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D.O.M.
THE ARK IS THE HOME

D.O.M. ARKA
– DOMEM

Abstract

A city is composed of homes. The meaning of a home is theoretically the same for everyone, and yet there are differences in the specifics. Humans usually express their individuality, and strive to preserve it in space and time. The home is one of those forms of individually shaping the construction that makes up a city that allows this expression to occur. On the other hand, the more a diverse a city's society is, and which causes its homes to become equally unique and diverse, the more it becomes interesting. Buildings cannot remain in a state of chaos, as the problem of the composition of a city is irreversibly tied with the composition of homes – the most basic element of a city. However, a city, every city, the composition of which is based on Mediterranean tradition, is not only encapsulated in the material body of its homes. In order for an urban composition to become complete, its constituent forms need to contain a transcendental element that expresses itself through D.O.M. Starting from the Rome of Jupiter, through Christian Rome, all the way to modernity, temples have always been an important part of a city. Homes and temples and all the other elements that make up a city, layered over the centuries, create an Eternal City, to which all roads lead. The Ark was also a house. Krakow is one of the beautiful examples of the cultivation of this tradition. The way to Rome may be very long and can lead through Lisbon. In this form, it remains in use.

Keywords; house, D.O.M., ark, symbolism of the form of the ark

Streszczenie

Miasto składa się z domów. Dom dla każdego pozornie znaczy to samo, a jednak w szczególności coś innego. Swą indywidualność człowiek zwykle uzewnętrznia, ponadto stara się, aby utrwalić ją w czasie i przestrzeni. Dom jest jedną z tych form indywidualnego kształtowania materii budowlanej, tworzącej miasto, która na to pozwala. Miasto z kolei jest tym ciekawsze, im ma bardziej zróżnicowane społeczeństwo, co powoduje, że domy, które się w nim znajdują, mają równie

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indywidualne i zróżnicowane formy. Budynki nie mogą pozostawać w bezładzie, gdyż problem kompozycji miasta nierozdzielnie związany jest z kompozycją domu – podstawowego składnika miasta. Lecz miasto, każde miasto, którego kompozycja wywodzi się z tradycji śródziemnomorskiej, nie zamyka się jedynie w materialnym zbiorze domów. Aby jednak kompozycja urbanistyczna była pełna, jej formy składowe muszą jeszcze zawierać pierwiastek transcendentny, wyrażać się poprzez D.O.M. Poczynając od Rzymu Jowisza, poprzez Rzym chrześcijański do współczesności zawsze istotną część miasta stanowiły świątynie. Domy i świątynie oraz wszystkie inne elementy składające się na miasto, nawarstwiające się poprzez wieki, tworzą Wieczne Miasto, do którego wiodą wszystkie drogi. Domem była też Arka. Kraków jest jednym z pięknych przykładów kultywowania tej tradycji. Droga do Rzymu może być bardzo długa, i prowadzić przez Lizbonę. Taka też jest nadal używana.

Słowa kluczowe; dom, D.O.M., arka, symbolika formy arki

1. INTRODUCTION

When asking the question – what makes up a city? – we are going to receive numerous answers, usually regarding the people that inhabit it, the material it was erected from and the cultural climate important to the person that delivers the answer. However, when we make the question more precise, or by slightly altering it, we are going to obtain the answer that a city is made up of homes. Yes, homes, and not buildings, as the latter are only the synonym of a box, and the word itself does not do justice to that which makes up a home, and, to be more precise, it does not point to the immanent relationship between a family and the place that it occupies – a home. Of course, we can say that a home does not necessarily need to be located within a city, as it can be erected in any suitable location. However, in order to not to stray from the main train of thought, let us discuss the issue of the home within a city in regards to two spheres: the physical and the transcendental. If we assume that a city is made up of homes, than the next question is going to be about the problem of an order, which allows us to determine whether a given set of homes comprises a city or just a coincidental group of them. The very term “order” has many meanings¹, a few of which directly pertain to the field of architecture and urban design. By connecting them in a sequence: order – sequence – state – hierarchy – values, we arrive at the concept of a system, from which we can derive a composition. Many works have been written about composition in urban design that state that in order to understand the matter of the organisation of a city, we cannot simply refer to its physical spatial structure. That structure

