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THE ARCHITECTURE OF SOCIAL BONDS

ABSTRACT

In designing of the common areas for residents, a sociological aspect is very important: how the organization of space can affect the community. Presented examples: The "Invisible City", Agora in Dronten, "Tree of Life" in Olecko refer to some issues of building community, taming the space, animation, and participatory architecture They indicate a evident need for creating spaces for activation of inhabitants, which could prove to be an indispensable tool for building social bonds.

SOCIAL BONDS IN THE CONTEXT OF PUBLIC SPACE

Places in the people-friendly urban space include those that have the potential to create social bonds. They can be the public, semi-public or semi-private spaces. What creates them and gives their character, is a social activities for which a specific place become a field of action. Places [...] *"where people build community, find their community and find themselves in the community, where is an exchange of intentional or occasional, conscious or unconscious information, negotiation of positions and goals, transfer of experiences; where members shape the patterns and eliminate pathologies."*³

Public space should be shaped in a way to maintain and support the social integration. Modern substitutes for public spaces: shopping centers, multiplexes are places for anonymous crowd, not for conscious community. These are private facilities and have to bring income. Public space, in principle, cannot be someone's property.

One of the basic human psychological needs is the desire to be together with other people, what is called affiliation. It is expressed in the willingness of individuals to join social groups and seek their approval, and its principal source is the need for security. A good public space is the space that ensures the safety of all and where there is the place for everyone. One, that ensures the free exchange of views and scope for its development. A living space of the local community, a place to which the community can identify with significantly raises the standard of living. It becomes the basis for a bigger satisfaction, than that resulting from the basic needs of home ownership.

In the structure of Polish cities the lack of valuable common space for inhabitants is very often. Places which have power to create real communities. There are plenty of ugly spaces which deterrent with disorder and emptiness. They are the dead parts of the residential environment. Kind of "non-places", where people can dispose a rubbish and go for a walk with a dog. However, their potential is often large. Most of these places reveals a value that can be defined and properly used.

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EXAMPLES

Each of selected examples refers more or less directly to the idea of urban space shared by residents. They represent together a compilation of various issues related to the impact of architecture on the environment of life. Presented topics: building community, taming the space, animation, participatory architecture are crucial in designing friendly spaces for people.

Project „invisible city”

The project was initiated by the Research Department of Material and Visual Culture at the Institute of Sociology, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan and the company Metropolis. It is the presentation of spontaneous forms of creative activity of citizens, present in urban space (Pic.1., Pic.2.). The project, in the assumption of its authors, is to meet three main goals:

1. Presents iconography of modern cities, in particular pays attention to those elements, which we do not normally see.
2. Documents signs of creativity of people, trying to adapt the space to suit their needs and giving it individuality.
3. Documents the uniqueness of specific places in the context of globalization, their aesthetic iconography of cities

„The realization of the project is based on the work of people documenting with cameras signs of the Invisible City. Composed of several people teams of sociologists, ethnographers and anthropologists, working in each of the cities included in the project, are looking in the urban space of creative expression and innovative activities. Their interest is mainly concentrate on the activities that are not subject to any aesthetic conventions, do not rely on the use of factory-produced goods, but which are extremely individual, unique, peculiar. (...) Often clumsy and kitschy projects are worth the presentation and preservation, because they not only materialize ways of inhabitant's life, but they also show how people deal with the space and place, and negotiate the terms of use with others.”⁴

Signs of independent actions to beautify and improve environment, presented on pictures, indicate a problem of taming and adapting the housing space to individual needs. They are the evidence of how important is the need of deciding about the appearance and functioning of living environment in human life.

2.2 Agora in Dronten

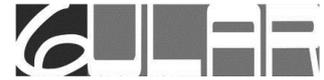
Agora in Dronten (Netherlands), was designed by Frank van Klingeren *“as a commonplace, so that the inhabitants of the district could see each other and in effect understand their otherness”⁵*

The building resemble a big box, did not have any sophisticated form. This covered space has been created so that it might be rented to various users, in whole or in any separate fragments. Glazed walls "invited" passersby inside, allowed users for easy orientation in the interior, which was promoted by the openness of the action (Pic.3., Pic.4.).

