ourselves as human beings in existential terms. Our bodies appear there to substitute the countless bodies of those who, prior to us, filled and co-shaped the place with their presence, marking it with sweat, fatigue, and memory of repeated sequences of gestures, perhaps also stigmatization, exhaustion and injury. To put it in Pallasmaa's words, architecture connects us with the dead.<sup>13</sup> To recall the argument of the theoretician and practitioner of the field, not only does architecture make us experience ourselves in the urban space, but it makes us confront the city with our bodies: it is thus the city that exists through our bodily location and embodied experience, not the other way round.<sup>14</sup>

What we are concerned here with is however the connection to a place that transcends the urban spatial organization. The place connects us with the dead in the most poignant way: it is what moves us truly and deeply. In the post-factory the bodily dimension is highly significant. Everything here is related to the actual movement in space and observation of what is going on in the place: listening to the noise in the background, touching the surface of machines, floors and walls, and detecting the smells of the factory (there are differently localized smells, those of home, harbour, perfumery, confectioner's shop – and the factory also has their own). The factory is an area dominated by smell, touch, sight and hearing: it is a realm of sensual and intellectual imagination. We are told to take precautions, to move along the marked routes, to take a train, to follow the instructions of mining experts, to put on a protective helmet, to duck the head in some situations, and so on.

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<sup>13</sup> J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and the Senses*, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40.

The post-factory, so fragmentarily experienced, has to be imagined even further. The visitor's body no longer needs the same expertise and alertness to danger as was necessitated of the body of a former factory worker, but it still feels an inner compulsion to humbly follow the discipline, even in the partial way it is required within the post-industrial space. The post-factory is exceptional in that it binds our corporeality to those who came before us. We are thus made to retrace their steps in order to reflect on the community of time and place. The post-factory becomes our common reality and not just a mere chimera. In this sense, the place that makes us realize that we exist "one after another" marks a return to the notion of home.

The sense of space that the post-factory projects and imposes upon us reinforces our subjectivity, producing a feeling we would be devoid of substance and meaning without it. The post-factory also projects the sense of space onto our urban experience of time and space, as if we were lacking in the power of expression. What we come to post-industrial places for is not their obvious benefits: a theatre performance, shopping, a museum exhibition, educational workshops, wine tasting, a sports event or a music concert 300 metres below the ground level. Instead, we come to experience the hidden post-industrial quality consisting in the originary knowledge of home and universal evanescence, one that disturbs us and leads us beyond ourselves towards the unknown and inexplicable. What is the purpose of living one after another and fulfilling our obligation of staying in the place and for the place? What aim does it serve? Where does the disturbing element come from? The thoughtful way of existence in the post-industrial place always implies a sort of journey to the origin. We visit such places as we visit homes but also cemeteries. The visits are celebrated as something extraordinary, respecting the distance that has arisen between us and the site. The journey to post-industrial places, which is very often a hazardous exploration of those mysterious areas and facilities, becomes a sort of pilgrimage to what is inconceivable within our own abode.

## 7. A place where the work has come to a standstill

The work which comes to a standstill means an end to the standard order of existence. Everything goes silent – a system of work which is sometimes over-exploitative and at other times simply aimed at unearthing the best part of the human being or matching the rhythm of a human life which is in need of being endowed with its individual form and value. It is not always the case that work leads to utter devastation so accurately captured in the picture of the industrial Coketown in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*. A human being whose life used to be defined as that of a worker in the local community, has suddenly been thrown into the existence at the end of time. The space and time that previously drew the contours of reality, its values and the self-evident sequence of events, have become marked by a loss. As a result, the human sense of loss is imposed upon the space and time which are left void, without work and “people of good work,” announcing demise and distance. The place is now constituted by acoustic and visual roughness. It is indeed poignant to visit a former forge in the mine which is immersed in complete silence or to see an unused winding machine, once contributing to the industrial symphony of sounds which resounded across the European landscapes. This sense of loss, as well as the sense of belonging to the industrial heritage, are further reflected in the project aimed at recording and storing the sounds of work and everyday life, undertaken by major European museums (such as the Museum of Labour in Norkköping, Museum of Municipal Engineering in Cracow, Technical Museum of Slovenia in Ljubljana, Westphalian Museum of Industry in Dortmund, La Fonderie: Brussels Museum of Industry and Labour, Finnish Labour Museum Werstas in Tampere).<sup>15</sup> The loss is, however, even more powerfully sensed in the experience of visiting an old factory immersed in total silence.

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<sup>15</sup> On the museum project see <http://www.mim.krakow.pl/work-with-sounds> [accessed 10.07.2017].



The former factory shafts, once towering majestically over the surroundings and seen from afar by visitors, were like medieval cathedrals: they somehow sanctified the space and provided directions to wanderers seeking food and welfare. Today an alienated former mine shaft tentatively overlooks the urban environment, which is instead dominated and defined by glass skyscrapers housing offices and apartments. Yet these lonely factory buildings, water towers or shafts are what still lure us from afar like holy towers directing ever new groups of pilgrims who set off on a journey for some other purposes. A water tower attracts us because it is a disturbing presence, radiating its metaphysical aura all over the place. It is part of a closed architectural system, impenetrable to observers due to the loss of its experiential quality, but still inviting a glance from afar. The time and space of such places need to be brought to light again. The end of a factory, the end of a machine and the end of the cultural order they belong to seems to be the last stage of the post-place's existence, one curiously capable of being transformed into something new and living. Yet this living is differently conceived: framed by a critical distance, irony and even playful attitudes on the one hand, and by the real desire to take root in the place again on the other.

