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back to the sense of the city

THE ROLE OF VALUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CITY

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Abstract

The paper provides two examples which illustrate how different values can materialise themselves throughout the cityscape. These images allow us to formulate a conclusion - a postulate regarding the need to revise our hierarchy of values. It is the opinion of the author that returning to traditional values can provide the physical space of cities with a chance to develop while taking into account the wealth of cultural heritage. The opposite can result in the worrying tendency to construct public spaces in a manner that is dominated by economic principles.

Introduction

If this paper were to have a subtitle, it would read: *one step back, two steps forward – back to the values seen as a chance for a true development of the city.*

It would not be meant to be understood literally. It should not be understood as a call to return to the styles or concepts typical of past periods. Rather, it would mean the exact opposite - the intent is to look back in the direction of the traditional concept of values that formed the basis on which cities were built - cities which are today considered beautiful and precious. In this manner, the author attempts to redefine the modern paradigm of shaping cities, which is currently mostly focused on providing economic value.

This proverbial step back is thus an encouragement to search the material world for values that are deeper than those that are strictly related to the economy. The author sees in them the possibility of the emergence of urban creations that would have the chance to initiate a form of the development of urban spaces that would draw inspiration from our cultural heritage to a higher degree.

The article's main thesis is that a revision of our hierarchy of values is necessary in order for urban spaces to develop in a sustainable manner and for new construction projects to introduce positive values into the cityscape.

The proposition of conducting such a revision implies that a hierarchy of values does not always provide us with satisfying outcomes. The paper provides examples that confirm this diagnosis, at least in the context of Poland and Polish planning conditions. An attempt at defining a remedy for this state of affairs has been provided in the conclusion.

The paper is based on a method of drawing conclusions on the basis of specific cases. The focus was kept on the visual aspect of the occurrence of values within the space of a city, making the cityscape a more objective carrier of content and knowledge regarding the state of culture.

The paper bridges the gap between philosophy and the sciences related to architecture and urban design, which is why it references subject literature both on the topic of axiology, as well as architecture, urban design and landscape architecture.

The first of these groups contains the works of Władysław Stróżewski[1], Henryk Elzelberg[2], Tadeusz Gadacz[3] and Roman Ingarden[4], in addition to philosophical syntheses of the thoughts of Max Scheler or Edmund Huserl, that are contained in the works of Leszek Kopciuch[5] and Zofia Majewska[6], who paint an image of values as definable and normative (that obligate human beings to take action), as objective "special qualities" that share their existence with their object. Such an understanding distinctly separates the concept of values from the qualities of a given object - when speaking of architecture and discussing cities, should we really use the terms "beauty, durability and utility", and not those that related to their physical properties - like colour and shape? The latter can lead to the emergence of values, but are not values themselves. The works listed above build a unified image of the hierarchy of values, which point in the same direction, apart from containing differences depending on the author. That direction is established between the lower values (hedonic, utilitarian), as well as higher values (aesthetic, legal, cognitive, spiritual)[7].

Even scholars of architecture and urban design explore the area between the fields of axiology and architecture either directly or indirectly, and their achievements are valuable sources of scientific materials. Andrzej Basista deserves a mention as a member of this group, due to his extraordinarily valuable "observations on the topic of values in architecture", in which he made the exceedingly important statement that the doubt whether values belong to a certain type of architecture or whether they are only attributed to it is purely theoretical, as it regards aesthetic values. There seem to be no similar dilemmas in the case of utilitarian values[8]. But even in the case that we can all agree that values are objective, then their perception is surely subjective. Here we can rely on the works of Wojciech Kosiński, who proposes that values related to urban

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[1] Stróżewski W., *Logos, wartość, miłość,* Kraków, Wydaw. Znak 2013,

[2] Elzenberg H., *Wartość i Człowiek, Rozprawy z humanistyki i filozofii,* Toruń, PWN, 1966,

[3] Gadacz T., Wartości w czasach zamętu, w: *Wartościowanie współczesnej przestrzeni miejskiej*, ed. –M. Madurowicz., Wydaw. WGiSR UW and the Office of the Capital City of Warsaw, Warszawa, 2010,

[4] Ingarden R., *Studia z estetyki,* vol. 3, Warsaw, Wydaw. Nauk. PWN, 1970,

[5] Kopciuch L., *Wolność a wartości, Max Scheler Nicolai Hartmann, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Hans Reiner,* Lublin, Wydaw. UMCS, 2010,

