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HOME LOST

DOM UTRACONY

Abstract

Home – a space from our childhood situated between a few walls, a place of senti-mental returns, a central point on our mental map of places painted with emotions. Home is also a house, an architecture expressed by its width, height, cubature, a detail, a game of light and shadow. While we create our physical space to inhabit, we fill it in with individual traits, which make us feel at home. The awareness of our unique-ness shapes our personal identity. In the recent years, we have been chasing jobs, at the same time changing places that we live in. In various places on the Earth, we have been creating "our home" for a moment, for a year or longer. Hundreds of immigrants from different cultural regions have been looking for their new home in Europe. Is the European identity based on common cultural heritage able to overcome the existing situation resulting from the global politics? Or Europe, as we have known it so far, is at the end of its journey?

Keywords: home, city, identity, space, Poland, Europe

Streszczenie

Dom – przestrzeń naszego dzieciństwa zawarta pomiędzy kilkoma ścianami, miejsce sentymentalnych powrotów, punkt centralny na naszej mentalnej mapie miejsc za-pisanych emocjami. Dom to także architektura, wyrażona szerokością, wysokością, kubaturą, detalem, grą światła i cienia. Kształtując naszą fizyczną przestrzeń zamiesz-kania nadajemy jej indywidualnych cech, które sprawiają, że czujemy się w swoim domu. Świadomość własnej odrębności i niepowtarzalności kształtuje naszą tożsa-mość osobistą. W ostatnich latach w pogoni za pracą zmieniamy miejsca zamiesz-kania, tworzymy w różnych zakątkach świata „nasz dom" na chwilę, na rok na kilka lat, swojego nowego domu w Europie szukają setki imigrantów z krajów odmiennych kulturowo. Czy tożsamość europejska oparta na wspólnym rodowodzie kulturowym jest w stanie przezwyciężyć zaistniałą sytuację, będącą efektem globalnej polityki? A może Europa, jaką znaliśmy do tej pory jest u końca swojej drogi?

Słowa kluczowe: dom, miasto, tożsamość, przestrzeń, Polska, Europa

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Home – some of us have it in a travel bag or a backpack, which is full of things, pictures and souvenirs we were given "for the road", being for a long time our only contact with the closest ones. Some people have just created their own dream place on the Earth; others have received their houses with all the sentimental memories. Home, however, is a space from our childhood placed between a few walls, a place of returns, which reminds us of the sun in July reflected in a copper rooftop of a nearby house, a smell of fresh bread from the local bakery or a rhythmical sound of a tramway passing through the neighbouring street. It is an asylum where, surrounded by the closest family, we feel safe. It is the most important point on our mental map of places painted with emotions. A home has also its physical dimension defined by its width, height, cubature, a detail, a game of light and shadow. It is an architectural structure ensuring safety and privacy. By shaping our material area of living, we customise it, in a sociological understanding. "Those who have at least once changed their place of living are surely familiar with the need to accustom the new space as soon as it is possible. Moving things, placing and organising them are some of the ways to ,domesticate' what is foreign to us, ways to give a space its unique character and a piece of oneself, so in effect, it becomes our property"[1]. We buy furniture, we introduce colour and lights that make us feel comfortable and safe. We fill the shelves with books and little things that are, in the end, too many when it comes to Christmas cleaning. What differs our area from many others of a similar form are those little objects, which make us feel at home. A lot depends on our individual preferences, character, sense of aesthetics and age. It is clear, especially in a multi-generation houses, where the youngest generation requires their own space and makes it very contrasting compared to the rest of the house. "The space that we use is never neutral, it is valued in an individual way by its every user with big or small dose of emotions. There are many dimensions on top of which we find histories, emotions, impressions – motives which make the area this way and not the other"[2]. It is disturbing when we consider being in our own place also outside our houses, claiming the outer space just for us, building walls, fences, putting barriers. Unfortunately, this is still an unsolved problem of multi-family houses in the so-called high standard, especially in Poland. Under the pretext of one's own security, we destroy basic advantages of urban space, the possibility to move freely in a labyrinth of streets and squares. A city has always been built for the protection and comfort of its inhabitants. However, the currently used forms of protection have been deformed, and it serves only few people. This phenomenon has reached a level dangerous for a city to function normally. Or maybe it is a misinterpretation of a feeling of uniqueness, individuality creating the personality of a citizen in a distorted way[3]. Heidegger would warn (text "…poetically man dwells…") about a too narrow understanding of the phenomenon. He would underline that dwelling simply becomes occupying space and ceases to be experienced as a way of being a human [4]. In a

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[1] A. Spruch, *O miejscach, nie-miejscach i oswajaniu,* Wydawnictwo Internetowe Witryna nr 22 (224) 20 listopada 2008.