¹ According to the PWN dictionary <http://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/porzadek;2505556.html> it is: 1. «a regular layout, a plan of something; also: a proper order, state of something»2. «a sequence of something after another thing in accordance with a predetermined hierarchy or rule, also: sequence, layout of something»3. «a state, in which law is abided and peace is kept»4. «a set system of the organisation of a society»5. «a relationship between persons and the values that they adhere to, or between specific phenomena»6. «a structural and compositional system established in ancient times, the main elements of which are strictly proportional to each other».

is usually shaped by an ideological, transcendental factor – it reflects a certain divine order of things. Heavenly Jerusalem² becomes one of the chief elements to which the successive founders of cities refer to. The concept of the home – the Ark from the Old Testament, which was, after all, a work of architecture and engineering, known from its description in the Old Testament, was also one of the first floating homes – cities, housing “all of creation”, but that was also constructed from a certain ideological element, which constituted Noah’s obedience to Yahweh.

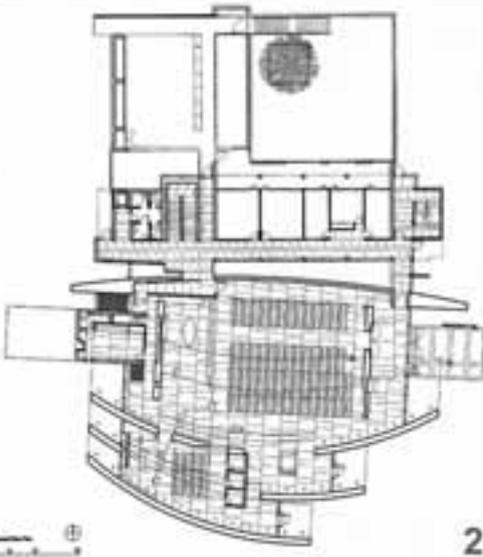
2. THE MEANING OF D.O.M. IN THE COMPOSITION OF A CITY

Rome, which has been the centre of Mediterranean culture for centuries, has, in the sense of being an urban organism, been influenced by numerous ideologies. It is there that the pagan inscription I.O.M. (Iovi Optimo Maximo), located in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus and devoted to him as the chief of the pantheon of Roman gods, had originated. After converting to Christianity, it was changed to D.O.M. (Deo Optimo Maximo). The coincidence in the meaning of the letters in this case seems to be beneficial, at least in Polish, as writing the word *dom* (Polish for home – transl. note) with capital letters, we can assume that, in opposition to *dom* written with minuscule letters in the profane sense, D.O.M. can be considered a higher form of a home in the religious sense, a temple, a house of God, the presence of which in the set of homes allows us to proclaim that set a city, a group of homes that demonstrates a certain manner of ordering within physical and transcendental spaces. The location of homes in relation to one another, and especially their architectural forms, are not without influence on a city – quite the contrary, they are immensely important, as it is enough to point out that in Hebrew, the word “ir” (רִיעַ), which means “city”, is of the feminine gender. The harmony that is the most important element of composition, occurs not only at the level of formal relations, but also on the level of transcendental ones, as well as between these levels. The description of New Jerusalem in the Revelation of St. John³ reflects the foundation of a perfect urban composition, which is described there as: a regularity of dimensions, proportions understandable to humans, symmetry, a perfection of shape and material, a clarity of colour and the shining presence of God. Humanity received a guideline that the ones to be the closest are 12 x 12 000 of the just, who are going to be sealed⁴, as the pursuit of perfection should be a method of choosing the path that leads there. Of these there are many, just like the human beings that were, are, and who are going to be. In the sphere of architectural forms, the Ark serves as a sort of a bridge between past and the future that is New Jerusalem.

² J. Uścińowicz, *Symbolic structure in the architecture of the temple – introduction into theology of the sacred art*. Elpip. 30, 2011, p. 130–180.