It is thus simply wrong to reduce the post-place to the leisurely exploitation of history, a place marked by consumption, enjoyment and simulated activity. A caricature of a factory is no more than a caricature of real life. A post-factory should not be a parody of industrial and cultural power that has irrevocably been lost. The sense of loss stems from the replacement of former gravity by mere entertainment or naïve environmental narratives. In the latter case, an exclusive concern with the environmental transformation of a post-industrial place is a waste of its potential. From the perspective of cultural anthropology, it is not sufficient to come up with notions such as the SynergiCity which highly appreciate what is insignificant, harmless, fragile, healthy, green and communally shared, leading up to courageous projects of social

transformation.<sup>16</sup> We cannot be content with the mere transformation of post-industrial cities undertaken with the environmental synergy in mind, directing our attention to sustainable development, green urban projects or innovative economy where pure air, green commons, restricted traffic or small, environmentally-friendly industry are used as arguments to support the idea of transformation. It should be stressed that such activity is also vital, yet the place can only be constructed and raised from within.

The “post-” should instead be able to rewrite the gravity of the place and to become a powerful gesture in space, connecting what is nowadays only superficial with what is hidden deep underneath and constitutes an expansive underground foundation of the city. Today’s post-industrial ever-growing cities owe their magnitude and distance to unused mines because the latter delineate a horizon line which does not overlap with the contours of office and apartment buildings or meadows. The three-dimensionality of the “post-” does not allow us to forget about the genuine foundation of the city. It is only after one has lost an old place that one can open his or her mind to the place again. The place that has ceased to be conceived in functional terms can be related anew, which makes people aware of the relationship and belonging to what has so far gone unnoticed or been belittled. In the post-place we discover again the tension between the myth of the place and that of the factory, between our *Heimweh* and our acute sense of alienation. The old factories, with their trust in machines, in what is tangible and permanent and what yields concrete results, do not seem to correspond to the current cybernetic times and their passing fads. Still, the lonely production halls or machines made shiny again appear to power the place with new energy. What at first glance appears inessential and useless, fills the place with new essence.

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<sup>16</sup> R. Florida, ‘Conclusion,’ in: *SynergiCity: Reinventing the Postindustrial City*, ed. P. H. Kapp and P. J. Armstrong, Champaign: University of Illinois Press 2012, pp. 171–182.

## **8. A place where we become respectful of the order and foundation of things**

The former system of duties imposed by a factory on a human being not just to exploit but to save him or her in a sense, to make him or her useful, was replaced by a new obligation, that of being committed to stay in one place. A mine or a steel plant may have disappeared but the old and new inhabitants of the place are still there to guard it and take care of its gravity and symbolism. As Reiner Maria Rilke wrote in 1906 in one of the letters to Clara Westhoff: “Lou thinks one has no right to choose between duties and to shirk the immediate and natural ones (...).”<sup>17</sup> In the post-industrial place, which strives to change former factories into new spaces open to everyone and easily convertible into the space of experimentation, exhibition or education, this commitment is particularly felt and lived. We are always where we are supposed to be. We do not want to depreciate our point of reference and support. Even if the factory is hidden behind the shopping centre, its presence is still detectable in some little graphic signs, single artefacts like machines, the layout of forms in space, and the remains of walls or remnant buildings. We are thus still in the right position to claim our heritage.

The ruins of the old factory tend to have an ever wider impact: the old plant radiates its influence as a powerful centre that emanates its light in all directions and at the same time shapes the rhythm of cultural space. It is a source of mixed origin, combining spirituality and matter, power and subtlety, permanence and degradation. A post-factory unleashes waves that spread around and dynamize the space, not just in architectural but also communal terms. It is still something metaphysical, nurturing the relationship between a human being and a place,

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<sup>17</sup> R.M. Rilke, *A Letter to Clara Rilke, Villa Discopoli, Capri, Monday, December 17, 1906*, in: *Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke 1892–1910*, trans. J.B. Greene and M.D. Herter Norton, New York: Norton 1949, available at: [https://archive.org/stream/lettersofrainerm030932mbp/lettersofrainerm030932mbp\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/lettersofrainerm030932mbp/lettersofrainerm030932mbp_djvu.txt) [accessed 02.09.17].

between a sense of necessity and individual ways of living, or work and meaning. Bringing to light the potential of such places is an obligation that materializes most naturally, simply and immediately. It manifests itself as a commitment and loyalty to the location. In other words, a post-industrial place is what affects and transforms our bonds.

A post-factory requires respect. We may no longer face any danger or risk our lives when we walk down the former labour routes but the breath of the past is still detectable here. We thus feel the need to be respectful of the order that the factory once established by fusing the rhythm of work with the rhythm of peoples' lives and nature. The sense of respect makes the post-factory both close and distant at the same time. This is the reason why, while visiting the post-industrial place, we only use marked paths and observe the rules even though they are a mere substitute for the former system of norms, rules and regulations once governing big factories. The factories of old used to subjugate human beings, subordinating their volatile and deficient existence to the overarching order whose task was to coordinate the countless elements of the system and to protect people against their inclinations, unstable behaviour and dangerous emotions. We are weak and fragile in our confrontation with nature; therefore, we are in need of discipline, hierarchy, and a clear set of requirements, specifying the beginning and end of work, its stages and procedures. What is vital is the whole art of planning, management, control and performing of tasks, but also the art of maintaining the mechanism, its conservation, repair and renewal.

Furthermore, what is essential is time, or our patient and humble waiting for the completion of subsequent stages and for the end product that the whole team is working on: we are in need of precision and repeatability, day after day. If there are clearly marked routes, their purpose is not to let people drift away from them. The post-factory instils in us a sense of admiration for the magnitude of the past. Even though it went largely unnoticed when the place was teeming with life and work, the post-factory exists now free and useless as if it was a work of art on display, delighting us with its beauty.

