

New borders – sociological analysis of urban interactions.

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1 ABSTRACT

What is characteristic and symptomatic for eastern and middle-European cities, they're trying to 'forget the past', improving many different modernizations in urban infrastructure. The new urban architecture is visible sign of it. From the sociological point of view, all the new buildings and areas impacts new kinds of social interactions and social stratification. It seems to be very significant, to analyze how the urban sphere not only influence social interactions, but also makes these interactions possible. Who is welcomed, in such a space, and what sort of citizens are intruders rather than guests. I would like to present some particular exemplifications of new urban public sphere in polish city, i.e. Poznań city, and its new quality in modern world.

2 INTRODUCTION

The prove it, I'm going to use few results of sociological qualitative surveys realized in Poznań in recent years, although none was projected for this text. All the cited below describe the city and its citizens, and I use it, as well as all the pictures, to make my short description more picturesque, and adequate.

I would like to analyze two particular examples of planning the urban area – the one from real socialism times – former urban blocks districts, that were constructed widely within eastern part of Europe, however nowadays former miracles of socialism, are becoming relatively unattractive, if not, regular slums. I'll compare it with a present examples of brand new built, huge and extremely attractive, miracles of our days – the malls. Both of these examples, however from different realities, have at least one common issue – the planners trust, it will fulfill most of social needs and desires. These cases should be treated also as examples of evolving the urban space and social interactions furnishing it.

Many polish sociologists involved in sociology of urban areas, describe these processes, i.e. Jalowiecki (2006), Cichocki and Podemski (1999), Jalowiecki (ed.), Majer and Szczepanski (2005), Misiak (2005), Wallis and others. They usually use the tradition of Chicago urban studies started by Thomas and Park, and continued by Znaniecki. The importance of Hannerz discourse (Hannerz 2006), and Goffman (Goffman 2000) dramaturgic point of view, brings new perspective to scientific analysis of urban sphere and social interactions. Contemporary polish scientists underline the consequences of 'fast modernization' processes, and a problem of inequalities connected with acceleration of many processes. The processes of modernization in polish cities are not interchangeable.

3 THE PAST

There is a long history in constructing cities as a visible signs of authority's power. Not only the name of a city, but also the most representative buildings, belonged to local ruler, and his people. In polish history, we have many examples of such ideological role, like king's names – in the old capital, Cracow, that meant 'Crak's castle', through the 1920s and created cities that were to improve polish economy, i.e. 'Ironwill', that symbolize 'the iron will' of local people to industrialize poor region of our country. There are also many after-war cases, when according to leading communists party establishment, huge efforts, to change the social structure of existing cities, were taken. With Cracow example again: a brand new district 'Nowa Huta', means 'The New Ironworks', and a new industrialized area surrounded with hundreds of same-looking blocks of flats. Nowadays, at ideological level, it looks similar – however not in such a scale, but many brand new examples of urban infrastructure, and a well known purpose – to shape citizens attitudes, behavior, making a kind of self-implementing prognosis. This can be illustrated with examples like 'The Golden Terraces' as a name for the mall, or 'The Green Hills' that symbolizes a high-quality settlement resort with a nice landscape.

What should be pointed, until 1989, all the new buildings in Poland had to be constructed with the official line of the communist party. As a result there was no possibility for local authorities or private investors to make any independent decisions, about their investments. Every new district was planned and constructed as a proof of 'socialist's party will and people's work', small villages were enlarged to fulfill new tasks led

by party establishment, while others were removed, to establish, in example, a new coal mine. In many cases, valuable historical infrastructure was devastated, to prepare a space for new style of building, and new style of living as well. The style was called 'the real socialism'. With no respect to former traditions, with omnipresent standardization of forms – the same not only in the whole country, but the eastern European region in general. It was connected with planned efforts to create new kind of a man – the well-known homo sovieticus cliché. For many people, especially local immigrants from the less developed country, such new built places were a chance for a better living. However most of them, needed only a short period of time to realize, that having few advantages, the new place of residence has many disadvantages as well – including the lack of community life, anonymous contacts with other people, and even poor quality of infrastructure.