³ J 21.9 <http://biblia.deon.pl/rozdzial.php?id=1109>

⁴ J 7. *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands.*



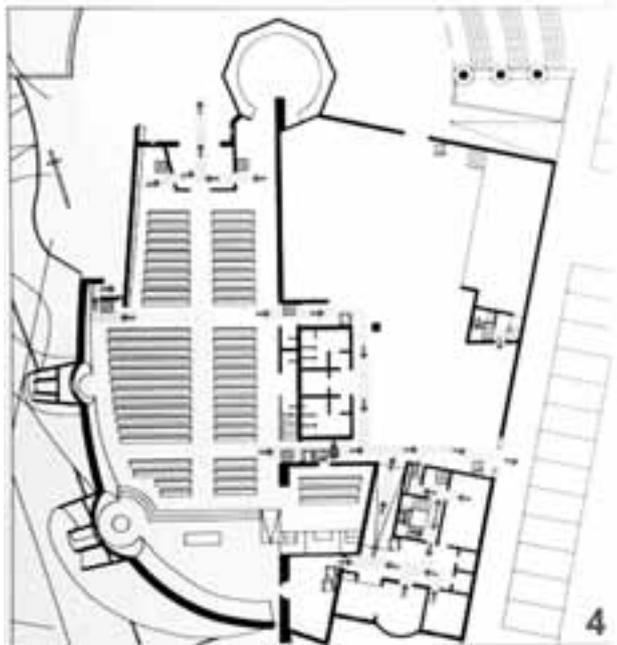
- III. 1. The Dio Padre Misericordio church by Richard Meier. View from the East. Photo. by Olga Górnik, 2015
- III. 2. The Dio Padre Misericordio church by Richard Meier. Ground floor plan, Source: <http://www.richardmeier.com/?projects=jubilee-church-2>

3. THE ARK AS THE ARCHITECTURAL FORM OF THE HOUSE OF GOD

Places of worship that have a form that is similar to that of the Ark, especially Noah's Ark, are not often encountered, probably due to the complexity of their structure and the associated construction costs. Furthermore, there is no canonical form of an ark, and until they have either been scientifically proven, or its remains⁵ have been found, the interpretation of its form is going to remain varied. Within three cities: Rome, Krakow and Lisbon, which fulfil the role of metropolises (understood as metropolises of spirit), churches of this type have been built, but not without trouble. Taking into account the time period in which they were built, determined by the author as between 1960 and 2000, the author selected the Dio Padre Misericordioso church by Richard Meier, the Arka Pana church by Wojciech Pietrzyk and the Nova Igreja Paroquial de S. Francesco Xavier church by Jose Teodoro Troufa Real to be discussed in the paper. Their common traits include: an architectural form that was avant-garde during the period of their construction and the illustrious achievements of their authors. The Dio Padre Misericordioso church, located in Rome, is relatively well known, at least among enthusiasts of modern religious architecture. Constructed on the occasion of the celebrations of the jubilee year 2000, it was the wish of St. John Paul II to erect a church that would commemorate it. Designed by Richard Meier, a Jewish-American, and constructed in accordance with a competition winning design, it brings many things to mind with its highly expressive architectural form. The dynamic, triple opening of the interior to the light elevates the gaze of all those gathered inside upwards. The symbolic form of the church expresses – according to the Author⁶ – the Holy Trinity through the use of architecture, and the ponds of water that surround it symbolise the sacrament of the christening. The Mercy of God the Father is possibly symbolised by the transparent walls that invite us to enter and participate in the liturgy. The author himself pointed out the role of the light in the minimalist interior, which, by constantly changing, creates its unique feel, and, after dark, illuminates the surroundings from the inside. The architectural form is that of an ark that opens itself towards the outside, as if inviting you to take shelter under the sail-like walls of its nave. However, it is deliberately isolated with a concrete fence from the space, which does not clearly belong to the sacred. In front of the church, from the side of Via Francesco Tovagliari, which gently bends away from the axis that leads the gaze of those who visit this place towards the gated entrance. It is a rather small square, with one half covered with warm-coloured travertine, while the other is covered in grass. This full gate plays the part of a physical barrier, possibly opening itself up during holidays and thus increasing the sacred space by adding to it the courtyard of the church. In this symbolic manner, the sacred takes over the entirety of the arching and triangular space, flanked on both sides by tall, five storey residential buildings. This space is enclosed by the dynamic massing of the church from the southern side, and the tall pines and recreational areas from the north. The transparency of the walls on the east-west axis was juxtaposed by the architect with the opacity of the concrete structures at right angles. This is logically justified by the church's urban context, as numerous windows and