[6] Majewska Z., *Problemy doświadczania i istnienia wartości. W kręgu myśli Edmunda Husserla i Romana Ingardena,* Lublin, Wydaw. UMCS, 2010,

[7] Additional results of original research on the topic of values and finding their essence in the material world, especially in architecture and the landscape: Zieliński M., Values in the space of architecture , *Space & Form* 2014, no.22/2, także: Zieliński M., Values in space – architectura and landscape perspectiv, *Space & Form* 2014, no.22/2,

[8] Basista A., *Architektura i wartości,* Kraków, Wydaw. Universitas, 2009,

spaces should be considered as the duo of "beauty and good", with friendly (in functional terms) and visually attractive (in aesthetic terms) urban spaces considered indicative of the value of the space of a city[9].

Ewa Węcławowicz-Gyurkovich, on the other hand, claims that it is possible to introduce new values into a historical urban environment, not only without causing any damage to it, but providing it with better exposure[10].

Disturbance of the hierarchy of values within a space - the case of the Łazienki Park

Figure 1. A view of the Royal Łazienki park in Warsaw

The XIX century composition of a romantic garden and a visual axis enclosed by the building of the Belvedere. In 2013 the composition obtained a "new closure" in the form of a commercial and office high rise. If we assume that this disharmony is the result of a wide-scale planning oversight, then the most important thing to remember in the future should be a more effective process of analysing existing conditions and estimating the effects of construction projects within a city. The condition here is that we all need to agree that the view like the one to the side is valuable enough to be protected.

Source: Photograph by the author

The reconstruction of the capital is, without a doubt, a source of pride for the Polish. In the place of a never before seen barbarity, a city was reborn, becoming a symbol. Despite all of the

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[9] Kosiński W., Well-being and beauty - places friendly to the people in pre-modern cities. Ideas, projects, implementations, *Space & Form,* iss. 18, 2012, see also: *Idem,* Well-being and beauty - people friendly places in modernist cities: Ideas, projects and implementations, Space & Form, iss. 19, 2013,: *także: Idem,* Well-being and beauty - people friendly places in the modernist cities after 1945: Ideas, projects, implementations, *Space & Form*, iss. 20, 2013,
[10] Węcławowicz-Gyurkovich E., *Architektura najnowsza w historycznym środowisku miast europejskich,* Krakow, Wydaw. Politechniki Krakowskiej, 2013,

arguments regarding its distinct aspects - socialist realism included - many treasures of our culture have been saved or recreated. And thus, our generation is forced to look on as these accomplishments are wasted, in the absence of war or other cataclysms, being turned into junk-space".[11] This is the manner in which Aleksander Böhm comments on the modern approach to the shaping of the space of Warsaw in his thought-provokingly titled paper "Do the Polish People Know They have Europe's Ugliest Capital City?". This comment was addressed at the largely thoughtless construction projects that have been carried out in a manner which dismantles the historically valuable composition of the Royal Axis in Wilanów[12].

Sadly, similar situations happen nearly every day in various places, which are more or less precious due to their distinct values.

The photograph above shows the landscape composition of the Łazienki Royal Park in Warsaw (Fig. 1). It is nearly impossible to claim that it does not represent historical, cognitive and especially compositional and symbolic values. This image shows the fragment of a romantic garden, a XIX-century composition that is based on the characteristic visual axis crowned by the classicist shape of the Belvedere, which rests upon an escarpment. From the point of view of landscape architecture theory, such a composition forms a finished work. Despite this fact, the entire composition is now marred by a mixed-use building located at the Square of the Union of Lublin, which has been towering above the previous dominant since 2013. This building clearly overshadows the classicist manor. This image expresses the qualities of Bauman's "liquid modernity", in which traditional notions become "liquid". Thus, certain values can be relatively easily replaced with different ones.

If we assume that the example that is being analysed - which features a visual dissonance that changes the perception of a traditional landscape - is a hapless coincidence, the result of some genuine oversight while developing a zoning plan on a wider scale, then the best that we can do is draw our own conclusions so that such mistakes are not repeated in the future[13]. However, this case points to more serious problems related to a change in the hierarchy of values.