## 9. A place where deep suffering brings people together

The post-industrial landscape should be approached with the metaphor of a scar and similar tropes: with the notions of marking, scarring, mangling, and being terrified by what has been left. This is the narrative offered by Anna Storm, when she writes that the scars on the post-industrial landscape refer to complex pasts where the reality of loss, wound and fear coexists with that of survival, resilience and courage.<sup>18</sup> This image, combining memory, experience, and economic and political projects, can most easily be applied to the Chernobyl disaster and its scarred landscape – one that recalls loss and the twilight of utopia and that is the quintessence of suffering.<sup>19</sup>

However, in tracing the suffering that binds a human being to a place as a complex reality where people and their experience are placed at the very centre, we have to trust the anthropological as that which is able to highlight both individuality and community, together with the notion of staying humbly in the place, of listening attentively to what is around and of inhabiting the world. We should again listen to Rilke, who in his *Notes on the Melody of Things*, while describing the gathering of relatives at the deathbed of a family member, points to their indifference and confusion which is followed by suffering that unites them: “Their words pass each other by, knowing nothing of each other. Their hands miss each other at first, in the confusion. – Until the pain behind them broadens out. They sit down, sink their foreheads, and say nothing. It rustles above them like a forest. They are close to each other, as never before.”<sup>20</sup> And the author adds that most people listen only to the fragments of a melody in the background or are only starting to

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<sup>18</sup> A. Storm, *Post-Industrial Landscape Scars*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2014, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 82.

<sup>20</sup> R. M. Rilke, *Notes on the Melody of Things*, xix, <https://pen.org/notes-on-the-melody-of-things/> [accessed 15.10.2017].

listen attentively because “They are like trees that have forgotten their roots and now think that the rustling of their branches is their power and their life.”<sup>21</sup> The silent understanding of subtle connections between people is not just an emotionally charged moment that becomes inscribed in memory but one that leads to the realization of a deeper attachment to the place, a sense of being connected to what was before and what is still to come in the future. The silence arising in the face of the unspeakable is accompanied by a sense of obligation to the place that scorns abundant expression and focuses instead on the very living.

The post-industrial place is thus about listening attentively to the melody of space and time that does not merely belong to what is visibly present and useful, but one that treats human beings, to quote Rilke’s phrase again, as “initiates of life.”<sup>22</sup> The post-industrial place has the power of a waterfall: it strikes us with its roaring noise and energy. By accumulating the layers of thought and action, it throws a human being into the very heart of home-making. A lonely tower of the former mine shaft, former post-industrial ponds filled up with soil, as well as a dazzling neon light which encourages us to visit a place that is no longer what it used to be, are all parts of the powerful force that immerses us in the locality, close to the roots and the notion of home-making. United in the suffering which stems from the loss of the old shape of the place, we slowly proceed to conceive of it as a rooted centre, still emanating the power to bring the world into being, to create the environment around us ever anew and to constitute the local community of those who keep the world going, in its rhythms of life and death.

## **10. A place that has become a garden of sorts**

The factories that have come to a standstill harbour a memory of the great industrial times which have produced not only mass labour, mass

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<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, xx.

<sup>22</sup> Ibidem, xxi.

projects of modernization of life, mass daily technical improvements and mass transformations of cities, but also mass displacements, mass movements in time and space and mass human beings. The losses and gains of the mass developments are what we seem to have already recovered from and expiated. In the urban space, especially in the proximity of the factories that have been the driving force of the city's life, one longs for gardens. At the end of the day, what one longs for is the Eden, whose image lies at the core of our attachment to the garden as a figure of paradise and bliss.<sup>23</sup> The city has defined the function of parks and garden in terms of tailoring nature in the urban environment to human needs.<sup>24</sup> We feel safe in contact with nature in the park or garden because it is where wildness has been transformed into leisure with a little bit of anxiety. The urban environment shapes the relationship between the home, the green and a sense of safety so as to reduce the element of struggle and to construe nature as capable of surprising us with a nice view such as a stream or a picturesque ruin. It makes it possible for us to expand the notion of the city as a gathering of people, things and events, without abandoning the place. As Rilke observes, what makes cities big is not so much a gathering of people, animals and things, as gardens and the human experience of loneliness.

The city equals accumulation. A factory may seem to be far removed from the notion of the garden, yet it is a vast space in the city that tears the urban texture apart by introducing what is empty, non-presentable, and enveloped in smoke and fog. It is a territory of the real where everything is palpable and one can observe the impact of work on the surroundings. The factory rambles and produces smoke. It appears to be a separate realm of life which powers the mechanism of the city and its rhythm. The post-factory, on the other hand, remains as real, even

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. J. Delumeau, *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition*, New York: Continuum 1995.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. P. Hobhouse, *The Story of Gardening*, London: Penguin Company 2002; L. Majdecki, *Historia ogrodów* [The History of Gardens], vol. 1–2, Warszawa: PWN 2007.

though it may be less expansive, no longer separated by a solid wall, sometimes found repulsive as a ruin, sometimes fascinating due to its new formula of exploitation, and at times changed beyond recognition after architectonic transformation. It is a vast area within the city that can be accessed and explored. The transformation it has undergone has somehow softened its contours, shaping it like a park to provide leisure opportunities to the inhabitants and offer various surprises, as well as the noise of new entertainment or education centres.

Most importantly, however, the post-factory is like a garden in that it keeps an empty space within the city. The space cannot be filled up and covered: there are seams of previous activity and signs of former existence everywhere. Moreover, just like the garden, the post-factory requires cultivation of what is empty. It plays an important role in the excessively urbanized space by helping to loosen its dense structure. It affirms the city's identity without infringing on its freedom and momentum for growth. It still remains a landmark not just in spatial but also existential terms, fostering the urban art of living. The post-factory provides the scenery to human loneliness which, in Rilke's words, is one of the characteristics of life in the city. In the place which cherishes the empty, we keep establishing gardens that are then filled up by ourselves, our experiences and events.

## **11. A place in fragments where life is again bustling with events**

In the post-industrial places the space is being inscribed again with events: exhibitions, a steam machine which is in operation again or a railroad restored to its working order. What used to be a petrified form is now being converted into a new event in the seemingly casual fashion – yet it is just pretence of the lack of solemnity. Even though the former carefully scheduled rhythms of the machines' operation are no longer part of the long-term strategy of production, a new life is introduced in



the nearly defunct space. The post-factory is about the re-awakening of power where events, people and things are made important again, even if they are now subordinated to the philosophy of the fragment, once chronological continuity, the layout of functions, systemic plans and the poetics of the whole have all fallen into ruin. Moreover, the fragmentary nature of the place has spilled over into human life, memory, a sense of community and even a notion of eternity, making them fragmentary too. The post-factory no longer needs to produce anything: it has become split and will ever since function as a place and a quote at the same time, pervaded by a sense of distance. It comes to us from afar, revealing its beauty and magnitude.