⁵ <http://oblubienica.eu/czytelnia/fakty-biblijne/arka-noego-odnaleziona>

⁶ Three circles of equal radius generate the profiles of the three concrete shells that, together with the spine-wall, make up the body of the nave. While the three shells imply the Holy Trinity, the reflecting pool symbolizes the role played by water in the sacrament of Baptism. <http://www.richardmeier.com/?projects=jubilee-church-2>



III. 3. View of the Nova Igreja Paroquial de S. Francisco Xavier church from the south, Photo. by the Author. 2016

III. 4. The floor plan of the church. Photo. by the Author. 2016

balconies of nearby residential buildings are placed to the north and south of the main axis of the church. The architectural form of this church, from those that are compared further in the paper, is the most austere, minimalist and the most technical in its appearance, but at the same time the most logical and, in a sense—despite surprising the viewer gazing upon Meier’s work with its ambiguity—predictable.

The same cannot be said of the next example, this time from Lisbon, Portugal. The architectural form proposed by Jose Teodoro Troufa Real is in its essence unpredictable and mannerist in its general expression. The interior and the detail of the structure, despite sort of posing as if to express the pompousness often encountered in Portugal, seem to irresistibly emanate with a certain imprecise manner, perhaps due to referencing their Angolan sources. The pairing of the very strong forms of one of the chapels, with column-like, cylindrical and robust shapes, with an astoundingly light, tent-like, canvas covering, elicits disturbing associations of a halted construction, non-linearity, or perhaps even the decomposition of some fragments of the whole, of some form of message which is unreadable to the layman. Similar forms have been used in the rhythm of three columns which flank the external arched staircase.

The Nova Igreja Paroquial de S. Francesco Xavier church was built in Lisbon at the Restelo housing estate, in accordance with a design by the Portuguese architect Jose Teodoro Troufa Real, who is originally from Angola. The architectural form of this church also resembles that of an ark, although it seems to depart from tradition somewhat. The local inhabitants are not too accepting of the form of the church, and it remains unfinished and without a tower, with a deeper investigation revealing that the construction lacks the necessary funding to be completed. Some see elements of Masonic symbolism in both the design and the built church, perhaps due to the architect’s membership in the Loja Masoneria Grande Oriente Lusitano. By comparing the successive versions of the design (there is a model and a selection of colourful renderings inside the church) with those posted on its website⁷ and that which has been built, we can see the incremental simplifications and changes to the form of the church and its colour scheme that were made. Despite the use of interesting solutions (a spiral wind turbine that generates electricity designed as a part of the tower), both the surrounding area and the structure itself are not welcoming from up close. Rather, it surprises with strong contrasts of forms and colour, while the interior seems more toned down when compared to the, shall we say, disharmoniously designed whole, which does not leave a passer-by without an opinion. We can either accept or reject the architecture of this building. The decision regarding individual choice was left by the designer to each passer-by. The architectural form is that of an enclosed ark, that stands against immense “waves” which rush on from the sea of the large blocks of the surrounding housing estate, allowing us to take shelter in the bright interior of the “hull” of the main nave.

The church of the Mother of God and Queen of Poland in Krakow, or rather, in Nowa Huta, also popularly called Arka Pana (the Lord’s Ark in Polish – transl. note), a work of Wojciech Pietrzyk, has earned itself numerous analyses and discussions of its symbolism⁸ in scientific and popular sources. This church, or rather the entire complex of buildings which are located around the main form, is an interesting and cohesive urban solution,

⁷ <http://troufareal.blogspot.com/>

⁸ <http://ciekawykrakow.blogspot.com/2014/11/nowohucki-dowod-wiary-koscio-arka-pana.html>