The space was arranged in such a way that it was possible to free up the arrangement. Sliding walls, the possibility of driving hooks, fitting the necessary equipment, allowed users to project the space in way that meets their current needs. All the necessary items of equipment such as booths, chairs, desks, mats for sports games, were stored in warehouses. The operating personnel had patterns of activities developed by the architect, who had designed some scenarios of the behavior of potential users of space. *“Van Klingeren brought people to the agora, where many of them saw for the first time theater performance and participated in the*

[4] <http://www.niewidzialnemiasto.pl/>

[5] KOWICKI Marek, Współczesna agora. Wybrane problemy kształtowania ośrodków usługowych dla małych społeczności lokalnych, Politechnika Krakowska, 2004



*festival of classical music. What's more, these people came to the theater for the first time of their own accord, that is, in a way previously unprecedented.*⁶ It has been developed an weekly action plan of Agora, divided into a daily and weekend program. Market, coaching sports, orchestra performances, and discussions with invited guests were held from Monday to Friday. On weekends were organized holidays celebrations, anniversaries, concerts and theater performances.

Unfortunately Agora in Dronten did not outlast the test of time. It was demolished in 2002, a new center of De Nieuwe Meerpaal was built in its place. Polish reality differs from the Dutch. This kind of centres could prove an indispensable tool for building communities and preventing social disintegration

"Tree of Life" in Olecko

The project design by Andrzej Legus (cartoonist and satirist from Olecko) was about installing on the main square in the middle of town "tree of life". The Installation was seemingly innocent, but situated in a well-known space to all residents, caused a significant movement among the local community. it was also the main goal of the project: the impact of space to rise in the community their creative potential. Waking willingness to act and create a local area.

The originator of the whole project has given people an excuse for social action. The empty space has become an area of exchange of information and experience goods: a anonymous square transformed into a specific place with a clearly defined prosaically character. The sculpture similar to the withered tree provoked people constantly into action.

*"The Tree forced the activity: to be alive, people had to beautify constantly, organize further actions and happenings. When there were no activity, the tree was still alive, but as a way of pangs of conscience."*⁷

CONCLUSIONS AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

The aim of the article is to demonstrate the importance of social bonds in the context of revitalization of common spaces for residents and bullets key stages of their design. Presented examples clearly indicate a clear need to create space for activation of the inhabitants. This confirms active participation of representatives of community in all of the listed projects.

Identification of problems and potentials in relation to the use of a selected part of the city is beginning of the design process, which aims to improve the quality of common areas for residents. Basing on the classification by Jan Gehl, activities occurring in the analyzed area can be divided into two categories: essential (necessary, for example, walking and shopping) and leisure (voluntary, such as walking). Essential activities do not have a direct impact on the development of social activity, and therefore order to achieve strengthen the social ties between residents and for the general excitation of positive social interaction, we should enrich the structure of optional activity. Finding potential sites for activity and possibility of functional for them, lets to specify predisposition for the node activity. The methodology allows for creating design guidelines for a variety of planning scenarios, serving improvement of the standards and quality of life and elimination of local problems: low social activity, uneducated neighborly relations, bad image of the place or erode the sense of security.

[6] KOWICKI Marek, Współczesna agora. Wybrane problemy kształtowania ośrodków usługowych dla małych społeczności lokalnych, Politechnika Krakowska, 2004

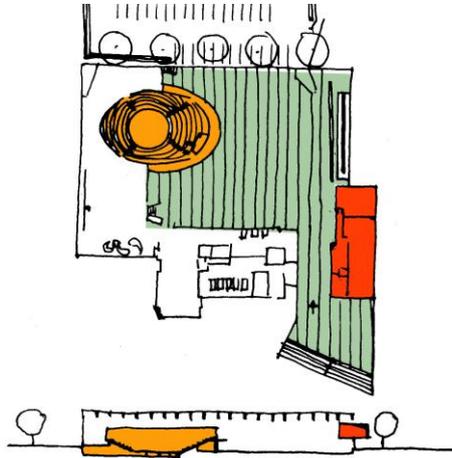
[7] SKRZYPCZAK Bohdan, Drzewo życia na placu Pawłaka, Autoportret. Pismo o dobrej przestrzeni, Społeczności lokalne, Małopolski Instytut Kultury, nr 8/2004



Pic.1. Project „invisible city”. Places spontaneous activities residents.



Pic.2. Project „invisible city”. Individual creation of spaces: chairs, tables, benches.



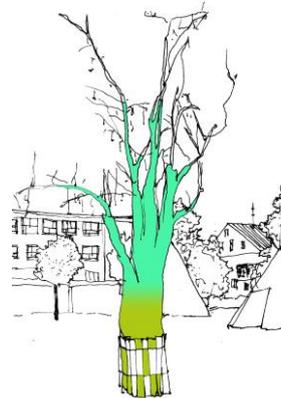
Pic.3. Agora in Dronten (Netherlands). Plan, section.



Pic.4. Agora in Dronten (Netherlands). Interior.



Pic.5. "Tree of Life" in Olecko. Site Plan



Pic.6. "Tree of Life" in Olecko. View.

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- [8] <http://www.niewidzialnemiasto.pl/>