The post-factory does no longer serve its former masters, or functions. It has distanced itself from the old politics and history. It has also shaken off the hysteria of productivity and speed. Without the impetus of the past and the oppression of the empire, usually erected on the bodies of victims, it is now engaged in everyday life where the violence of the powerful industrial plant has been replaced by curiosity. Deprived of its previous utilitarian aspect, the post-factory has become an open form. And yet, due to its connection to the place where it is located, to the earth and region, to the people living there, it cannot cease to be an event. There is still something in the factory that is alive, that stops the machines, that illuminates the place which soon is plunged into darkness again. The noise that was caused by visitors turns into silence in a little while. Everything here is a fragment that refers us back to the infinite – be it endless work, interrupted life, or an unfinished narrative. The post-industrial place looks forward to infinity and, by repeating events, draws our attention to the origin and depths of time.

## **12. A place which is more than just design**

Design practices present in our culture are conventionally associated with architecture, clothing, computer graphics, interior design, consumer goods, items, games and so on, but also with the making of

military equipment, plant machinery or transport vehicles. They have become highly influential in disseminating ideas, values, patterns of behaviour and ways of juxtaposing things.

Design is closely intertwined with the history of humankind; in Charlotte and Peter Fiell's words, an object created by a human being is already a designed item, and by applying it we come to experience the world.<sup>25</sup> Design involves both the planning stage and material effect of human creation. It is derived from the Latin verb *designare* (meaning 'to designate, ponder and choose') and, as the authors explain, even though it referred to the making of artistic patterns or building plans until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in most cases designers carefully balanced the artistic and technical aspects of work.

This coupling may be of interest to us insofar as it may lead us to examine different representations of the difficult relationship between art and technology, as well as artistic versus utilitarian elements of human work, by tipping the scales in favour of one of them. However, what is here more significant in anthropological terms is that design can actually transform the place, revitalize its image and formulate its future novel conception by defining new functions, new users, new meanings, new activities, new lifestyles, new ways of looking at an old place, and new notions of one's location. But it is not just about design shaping our awareness: what is at stake is the realization that the idea of a place is prior to the gesture of the designer and practitioner of culture, that thinking precedes "thinging." To make sure that this is the case, not only do we need to find out how to address the connection between technology and art, or the utilitarian and the artistic, in a non-conventional way, but also to focus on and bring to light the very experience of the place. Anthropologically conceived, design should be more than just a way of combining artistry and functionality, or beauty and ergonomics. It should seek to marry purposefulness and faith in the existence of a masterpiece – also in the machine-made objects, and to view the trust

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Ch. and P. Fiell, *The Story of Design*, London: Goodmann Fiell 2013.

in the democratization of reality as underlying the production of beauty for the masses. Finally, it should foster faith in “better” solutions. From the anthropological point of view, the word “better” means something different from what the designer has conceived and planned; “better” does not indicate more resourceful, sophisticated and functional, but deeper in its way of thinking which consciously revolves around the place and its quotidian existence and remains rooted in “homely” values.

Design may give a new lease of life to the place by turning towards the depth, to what constitutes the place’s identity and has perhaps been forgotten. In this sense, it may be able to revive and transform old values by turning them into a stimulus to develop a new, rejuvenated way of thinking. We can similarly treat design with reference to the rhythm of living or rules of composing image, decorating, distributing features, establishing connections, and so on. The spectacular and well-planned design in the urban space was able to thoroughly transform the Basque Bilbao (Bilbo in the native language) by locating the city in the network of events, providing a boost to the enterprise of building the metropolis with a flourish and engraving itself in the social and scholarly memory as the “Bilbao effect.”<sup>26</sup> The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, designed by Frank O. Gehry, remains a point focalizing our ideas of the centre, one that sends the waves of transformation further on. Still, it is essential to point out that transformation and revitalization projects embrace a number of social and cultural spheres of the city and the region and thus cannot be reduced to this single gesture made by the architect in space.

If design is treated as a mere artifice or trick of art, it remains a spectacle showing off the designer’s skills, which has nothing to do with the place in a broad sense – with a region conceived as a realm of cultural thinking, with a local community, with its particular space- and time-conditioned understanding of a human being, with the contextual

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. J. Alayo, G. Henry, and B. Plaza, ‘Bilbao: Case Study,’ in: *Remaking Post-Industrial Cities: Lessons from North-America and Europe*, ed. D. K. Carter, New York and Abingdon: Routledge 2016, pp. 142–152.

notion of time or freedom, with the local attachment to a specific rhythm of living and so on. It is only a flash that can dazzle us as a single phenomenon or offend us with its incongruity. The design of post-industrial places should direct us back to the ways of taking root in the place, to what is basic and has perhaps been squandered in memory. Its task is to give the place a new lease of life by reintroducing order or to push it in a totally new direction; however, this should always be done with the cultural knowledge of the place in mind.

In the story of the spectacular success of the Bilbao project, we often neglect the role of a local context, that of the country of Basques with its distinct set of values, style of living and other elements of identity, with its peculiar understanding of time and space, with its notion of sedentary and nomadic life, or of the relationship between individuality and commonality, or of the readiness to change what can be changed and reluctance to alter what is truly essential. Foreign design may work miracles for the place, like the Derridean graft in which the alien interferes with the homely,<sup>27</sup> but it is only the case, we could add, when “home” is a well-conceived construction and not just some watered-down waste substance. Revitalization projects will only then translate into a social and commercial success when they are able to strengthen what is vital to the place and local community. Otherwise, they may breed problems. It is obviously worthwhile to examine the stories of the transformation of post-industrial cities such as Rotterdam, Turin, Essen, Buffalo, Detroit, Milwaukee, Pittsburgh and New Orleans,<sup>28</sup> but the lesson they teach us should be complemented by an anthropological observation which most often evades the scholars discussing the places. The relationship of a human being and a place cannot be reduced to the analysis carried

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<sup>27</sup> J. Derrida, ‘Fors: The English Words of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok,’ trans. B. Johnson, in: N. Abraham & M. Torok, *The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*, trans. N. Rand, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1986, p. XXV.