Ill. 5. The church of the Mother of God and Queen of Poland. Photo. by the Author. 2016

which plays an important spatial and social part in the lives of the residents of Bieńczyce. The charities and non-government organisations based in these buildings enrich the area and complement the commercial structures located to the south of the aforementioned complex. Comparisons are often made between it and Le Corbusier's chapel in Ronchamp. The search for the source of this comparison in Polish language publications leads us to the conclusion that the first person to make it was H. Buszko, who stated so in his doctoral thesis written at the Faculty of Architecture of the Cracow University of Technology⁹. Siedlecka¹⁰, by referencing Le Corbusier's maxim that those who seek harmony have a sense of the sacred, further developed his thought, namely: "This does not mean that churches should be banal, or 'worldly'. The only thing this means is that, like in Le Corbusier's oft-cited motto, non-religious architecture can also have a religious character (in a broader sense, like a beautiful landscape, for instance)"¹¹. This thought is also illustrated by a photograph of the church in Bieńczyce, taken during its construction (we can see that based on the clearly visible scaffolding and the lack of the cross – tower). It is hard to find a direct confirmation of H. Buszko's thesis in Rosier-Siedlecka's statements. However, even a cursory analysis of its conceptual design¹² and that which has been built reveals the unique qualities of the shaping of its form, often encountered in previous works by that architect. First, we can clearly observe the precise implementation of architectural detail on Pietrzyk's behalf. Equally distinct is the mutual interconnection of the space of the nave with the presbytery, along with placing the participants of the liturgy at opposing sides on two levels, so that both groups can, in a sense, "circle around" the altar, as well as the slanting of the floor towards the altar. There is nothing of this sort in the conceptual design of the chapel in Ronchamp, just as there is no slanting of the surface of the main nave in the direction of the altar, which is a typical feature of the churches designed by W. Pietrzyk. The form of the floor plan of the chapel in Ronchamp is partially concaved and partially convex, while that of the floor plan of the church in Bieńczyce is convex. The towers are also designed differently – in Ronchamp there are two forms that resemble towers, while the church in Bieńczyce does not have any, instead sporting a single steel cross with a golden crown. Similarly to the two previously discussed designs, the tower, or rather a steel cross with the golden crown of the Mother of God and Queen of Poland, plays the role of the "mast", delineating the vertical direction towards the sky, as well as symbolising a support for the invisible sail of faith, which allows the Ark to maintain its chosen course. The form of the temple is that of a semi-open ark, absorbing light during the day and emitting it at night, as well as a sort of defensive structure, which has proven itself with excellence in troubled times. The interior, with an outstanding expression and a dynamic, sculptural accent in the form of Crucified Christ, is one of the most beautiful aesthetic solutions found in the churches of that period. When comparing the manner of the functioning of light in both buildings – in the chapel in Ronchamp and the church in Bieńczyce, we can also clearly see a different compositional approach. The light in Bieńczyce operates through large surfaces, which heavily illuminate

⁹ A. Buszko, *Ewolucja myśli architektonicznej w sztuce sakralnej po reformach Soboru Watykańskiego II na przykładzie Krakowa*, doctoral thesis, Cracow University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture, 2006, p. 109.

¹⁰ M. Rosier-Siedlecka, *Posoborowa architektura sakralna*, RW KUL, Lublin, 1979, p. 214.

¹¹ *Op.cit.*, p. 214.

¹² T. P. Szafer, *Nowa Architektura Polska. Diariusz lat 1971–1975*, Arkady, Warszawa 1979, p. 174–5.

the multi-level interior of the church despite colourful stained-glass windows. Meanwhile, the interior of the chapel in Ronchamp is illuminated with a colourful, yet point-like, intense light which enters through irregularly placed, sized and shaped windows. The external surface of the walls is also different – as one structure is plastered, while the other is clad in stone. The only similarity between these buildings can be identified in the form of their roofs, which resemble the form of a boat that “rests upon a rock”, which is formed by the slanted walls of both structures. This is probably the root of the popular name of the church in Bieńczyce – “Arka Pana” – The Lord’s Ark.

4. CONCLUSION

Despite numerous existing definitions of a city, it seems that this concept is not complete in the context of the space that is reserved for living in as a set of homes without the inclusion of houses of worship as homes of a special type, which organise the spiritual space of the residents.

Churches, due to their distinct architectural form, become important nodes within the urban composition of a city, as well as its landscape. They play a similar role in the open landscape, becoming points of reference, which causes the beauty of the spirit to transcend into the beauty of the landscape.

The symbolism of the Ark, being distinct from among the meanings of the architectural forms of temples, requires deeper study. The role of this sketch is to turn the attention of the reader to this multithreaded, important and complex problem.

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