Before the collapse of party, its leaders, and their plans, in 1989, generally speaking, most of polish cities completely changed their visual landscape, in comparison with pre-war times. A good example of these, are 70s and 80s building era of block of flats, fulfilling city suburbs. Although most of such areas were brand new, built in former rural areas, with many planners analysis, the results were not really impressive: most of these places were seen as dangerous, unattractive and people manage to get by in it treating their place of living as temporary (that was even written in official registration form as 'temporary place of residence', as everybody waited for a bigger and more suitable flat, and this was a kind of neverending process). The flats were rather small, some of them still has 'the dark kitchen' – means with no windows, and bathrooms 1,6 meters width (the bath size), and 2 meters length. However nobody was complaining, as with the average period about 10 years or more to receive it, it would be unreasonable. The area as a whole, was rather pessimistic, with a standard set of a school, kindergarten and some shops located somewhere in the middle. There was usually also a church, or a place where people were gathering to pray – with many security agents' efforts to control it. The transportation net was rather poor, and the possibilities to communicate using telephones, was not common. The today's name for that, at a conversational level, is 'a social desert'.

There are many remains of the past city planning in Poland, however the planning was not only about architecture, but mainly caused because of political decisions. Usually, since 1950s, the high level of urbanization, was a part of industrialization processes – new districts were located near industry areas. The results might be identified in social structure, and it is probably the most evident and recollect sign of the past. Examples of such processes come from every big city in Poland, with some spectacular ones like, as mentioned above, Nowa Huta in Cracow, Tychy, or Poznań districts – Rataje or Piątkowo. Every time, the new block of flats were built, it was settled with a total social townsfolk mixture. It was a part of architecture plan – to mix people from all social classes making local communities as heterogeneous, as possible.

Such districts, as described above, still exists, and about 30% of citizens of Poznań live there. Some of blocks were painted and or even renovated (the same like in former East Germany, however with the lower scale), while others look still the same. It is even not unusual, the meet western backpackers visiting Poznan blocks, and watching people living there. Another example comes from Cracow, there's tourist agency, similar to Poznań ones, offering a special 'Red Trabant course' among Nowa Huta district. This is another example of brand new district built near to the city in 50s and 60s, as a result of political decision to settle thousands of workers in the traditional university town, the former capital of Poland. Present excursions take part in the real city, sightseeing in the neighborhood of real citizens, however, as tourist guide claims, some of foreign visitors hardly believe it's not fake, as the area look extremely unpleasant and unfriendly to people. Many visitors are western backpackers with a strong demand to 'discover the past' – and that easy in many polish cities.

To sum up, I'd like to point some aspects former city planning growth. The past, this way, in polish cities reality was rather sad, dark-coloured and pessimistic. People forced to live in such area, had no possibility to make it more friendly, or even individualize it according to their own needs. There was a lack of recreational areas, in example 700,000 city like Poznań offered to its citizens 20 years ago only 6 swimming pools, 2 Zoos, 1 tropical garden, 1 ice-rink, and a number of playgrounds for children. The average person spend more time weekly queuing in front of any shop, than at leisure activities.

Sometimes, present television advertisements use particular motifs to present, usually with a facetiousness way, old timers. But most people see only the present – it's certainly colorful and joyful, however it is not clear if all its citizens should be optimistic. I'd like to ask about the future – is it full of chances for everyone interested, or is it rather like 'the game is almost over' and no new runners are invited. The changes are such

wide and deep, that many polish youngsters watching ‘sentimental’ exhibitions with old pictures, also do not believe, it’s real, just as they same-aged young people from western countries.