<sup>28</sup> See the chart representing the analysis of post-industrial cities in: *Remaking Post-Industrial Cities: Lessons from North-America and Europe*, op. cit.

out within social and economic parameters or with regard to the ways of stimulating artistic and tourist activity.

Post-industrial design cannot mean violence to the place or a sophisticated mechanism capable of taming its powers. In design we should be able to perceive the contours of home, an essential task awaiting a human being. The old factory, which abounded in architectonic details, ornamental patterns, sophisticated plans, monumental gates, dazzling bas-reliefs, well-designed towers, doors and windows, was itself an embodiment of design, not just in its reference to the neo-Gothic style but in the attempt to illustrate the relationship between the human, place, power and authority. The story of classical physics and its basic categories such as work, power, force, mass, charge, path, trajectory, time, heat, energy, potential and motion, velocity, momentum, acceleration, pressure, vibration, wave, intensity, voltage, resistance and so on, was translated here into the narrative of a multitude of dynamic, magnetic, electrical, electromagnetic or thermodynamic laws governing culture. The design of former factories was not just an aesthetic product but an integral philosophical and cultural story which placed a 'handy human,' *Homo habilis*, in the very centre, together with the power (s) he possessed to couple nature and culture.

The post-factory has to be attentive to this design of thought. For its task is to find a way back home by demonstrating unthought-of relations between humans and landscape or between people and things, and by uncovering unexpected distance in what constitutes human environment and neighbourhood. Good design is about posing questions about the place. It does not show everything in detail because a well-designed place should not provide us with a finished picture, or it does not trigger any activity. It should instead confront us with the task of finding our way back home by developing a new metaphysics of life. In this regenerative gesture that is design one should transcend the despair following the demise of a factory and replace it with pensive sadness (for we do live amid fragments, surrounded by ruins, having experienced a loss), combined with the need to "kindle the flame" again.

The work of post-industrial design should be preceded by an attempt to read the place precisely in regional terms. In this sense, design is not transferrable to other contexts, regardless of the similarity of cultural narratives. It springs from a particular place, attached to the periphery and focused on the local centre. Indeed, one should always hold on to where one is.

### **13. A place where we vanish and dissolve in the dark**

In his novel *Kafka on the Shore* Haruki Murakami made a remark that before Sigmund Freud and Carl Gustav Jung appeared on stage, the correlation between real or physical darkness and darkness of the soul was something natural, and these two kinds of darkness tended to be mixed together, with no boundary separating them.<sup>29</sup> Before the discovery of Thomas Edison's bulb the world experienced the dark differently. In contemporary times the outer darkness has disappeared, leaving behind the darkness of the heart.

The factory, a quintessence of development and gravity, always craved for light even though it was immersed in the dark and covered with smoke and dust. The electric lighting, while it meant less profit, enabled shift work system. Artificial light was not only practical but also made it possible to illuminate the factory which had the spectacular effect of highlighting objects and adding a ceremonious touch to the space, like in the cathedral. The subsequent stages of the use of Davy lamps by miners to detect methane, the introduction of gas lighting and finally the use of electricity to make light with the aid of a glass bulb, followed by the development of the network of electric lighting and its distribution – were all instrumental in gradually eliminating darkness from the factory, yet the dark could not be ultimately removed.

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<sup>29</sup> H. Murakami, *Kafka nad morzem* [Kafka on the Shore], trans. A. Zielińska-Elliott, Warszawa: Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie MUZA SA 2013, p. 302.

The factory has always been immersed in the dark both in the literal and metaphorical sense. The immediate environment of the factory which surrounded the machines was lit, but the darkness enveloping the industrial landscape and lurking in the corners of a steel plant or mine was the reason why the factory gestured towards the real darkness and correlated with what Murakami calls the darkness of the soul. The secrets of factories, the workers' craft, discipline and cruelty, loneliness and community were all linked here in an obscure manner. The surroundings were dark and uncertain: on the one hand, they were marked with the light of the Enlightenment and the progress of reason together with its economic calculation but, on the other hand, they were pervaded by mystery, with dark powers, ghosts, spectres, wonders, diseases, death, passions, fear and decline always in the background. Darkness and twilight tend to awaken our imagination, as Pallasmaa wrote.<sup>30</sup> Homogeneous bright light standardizes human beings by equating their experience and crippling imagination, while shadows, twilight and darkness of the surroundings make the place multi-dimensional, infinitely multiplying its relation to what was before us and what comes after, to what is underneath and what is above, and to what exists beside us and persists all the same.

The demise of the world of factories may dangerously affect our vision by bringing to light what used to be immersed in the dark and defined the match between human darkness and that of a factory. The post-factory seems to uncover too much by disclosing the secrets of work to the mass of the uninitiated. The world of ruin is susceptible to collapse because of the bright light directed at the space that should sink in twilight. However, looking more closely at the organization of the post-industrial space, we can observe that it is possible to expose it in an adequate way, acting with discretion, keeping the twilight and shadows of the past when they are supposed to be, so as not to give the visitors an illusion that everything here can be known and understood.

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<sup>30</sup> J. Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin. Architecture and the Senses*, op. cit., p. 46.