The site which is currently occupied by the high rise[14] used to be the location of a shopping centre called Supersam, which stood there for 44 years. This building was highly praised by architects and civil engineers, as well as art critics - often hailed as a marvel of modernist architecture. This opinion was based on the innovative and sublime form of its roof, which defined both the architectural expression of the building, as well as its functional value. Its outstanding qualities were praised not only in Poland, but also beyond its borders[15]. The demolition of the pavilion, and thus the annihilation of the values that it represented is an example of a perverted hierarchy of values. The case does not revolve around the replacing of one building with another - with the latter being larger and more profitable (and which, *nota*

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[11] Böhm A., *„Do the polish people know they have Eueope's ugliest capital city?",* Teka Komisji Urbanistyki i Architektury o/PAN w Krakowie, Vol. XL, Krakow, 2008,p.154-155,

[12] *Ibidem,*

[13] The authors of the complex explain that they performed a wide spectrum of analyses on the scale of the entire city. Cf.: Kuryłowicz E., *Plac Unii – Trwanie i przemijanie,* [in:] Warszawa wielkomiejska, Plac Unii i okolice, EKNIN Studio PR, Warsaw 2013, p.272-274. This is further proof of the necessity of conducting visual analyses.

[14] it is in fact a complex of three commercial and office buildings which includes a 90 m tall tower. Its usable space is almost 94064m^2. Information obtained from www.apaka.com.pl, retrieved in March 2016

[15] Cf. *Warszawa mi się podoba. Z Christianem Kerezem rozmawia Jan Strumiłło,* [in:] *Ukryty modernizm. Warszawa według Christiana Kereza,* Karakrter, Museum of Modern Art, Krakow - Warsaw, 2015, p. 31-35,

bene, possesses its own set of architectural values). The problem is the ease with which we accept the loss of values in a larger sense. The demolition of the Supersam building brought with it a dismantlement of the material evidence of the professional skill and creativity of its designers. The destruction of a piece of architecture, which was valuable not only in the sense of being original, but also because it had been an expression of the culture of the society which had created it - just like the disappearance of the Supersam building in general - is proof of the level of modern culture, which, it seems, has a problem with the perception of values and providing an answer to them[16].

It is worth mentioning that the area which used to occupied by the Supersam building, and which is now the site of the Union Square commercial and office complex, was assigned to be the location of a vertical dominant back in the years of the interwar period. It was the planned site of the building of the Polish Radio, designed by Bohdan Pniewski in 1938. This building was envisioned as a spatial signal, a crowning element of the monumental Puławska street. The competition requirements postulated that the building needed to have 21 stories, which would translate into a height of around 70 m[17]. That is 20 m less than the current tower. When looking at the photograph (Fig. 1) once again, it is easy to point out that this difference "would make a difference" in the case of the view along the axis towards the Belvedere[18]. The authors of the building were of a different opinion: "The height limit included in the zoning decision that had been attached to the competition requirements in 2007 postulated that the building was not to exceed 90 m. We are currently of the opinion, one which we also held during the competition, that the tower could have been taller. (...) XXI century Warsaw is a metropolis that reaches far beyond its pre-war borders, it is accented by the PKiN (The Palace of Culture and Science), the Wola skyscrapers and the large districts of Ursynów and Wilanów, from which one enters the city centre by the Union of Lublin Square. In comparison to the extent of these changes in the scale of the pre- and post-war city, a difference of 20 m seems a little bit too small." While this statement is not without its own merits (the scale of modern Warsaw and the need to accentuate this urban node intuitively force the introduction of a dominant), we need to remind our readers, after Aleksander Böhm, that the pool of elements which belong both to the set of outstanding works, as well as to the set that includes those works which distinguish our own domestic culture from that of other cultures (in the face of globalisation) is limited[19]. This forces us to make decisions.

As the example above has shown, in order to attain the highest possible level of knowledge before making a decision, a broad and thorough analysis of the site should be performed, an analysis which also includes areas that are farther away from the location of the site - while remembering that architecture is not confined to its own walls - it enters into a series of relationships with its distant surroundings. It should be added that the currently used tools - both

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[16] The technical documentation of the building, as well as additional materialsregarding it, have been preserved, so there is still a chance that the building can be recreated - either in better times or in order to address a demand to reintroduce the cultural values that were once lost. However, it would not be original. Practical experience has shown that such a course of action can be beneficial in certain cases, vide: Mies van der Rohe's pavilion in Barcelona.