4 THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

Unfortunately areas described above, are not fake, nowadays they are also facing new social challenges and threats. Because such places are becoming relatively less attractive – many people try to leave it, escaping to safer ones. Those who stay, often from lower social classes, are called ‘blockers’ – means the youngsters, usually unemployed or poor qualified, with high level of aggression, and low level of hope. This is a social problem, as former proves of architecture possibilities, evaluate into slums fate. So the main issues are connected with low level of safety and lack of revitalization enterprises.

Although polish economy is booming, especially in the prices of immovable, you can still buy such flat at relatively low price. In biggest polish cities, the average price of 1m² of a new built flat in the city center, doubled during last three years, reaching in Poznan level at about 1500€, to 2500€ in most attractive resorts. The boom is stimulated with the growing number of bank credit limits available for average person, and a growing number of better and better situated young people, called ‘yuppies’. However it is a worthwhile to remember, that mostly only new buildings are seen as attractive, and it is still possible to find an ‘unreasonably cheap’ location in the suburbs.

It is not easy to investigate and extrapolate the future in Poland. Last years events, European Community access, and growing number of foreign enterprises taken, suggest some optimistic visions. This is also the new reality of post-communist polish cities, like Poznań. It is one of the biggest in Poland, with estimated number of habitants at more than 700 thousands. What seems to be important, one fifth of them are students. They are another part of new polish reality – growing number of people involved in upgrading their qualifications, believing in the better future. The city gives them a chance – as it is one the most attractive polish city, with many foreign investments.

I would like to illustrate these unique with some of results of quantitative survey taken in Poznań in 2005. For example, most Poznań citizens see the future of their city and region as ‘better in the nearest future’ – at the level at about 40% for Poznan, and 48% for the whole region (Wielkopolska state). Other answers, collected in the same survey, are even more enthusiastic among younger and better educated respondents (see: Cichocki et al, 2005). The level of optimism in Poznań is one of the highest in the whole country. On the other hand, the same time, threatening number of people, especially young students and specialists (doctors, scientists, or even plumbers), leave this place to emigrate in searching for the better future anywhere in the west. Others see no future for them and wait just to complete their education (relatively cheaper than in the west), and move out. With following examples, and some images, I’m going to present visible aspects of changes and redefining the public sphere in one of polish cities.

Questions, I want to raise, is about the problem of urban evolution, and its ‘successful implementation’ of the new and better. Last 17 years, since 1989, is probably a significant period of time to evaluate the urban space evolution, its results, advantages and disadvantages, with the main question: for whom it is redefined? Undoubtedly, besides many problems with transport, revitalization of many dark parts of the city, many efforts where taken to improve the character, or just the front-stage of Poznań. In the following part of the text, I’ll observe this particular example of a big polish city and its changes. There are two main issues, I’m going to describe. The first one is about space in public and the newest, in polish conditions, changes. The second one is about social interactions determined around it. The interesting area, or better ‘stage’(see: Goffman, 2000), of social interactions, is the public space that impacts the way people move, behave, interact, cooperate or compete. A good example is traffic, and the organization of space that makes some reactions acceptable, and others forbidden. A general idea is that pedestrians and cars should not have any occasion to clash, what is, certainly, fully reasonable, the supported by a system of traffic lights, lines, bridges, where necessary, and so on. However the investigation of face to face interactions in public sphere, especially in the new built or rebuilt area, that is very often a kind of ‘gated’ area, because of security reasons, clean environment, and suitable neighborhoods. Whatever it is, the result is usually similar – ‘no entrance’ for any social categories, like – homeless town beggars, kids, pedestrians, and others if needed.

Every time, the border is in danger to be crossed, a guard (human or artificial intelligence reaction supported by closed – circuit television systems) will react. All the new built houses in Poznań are fulfilled with safety

improving systems, guard service. Many has underground garages, that allow owners to leave with no contact with other people, as you may get from your apartment to your car, and than reach your office without leaving it at all. Such isolation is a by-side product, however sociologists are interested in it as a reason of many other social consequences, as they are usually identified as negative ones.