The post-factory should not be an easily decoded space to be consumed on the spot. It should be an invitation to vanish in the dark for a little while, to sink in what is impenetrable, out of respect for the implacable forces of nature, and without the arrogance of excessive lighting and lavish entertainment that plays games with what is dead serious. Thickening twilight, the sound of feet rustling along the ground, the noises of machines in the place are what still resists our vision that longs to make everything clear and unequivocal. And the darkness of the self finds relief in the momentary stay in the post-factory – surrounded by machines, in the very centre of brightly lit city, dazzling us with its superficial glitter. We can thus go back to the old correlation between two kinds of darkness. Post-industrial places in the city are such twilight zones that should be protected for the very reason that they provide us with the shelter from excessive brightness and let us hide in dense shadow. In this way, we come back to the places we have perhaps never left.

#### **14. A place which is like a spring**

Can we bridge the gap between a spring and a post-factory which smoked, rambled and filled the world with its vocal presence until quite recently? A spring is what is crystal clear and life-giving: it is situated at the beginning of things and radiates its energy, spilling over and illuminating the surroundings. A spring has an influence on everything around by defining direction, speed and layout of the space, both empty and filled with presence. It is always essential, establishing the frames of reference, not only spatial but also temporal ones, as it is also an origin. It refers us back to the image of Eden, from which four Biblical rivers originate,<sup>31</sup> expressing the ultimate human longing for a life-giving force, a central point and, most importantly, a mystical source. The spring of paradise is a centre and active beginning of things,

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. the Book of Genesis 2: 10–14.



as Juan Eduardo Cirlot puts it.<sup>32</sup> A spring has its distinct place in human culture: it underlies the much cherished image of the garden with a fountain symbolizing the source of the water of life, as we read in Jung's texts.<sup>33</sup> To a mystical thinker life calls for a revival and regeneration, and a life arrested in its development needs a new source that stands for spiritual energy and inner activity of the self.

A spring is what defines the world of experience. It exists prior to, above and beyond a human being, so that one does not know where it comes from and what for, or for what and whose sake it persists. It accumulates the future and the past, as well as life and death, within itself. An everlasting spring, but also a spring that is about to dry up or has already dried up, is like the germ of a new life but at the same time a void covering up indeterminacy and terror and a crack opening into darkness. A spring is both a basic point of reference which eternally sustains life and allows us to grasp what is ungraspable and elusive, and a place of imminent decline and dissolution. Overgrown with myth and experience, referring to what lurks under the surface and reaching into the deep, a spring cannot be discussed in material terms because it is lacking in social and instrumental coordinates. Therefore, it cannot be approached with the aid of a common language so as not to defile its crystal-clear waters and to let it penetrate life (also human life) from afar.

The post-factory as a life arrested in its development needs a return to the source or spring. In his book *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*, Rudolf Arnheim, referring to Albert Einstein's concepts of matter and field, as well as to Paolo Portoghesi's notion of social and perceptual fields, wrote that buildings are like islands in that they define the dynamics of a field; that is why "a field of visual forces expands from the centre and propagates its wave front as far into the surrounding

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<sup>32</sup> J.E. Cirlot, 'Źródło' [Spring], in: J.E. Cirlot, *Słownik symboli* [The Dictionary of Symbols], trans. I. Kania, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak 2006, pp. 492–493.

<sup>33</sup> C.G. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*. Collected Works of C.G. Jung, vol. 12, trans. R.F.C. Hull, ed. G. Adler. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1968, p. 118.

environment as its strength permits.”<sup>34</sup> If we wished to apply this theory of architecture to the thinking about a spring or source, we would have to focus on and highlight the condensation of what is essential in the centre and its ability to establish the field of influence. The post-factory is such a condensation of things which expands from the centre and affects the surroundings. It is condensed energy because it combines on the one hand what is permanent, rooted in the depths, down-to-earth and palpable in its presence, and, on the other hand, a destructive force that makes everything vanish into thin air and turns the most durable constructions into ruin. By participating in these two incongruent orders the post-factory is able to link fluidity with the former gravity: it is both light, exempted from the burden of functionality, and attached to the earth with the force of experience and history. Stuck in the place, it makes it at the same time more spatial and expansive. The post-factory belongs to the earth since it takes up again the notion of roots and is subject to the law of gravity; simultaneously, it seems to rise lightly into air towards heaven. For a human being, it offers a space mediating between belonging and ephemerality.

## **15. A place that teaches us to understand we are attached to the ground**

Frau Schwientek, a great character in Janosch’s novel *Cholonek, oder Der liebe Gott aus Lehm* was right when she expounded her view that “nothing comes from nothing.”<sup>35</sup> The philosophical phrase, echoing Melissus of Samos’ and Lucretius’ *ex nihilo nihil fit*, in the Silesian context does not so much serve the purpose of showing the contradiction inherent in the notion of becoming, as indicating the posture of existential

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<sup>34</sup> R. Arnheim, *The Dynamics of Architectural Form*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press 1977, p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> Janosch, *Cholonek, czyli dobry Pan Bóg z gliny* [Cholonek – the Good God of Clay], trans. L. Bielas, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak 2011, p. 27.

humility in the face of what there is. Of significance here is not the logical meaning of the sentence but a desperate lament behind it, one that emphasises a connection between the interaction of things and its consequences, and expresses the view that people and things are bound to each other with the chain of actions, words, and effects of their work, and that they are fastened to the ground. Thus, the treaty on nature is also a treaty on culture. We are attached to the ground even though we are as restless as we can be in contemporary times. We plan our lives, continually coming and going, beginning something and abandoning it, each time letting the fresh air in and closing the door behind. We may seem self-sufficient and unrelated to the place, capable of adapting to the changing conditions of living, standardized, internationalized and similar, but we still suddenly realize at one point that the idea of home is about permanence and has to be taken into consideration as such.

In the ruins of the post-factory there is something lyrical but also deeply upsetting. A home that is both solid and turned upside down, powerful and full of glory on the one hand, while being fragile and easily destroyed on the other, shows how strong our foundation is. We have accommodated ourselves to the landscape. We follow obediently the routes available to visitors and touch the machines in order to identify all the significant and insignificant reasons why we have come to visit the place. Thrown into the place, we keep trying to reach it from afar. The post-factory offers us such a journey which is perhaps a passage to the heart of darkness. The disintegration of buildings corresponds to the mortality of those who formed the substance of the city before us and worked hard for the sake of the factory's development, only to fill the common soil with their bodies. We exist in the vicinity of people and things, and the post-factory makes us deeply aware of the layering of human and non-human lot. It exposes a limitless foundation beneath. It also inscribes our existence in the larger event of dwelling.