[17] Trybuś J., *Warszawa niezaistniała, Niezrealizowane projekty urbanistyczne i architektoniczne Warszawy dwudziestolecia międzywojennego,* Muzeum Powstania Warszawskiego, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Fundacja Bęc Zmiana, Warsaw, 2012, p.280-281,

[18] After: Kuryłowicz E., *Plac Unii…Op. cit.*, p. 274,

[19] Böhm A., *„Czy Polacy wiedzą… Op. cit*, p.157-158,

virtual and real[20] - allow designers to effectively estimate the consequences of the carrying out of certain construction projects. The virtual world offers a particularly wide spectrum of possibilities - among other things, they allow designers to analyse and estimate the visual results of newly designed buildings within the scope of the urban substance,. The cities of London[21] and Vancouver[22] can serve as an example of this, as the value of their skylines in the broad scale of the landscape of the city have been determined to be worthy of protecting for future generations. In order to do so, these cities have introduced the requirement of performing digital visual analyses into their planning systems.

Disturbance of the hierarchy of values within a space - the case of the Post-January areas in Gdańsk

Figure 2. Solidarity Square in Gdańsk along with a monument dedicated to the Fallen Dockworkers of 1970, as well as the European Solidarity Centre - a space marked by history and symbolism

Its dynamic change is the cause of worry about the preservation of the identity of this place and the clarity of the values that share its existence.
Source: Photography by the author

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[20] An example of the use of such a tool has been presented by the authors of the "tower-gate to the city" experiment, which involved the use of a balloon and a string in order to analyse the visibility of the designed building and its relationships with the historical views of urban interiors, as if on a living organism. Cf. Forczek-Brataniec U., Stokłosa K., Krajobrazowy eksperyment autorski „Wieża-brama do nowego miasta w Krakowie, [in:] Sztuka ochrony i kształtowania środowiska. Twórczość – Nauka – Dydaktyka, Czasopismo Techniczne iss.5-A/2007, Krakow,
[21] Olesiński W., *Postrzeganie krajobrazu miasta w warunkach wertykalizacji zabudowy,* doctoral thesis, Politechnika Krakowska, 2014, p. 109-110,
[22] Berelowitz L, *Dream City: Vancouver and the Global Imagination,* Vancouver, Douglas&McIntyre,2005,

The photograph shown above depicts Solidarity Square in Gdańsk, along with the Monument to the Fallen Dockworkers of 1970, as well as the European Solidarity Centre. In the lower right corner of the image we can see the route which leads to Gate no. 2, which was the entrance to the Gdańsk Shipyard when it was still operational (Fig. 2). Both the square, the gate, as well as some of the buildings that are located on the former shipyard grounds have been put on the historical monuments registry as the mute witnesses of history[23]. This space and its character are currently undergoing dynamic changes. The shipyard has been closed and its former grounds are in the hands of private owners. It is evident that the landscape of this place is going to change dramatically - from a typically industrial one to an urban one. However, there are certain fears that are associated with this. They are mostly based on the possibility of the erasure of the identity of the area and at the same time making its historical, symbolic, educational and social values unperceivable[24]. Other evidence which points to the fact that these fears might not be unfounded is provided on the photograph below (Fig. 3.).

Figure.3. A view of the new office development in the centre of Gdańsk

When viewed from afar, nothing seems to draw the observer's attention (a). However, a closer look reveals a window of sorts (b). It is three storey high opening in the building, which makes it possible to see the top part of Monument to the Fallen Dockworkers of 1970 in the distance. It is an interpretation of a condition outlined in the zoning plan, regarding the preservation of a visual axis towards the monument. (c) aerial photography showing the urban context. The direction of the visual axis has been marked with an arrow.

Source: Photohraphy by the author. Map: www.googlemaps.com

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[23] The events known as "December '70" or "the massacre on the Coast" took place in the year 1970. They were tied to a bloody pacification of striking workers and civilians by the military, acting on the orders of the communist regime. The protests and social unrest were caused by a catastrophic economic situation caused by drastic increases in the retail prices of meat and other foodstuffs. A monument in memory of the fallen dockworkers was unveiled in 1980. The shipyard itself became a symbolic place. It was there, that the fall of communism and the political, social and economic transformation of the country began.