5 PROBLEMS

It is also not difficult to see some problems, that appears in this city – I would not describe urban pathologies, somehow interesting it is, but will focus on social consequences of present changes. The first issue is the new stratification redefining public sphere and its users according to some rules.

Bauman describes new city borders dividing its surface in socially isolated parts. Such lines in the city are invisible but limits many other processes (see: Bauman 2000). The only way to identify and investigate, is the try to cross it – if you're identified as a welcomed person, there's no problem, but if not – your problems starts at once. This is something, that is relatively new in polish reality, but a very well-known to all who wants to participate in public sphere. A kind of restricted entrance is an 'ideal type', and in every place if it is not strict enough, it is because of lack of money. It seems to be caused by a combination of factors like the terrorism threats awareness (especially in state area), authorized staff only buildings or even districts, the idea of discreet limitation of entrance for some categories of people – like the poor. In the state of the art it is analyzed as 'gated community issue', but in polish city an interesting question might be raised – if such communities are the only ones in local environment, as no others appeared? What's more about gated, or limited-access, areas is, that almost all of new built, and bought, buildings fulfilling this condition. So that during a relatively short period of time, it will be even more significant. There can be also observed a budget version of gated areas, a closed circuit telephone at the entrance, and iron gates, painted with graffiti.

Another interesting perspective might be seen after dramaturgic theory. As Erving Goffman claims (Goffman 2000), all the face to face interactions might be compare to actor's play, with such important additional elements like the stage – with front stage and backstage. When actors meet, they 'play' their roles, and an important part of the surrounding area ('decors') is to help making needed impression about partner. The decorations play their role in the way to fulfill the actor's image. This concept in very well known in social sciences, especially in sociology, and very often used in scientific discourse about social interactions, and its active character. Goffman underlined the spontaneous character of partners interaction, and their own individuality in it. Another important part of this theory focuses on consequences of everybody's will play and look as good as possible, with the importance of the stage and its sets. As Goffman claims, actors use the space, to improve needed impressions, and making some parts of it more important than others.

I will use Goffman's perspective to analyze to stage role. As I pointed above, a unique character of some urban sphere – i.e. malls, makes some individual behavior, and social interactions more adequate than others. From the former situation, when public sphere was planned as pointless and standardized till the 80s, now, an opposite processes can be observed – the public space is renovating and redefining, allowing people to use it in new ways. But this is not like the change from the worse, to something suitable and proper, because in many cases such changes do not lead to any positive for the community needs.

The malls are probably the only special public spheres, where everybody is invited. In Poznań and suburbs, there are at about 10 big malls, and a certain number in built. What is symptomatic, in most cases such malls are the only new buildings in the surrounding area – imagined as the only sign of modern times, modern architecture. They became, just in 5 years, in important part of city architecture, an element of people's way of living, spending their leisure time, or just time-consuming, as Ritzer claims (see Ritzer 2001). This is also an example of area, where new kinds of social interactions take place. According to the malls' role, such interactions are the by product of consumers behavior, as celebrating of consumption is the main purpose of visit. However some examples of teenagers wandering there, instead of studying (the problem is so big, that even police organized special 'patrols' to identify such pupils and send them back to school), in most cases, it is not possible to meet, or have social interaction with anybody. The human flow is coming, and one can hardly stop without a risk of being tread.

Every weekend, and even during the week, thousands of cars are jamming around it. As all the malls are brand new ones, they are so 'beautiful', that even foreign visitors, from western Europe as well, are sightseeing it (usually as an additional part of a trip to low-priced but high-quality polish doctors, beauty

saloon, and others). They became a kind of must-see attraction. There are many facilities, including typical polish concept, free buses for budget visitors. Extreme discounts, unbelievable occasions makes all this possible, similar wherever it is. In all these places, people are not looking for other people to socialize, but rather for commercial promotions. Even small cafeterias put their armchairs in the hall area, that makes possible to watch consumption space, and increasing the number of nervous pedestrians walking between tables. Using Goffman's perspective again, it can be seen, that even a brand new sphere, as malls, planned for consumers, do not allow you to enjoy it – from backstage salesperson's point of view, it is not so friendly.