The post-industrial landscape we immerse ourselves in anew by consciously following the processes of its reconstruction, reconfiguration

and revival, finally enters our very being, which results in establishing a new order based on reintegration and mutual belonging. We are now subjects of the places we have never really outgrown; we have become part of the location by participating in its dynamics of life and death. The imagination which is set free in post-industrial places lets us descend into the depths of thinking that old mines or steel plants keep alive. One generation after another, we keep guard in the place by both exploiting it and caring about it, inflicting wounds and then letting them heal.

## **16. A place of reconciliation**

The post-factory is a place of unique reconciliation. It is where a ritual has taken place, one involving not only the material aspect of existence (architectural, renovating, animating, anesthetizing, popularizing and other activities), but also the social (the behaviour and active engagement of people who have visited the place, wandered around or been on a pilgrimage) and the spiritual (the place, already uprooted and often vandalised, has been restored to its proper order and function, which has helped to reinstate the relationship between a human being, nature, industry and the place). To transform the post-factory into a *place* is to open it again to the infinite and to make it part of the community. What once used to be a realm of humility and discipline, or loyalty and devotion, after the fall of the factory and the experience of its end has become an unmarked space, most often disliked and rejected as mediocre and alien. It is only the post-industrial gesture of extracting the value from what is distant that can make the place existentially open to the unknown and re-establish its position with all the rigour that is needed.

In this way the space may become home again. However, the reconciliation is not just about the re-instatement of the sacred dimension to a vandalized and desecrated place, but has also the deeper sense of

reconciling the sinner with the church.<sup>36</sup> *Reconciliatio* conceived as reinstatement allows us to stress an interesting anthropological (not just legal and theological) aspect of the process: what is meant here is the reconstruction of a community and inclusion of a person in what is going on “between us.” Not only in the sense of interpersonal relations but also in terms of what the place is, what brings us together, what stretches between us and locates us where we currently are. We visit post-industrial places by including them in the itinerary of our pilgrimage, by experiencing again the anxiety about our roots and by making a conscious effort to dwell here again. This is why the reconciliation that takes place in post-industrial spaces has so much to do with homecoming. The process of reconciliation is only possible when the discrepancies between us and the space we inherited are fully experienced and overcome. We reconcile ourselves with the place by creating connections between what has so far seemed irreconcilable. The more time we devote to the precise reconstruction of the details of work, the more effort we make to closely read and experience the place, the more we are able to immerse ourselves in the homely space that we now treat with respect. As subjects of the place, we are duly respectful of the ongoing eternal mystery of transfiguration and redemption that we are being involved in here. We have the feeling that we are part of something profound.

The anthropological reading of a post-industrial place demonstrates the need for an experiential approach to the location where dwelling becomes possible again.

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<sup>36</sup> See Z. Teinert, ‘Odpusty i kary doczesne w świetle dokumentów Soboru Trydenckiego’ [Indulgences and Temporal Punishments in the Documents of the Council of Trent], *Teologia i Moralność*, vol. 9, 2011, p. 186.



Photo 1. Bilbao 2017 (A. Kuncce)



Photo 2. Bilbao 2017 (A. Kunce)



Photo 3. Bilbao 2017 (A. Kuncce)





Photo 4. Bilbao 2017 (A. Kuncce)



Photo 5. Giszowiec 2017 (A. Kuncce)



Photo 6. Hornické muzeum Příbram 2016 (A. Kuncce)



Photo 7. The Silesian Museum in Katowice erected on the site of the former Katowice coalmine, Katowice 2017 (A. Kuncce)



Photo 8. The Warszawa II Shaft of the former Katowice coalmine, currently the Silesian Museum, Katowice 2016 (A. Kunce)



Photo 9. The Silesian Museum in Katowice erected on the site of the former Katowice coalmine, Katowice 2017 (A. Kuncce)