[24] This issue is discussed at length in: Zieliński M., The struggle of the values for existence in space, *Space & Form* 2014, iss. 22/3,

This is a view of Błędnik[25] street, in the centre of Gdańsk. It shows the possible consequences of changes in the hierarchy of values within the landscape of a city. A section of the local zoning plan[26] regarding the preservation of a visual axis towards the monument, most appropriate in regards to the symbolism and culture of the place, justified from the perspective of the principle of urban design, has been interpreted by the investor in a caricatural manner[27]. The resultant parody of a visual axis lays bare the weakness of planning and the dictum of economic values. It is a clear signal, that the shape of the city is subjected to the price per square metre of usable space and not to composition, history, or the identity of a place. In the presence of such conditions we can forget about the values of the cityscape that we learned about in urban design handbooks - about the streets, the axes, the background, the closures and visual openings, and other elements which provide the opportunity for aesthetic experiences like those that Gordon Cullen had written about[28]. It is going to be harder and harder to preserve and shape spaces that could provide us with cultural experiences, as the symbols and content that is important from the point of view of local identity that are ingrained into the cityscape is either going to disappear for good under the foundations of new corporate offices or is going to be covered by new office buildings and shopping centres.

Summary and conclusion

The examples provided above can be identified in the words of Sławomir Gzell as research by design, which a scholar might aptly compare to the military term "reconaissance by fire". However, in order for the losses caused by this approach not to be in vain, we should draw our conclusions from them. The cited author postulates that the shaping of a space should not be carried out in the form of ceaselessly increasing its built-up area, but that it should involve factors which move the imagination, which provide meaning for the theory of a place and create urban motivations for architectural design[29]. It is, without a doubt, helpful to weigh various and often conflicting values that are often placed on different levels of the hierarchy. Thus - identifying what is valuable and the performing of a thorough inspection of these values, the care for their preservation and the development of designs on their basis and not at their cost - should preceed new construction projects, so that they can directly increase the value of a city.

The table below shows a comparison of a traditional hierarchy of values with the values that are currently becoming a reality through the architecture of the spaces that surrounds us:

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[25] It is a major transportation artery of the city.
[26] Resolution no. XVIII/285/11 of the City Council of Gdańsk of the 29th of September 2011 regarding the entry into force of the Śródmieście zoning plan for the region in the area of Jana z Kolna street an Dyrekcyjna street in the city of Gdańsk, www.gdansk.pl/zagospodarowanie-przestrzenne/plany,1154, retrieved: April 2016,
[27] The window which provides a view of the top section of the monument is a part of the Tryton office building, built in 2015 and designed by the ArchDeco design company. The building has 17460 m^2 of usable space. archdeco.pl/projekty/budyne-biurowy-tryton retrieved: March 2016,
[28] Cullen G., The *Concise Townscape,* Architectural Press, New York, 1971,
[29] Gzell S., *Why the architecture for us? What for the urbanism for us?* Teka Komisji Urbanistyki i Architektury o/PAN w Krakowie, Vol. XLII, Krakow, 2014,

AXIOLOGICAL HIERARCHY OF VALUES	ARCHITECTURAL HIERARCHY OF VALUES
SPIRITUAL	SPIRITUAL
ETHICAL	ETHICAL
AESTHETICAL	AESTHETICAL
CULTURAL	HISTORICAL, COMPOSITIONAL, COGNITIVE, EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL, IDEOLOGICAL
VITAL	FUNCTIONAL, ECOLOGICAL
UTILIARIAN	TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC
HEDONIC	LUDIC

If the values that are in the lower part of the table are placed above those from the upper part in our everyday choices and in regard to our private lives, then the matter is simple and depends on our own conscience and the morality of the person that performs the evaluation. However, when this hierarchy is starting to influence the space of the city and other people, which is definitely the case as the examples provided above have shown, then the matter becomes a question of ethics.

The first of the examples shows that an administrative zoning decision is not conducive to the preservation of values. The second one has proven once again that the hopes associated with zoning plans can be dashed more often than not. This illustrates that when faced with imperfect tools, the values that are materialised in the spaces of cities are going to be dependent on human choices. This is why, in accordance with the principle that the human world is a world of values and all of the choices that are made are the result of evaluation, we need to remember, that the assumption that places alone are the source of values can be proven wrong. On the other hand, the statement that it is the values that create a place could be useful in the process of making decisions about the shape of a space, especially in the future.

Looking at the statement above, a return to the roots of the city - to its sense - can mean a return to values.

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