Another point of view be compared with present ways of recreational and leisure activities. In summer 2006, during a qualitative field study about 'one-day tourism in Poznań', the same time when thousands people are walking in any mall, the National Park just at the border of the city, 15 kilometers from the center – The Wielkopolski National Park, is almost empty. It was not even easy to meet any person, and Park entrances noticed individuals only. Although it is even possible to watch the forest from suburban mall's parking areas, hardly anybody follows this direction. This text and its issues are not adequate to analyze such complicated social interactions like spending the leisure time of Poznań citizens. The conclusion, from this field study taken in the summer 2006, was that the number of National Park attractions might be counted in tens, while same time mall visitors, might be counted in thousands (see: Isanski, Ornoch-Tabędzka 2006). What is also important, in comparison with our former reality – this time nobody is forced, just persuaded by advertisements, to such behaviour, this is just a symptom of new ways of spending people's weekends and recreation time. So that, there is even undoubtedly a new kind of tourist – the mall tourist, more significant in social scale, than former outdoor recreation. The question 'who pays and who benefits', however fascinating, is probably out of present range. It is still a chance, but with a very astonishing number of people interested in making a reasonable and conscious choice. The present situation of Poznań, and many other polish cities seems not to be really well-planned. Whatever it is or not, the average citizens can hardly see everyday changes as a process, it's rather closer to chaos. It looks like Poznań, even being renovated, offers new renovated areas to few particular number of social categories, but most of citizens could identify costs only, not benefits.

As, in example, city tourists (the category that is not limited to tourists only, and may grasp citizens as well), are temporal users of city infrastructure, they persuaded to use all visible signs to identify it. The public space where social interactions are taken, as I mentioned, takes it's own role. The role for the just-built area, is usually constructed in a way, that makes some reactions more reasonable, while others unwished. Some of traditional behaviors, including a chat or face-to-face meeting, is not even possible, as a big crowd is behind and around. The tourists, as I see it, are prompted to identify the symbolic ground of space, using it, in example, as a source of information of eating manners (forget it in a fast food), the possibility to stop and have a rest – not possible, as benches are rather rare. The same time, consumption is stimulated, and consumers attitude is widely seen. In the city area, tourists are rather consumers. If you visit Poznań as a tourist, and spend a few days sightseeing, your opinion could be similar or even worse.

6 CONCLUSION

As a conclusion of my text, I want to underline, that although in Poznań, as in many others polish and also other central and eastern cities, many changes might be identified – in public sphere, and its connections with social interactions, these changes are usually not with free access for everybody. It is limited according to some particular reasons, that exclude the former public sphere, from the majority of citizen's experience. Dramaturgic interactions, as Goffman saw it, take place in the stage, but there are many levels of stage, with limited terms and levels of use. It is even connected with some architecture improvements to divide users into categories.

One can say this picture is not real, it's too pessimistic. Or, on the other hand, this is only the beginning, with no escape but acceleration of present processes. Another point of view might be raised, as well, that the situation presented above is average with nothing special, in comparison with the western cities, or maybe the only one with the economic aspects. The very small size of the text makes my discourse limited to just few aspects, eliminating others. I wanted to examine some of social aspects of present, and ask for the future. As for now, the number of malls is growing, and it seems to be more attractive idea for people to spend their time this way, instead of outdoor, or even indoor but active, recreation. The National Park is not a real

attraction any more, even university students involved in field study I recalled above, claimed it was their first visit in this forest located not more 15 kilometers from the city center. Some areas became more distant, than at any time before.