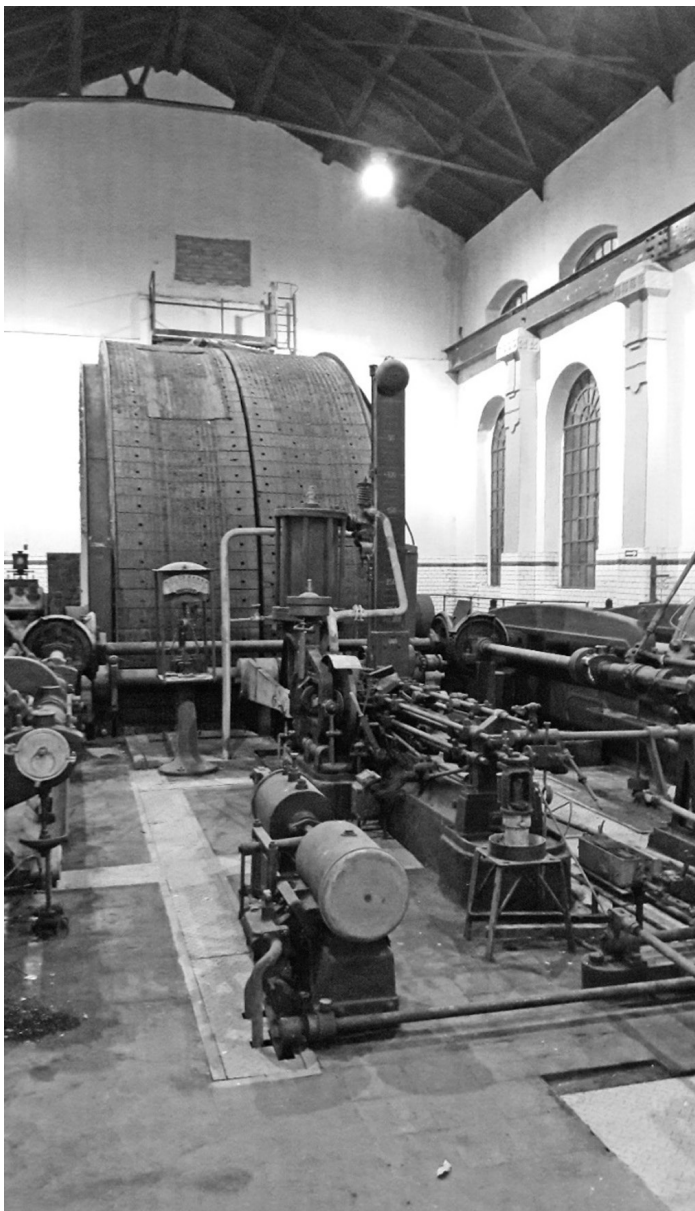


Photo 10. The Silesian Museum in Katowice erected on the site of the former Katowice coalmine, Katowice 2017 (A. Kunc)



Photo 11. Silesia City Center erected on the site of the former Gottwald coalmine, Katowice 2017 (A. Kuncce)





Photo 12. Nikiszowiec 2017 (A. Kuncze)



Photo. 13. The Wilson Shaft, Katowice 2017 (A. Kuncce)



Photo. 14. The Wilson Shaft, Katowice 2017 (A. Kuncce)

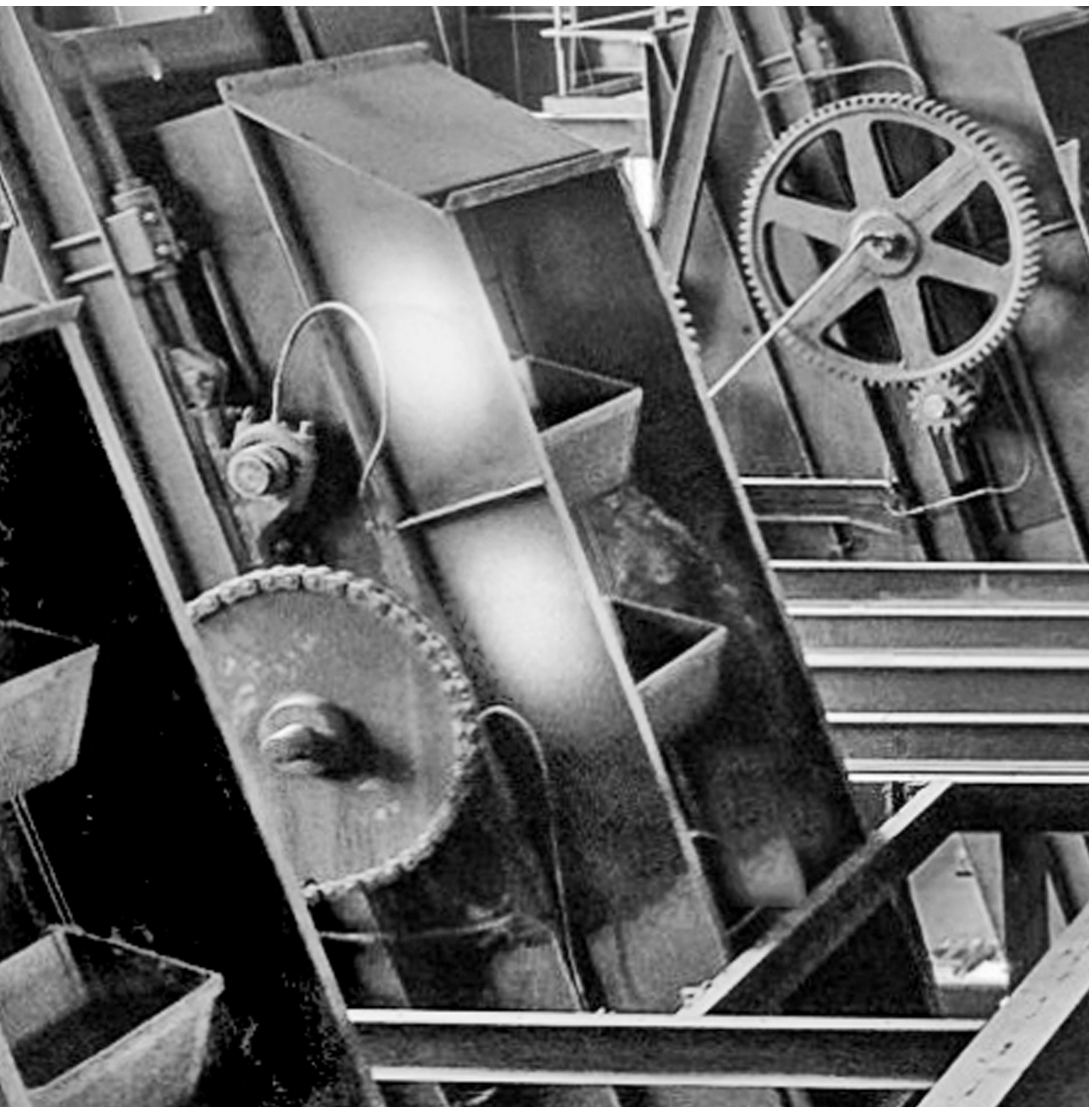


Photo 15. Ruhr Museum UNESCO – Welterbe Zollverein, Essen 2016  
(A. Kuncce)



Photo 16. Ruhr Museum UNESCO – Welterbe Zollverein, Essen 2016  
(A. Kuncce)



Photo 17. The Old Brewery, Poznań 2016 (A. Kunce)



Photo 18. The Maciej Shaft, Zabrze 2017 (A. Kunce)



Photo 19. Sklárna Harrachov (currently Glassworks and Mickrobrewery Novosad & Son Harrachov), Harrachov 2017 (A. Kuncce)