7 LITERATURE

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8 APPENDIX 1: 18 PICTURES

 <p>Figure 1. Real socialism architecture Remains</p>	 <p>Figure 2. City infrastructure – with no renovation for at least 60 years</p>	 <p>Figure 3. Budget gated area – closed circuit phone</p>
 <p>Figure 4. Heterogeneous architecture neighbourhood</p>	 <p>Figure 5. View from the city center – suburbs with same-looking blocks of flats</p>	 <p>Figure 6. 1970s brand new district – painted from outsider</p>



Figure 7. Typical 1970s infrastructure – a school surrounded by blocks



Figure 8. The centre – the church, real socialism's mall, and emperor's castle.



Figure 9. Reconstruction – former factory area into skyscraper



Figure 10. The brand new Sheraton, next to devastated old printing house



Figure 11. The mall



Figure 14. The mall inside – spectacular and magic leisure area



Figure 13. The mirage with a closed circuit television motif



Figure 12. The block of flats mirage in the mall's façade



Figure 15. The mall inside, and architecture similarity to church's



Figure 16. Another mall in butli just next the the existance one



Figure 17. Reconstruction of a city centre



Figure 18. Renovation of a public infrastructure – a kindergarten

Evaluating Sustainable Appropriation of Urban Public Parks

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1 INTRODUCTION

Urban public parks offer a great potential to raise the quality of life for urban citizens, while at the same time their creation and maintenance requires substantial amounts of money. Surveys have shown that citizens consider parks to be an important element for their well-being, even if used only occasionally. By offering opportunities for equal participation irrespective of gender, age, nationality or social-economic status, parks also enhance social sustainability. We consider social sustainability as the necessary element for the two remaining pillars of sustainability, namely economic and ecological. By equal participation, we mean the possibility for every potential and actual park user to engage in activities as desired, as long as these activities do not prohibit or discourage others to use the park. There are two processes opposing equal participation: First, if a park user leaves or does not show up at all because he or she does not feel comfortable in the park, we speak of processes of exclusion. If the space appropriation in the park is dominated by a certain group of visitors, then there are processes of domination.

We assume that the specific behavior settings of parks (in the sense of SCHOGGEN 1989⁷) and management strategies (KAPLAN et al. 1998) strongly affect visitors' behavior by affording certain activities while discouraging others. Thus, both the design and the management can contribute to minimize usage conflicts and ensure social sustainability. Consequently, the design and management of public parks and recreation areas have attracted a substantial amount of interest. Academic research ranges from technical aspects of counting visitors (ARNBERGER et al. 2006), the usage of parks (BRANDENBURG et al. 2006), a focus on gender issues (PARAVICINI 2002) to more conceptual and theoretical publications on the social construction of public space and its appropriation (KASPAR and BÜHLER 2006, LÖW 2001). On a more administrative level, the postulates of social sustainability and intensive usage of public parks are integrated into the agenda of the city of Zurich, for example (GRÜNSTADTZÜRICH 2006). The spatial distribution of park usage has already been observed in Basel (BAUR 2000), although the resolution is coarse.

In order to enable and foster equal participation, it is necessary to detect and analyze domination and exclusion processes. To do so, our research project uses a mixed methods approach (CRESWELL 2003). We combine qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews and document analysis with observations of park usage, and their subsequent quantitative analysis with geographical information systems and supporting information technology. The latter, quantitative methods will be presented in this paper.



Figure 1: Extensive (Wahlenpark, left) and intensive (Bäckeranlage, right) use of public parks (photographs taken by the author, Zurich 2006)

Our aim is to model the social interaction and resulting space usage in urban public parks at the micro level of individuals. We propose that it is possible to capture and represent the complex interpersonal processes of space use and appropriation on the microlevel using a relatively simple model. This model implements

⁷ The notion of behaviours settings goes back to Roger G. Barker (1968). In essence, it assumes that there is a structuration of the environment into discernable settings that influence strongly one's behaviour.