[2] T. Kapecki, *Tożsamość przestrzeni miejskich – czyli 7 żywotów kota,* Monografia, Ed: Biuro Biennale INAW 2014, Wydział Architektury Wnętrz ASP w Krakowie.

[3] A. Górski – a fragment of critique to the report „Przestrzeń życia dla Polaków".

[4] M. Heidegger, „…poetycko mieszka człowiek…". [in:] idem: *Odczyty i rozprawy*, trans. J. Mizera. Kraków, 2002.

well-organised city space, the rules of social existence are different, they are created by all citizens in a democratic way. Our home, our place of residence is connected to the social reality in which we live. This reality is shaped by common experience and, depending on our current social relations, we are its independent observer or active participant who identifies him – or herself with a social group of differentiated identity [5]. "In a social aspect, a space is perceived by a single man as an element consolidating them with the collectivism around common elements with symbolic load and shared during interaction with others"[6]. An important factor, which shapes a territorial identity, is the reference to the history, to symbolic places, which are significant for a city, to historic architecture, necropoleis etc. "To be able to read a space collectively, it is necessary to have common experiences, memory and knowledge, proper or secondary, passed on to us"[7]. Positive characteristics of common spaces have been noticed to have an impact on the quality of life and dwelling, mental health of the inhabitants, and their emotional growth. That is why the development of public space is crucial for local authorities as well as its inhabitants. The conclusion seems obvious; however, its' implementation is impeded by law. "So far, any space has been limited to a house and everything outside of it perceived as something foreign. This type of thinking was heading towards an architectonical and urban chaos. Today's thinking about the architecture of tomorrow breaks the stereotypes of urban space thought and it introduces new relationships between a living space and its surroundings. The lack of urban coherence and the detachment from social and cultural conditions definitely have an impact on the quality of life, safety and social contacts"[8]. Slowly, but steadily, our attitude towards a living place has been changing. A certain type of behaviour is gone, a behaviour of people inhabiting their new "houses" in newly created settlements similar to Nowa Huta, Starachowice or Tychy. They were built at the beginning of the second half of the 20th century, and the cultural mix created there by all newcomers from various parts of Poland would create such a strong community that it would integrate new generations in the area for the coming years. A little bit less interesting is the image of the so-called "estate-bedrooms" built in the 80's. The image is infamous for the negative behaviour of youth subcultures who, with the regained freedom, reacted to asocial urban decisions, which did not include basic elements favouring socialisation. It would seem that all the wrong decisions concerning estate building in Poland are gone. However, the last construction boom with its peak in 2007–2009 also brought many mistakes. And all this with the full consent of law,

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[5] A man as a social being, has natural need for mutual interaction. This need is realized in public space of city and housing estate. The creation of such space constitutes the vital issue of cultural landscape in contemporary cities. The significance of the matter has been expressed in Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007) where the need for high quality cultural public spaces in integrated urban development has been emphasized. Another, more recent document on contemporary city design, concerning man-city relation, is Karta Przestrzeni Publicznej (Public Space Charter) established during the 3rd Congress of Polish Urban Development held in 2009.

[6] T. Budzik, *Przestrzeń jako składnik tożsamości w świecie globalizacji,* Historia-Kultura-Globalizacja nr 11. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2012, p. 16.

[7] E. Rewers, *Post-polis. Wstęp do filozofii ponowoczesnego miasta,* Universitas, 2005, p. 21.

[8] K. Biskup, *Przestrzeń społeczna w miejscu zamieszkania,* Środowisko Mieszkaniowe nr 10, 2012, p. 36.

Ill. 1.　Home Lost, photo by T. Kapecki

especially related to urban development. One would speculate that if the Charter of Public Space, adopted by the Third Congress of Polish Urban Planning in Poznan, had appeared few years before, the image of what was built during those times would have been more positive. Sociologists and architects would not have to look for solutions concerning the revitalisation of residential areas, especially in terms of social integration of inhabitants[9]. The actual changes refer to the ongoing revaluation of conscience related to the place that we live in, and this is not our specialisation, but a world trend resulting from the globalisation of economy. Chasing a job that would ensure a better economic status, calm and wealthy life, we build in various places in the world "our home", for a moment, a year, few years, sometimes forever. "More and more frequently, opinion polls and profound sociological research point to leaving an identity and adopting isolating attitudes towards local issues as well as the increase of absent and self-alienating behaviour. We could be even talking about whole groups of people without their own country who do not feel the need for this type of affiliation"[10]. United Europe is a gift for those thinking about the future of their children, but it also carries social and internal denationalisation problems, especially for those with professional ambitions. Will the already damaged relation between a human being and their living place, social or cultural bonds built for generations, their common tradition and religion survive? Or perhaps the simple American model will prevail? The model where a home follows a job and a new place does not have any special meaning. What is comforting in this situation is the fact that all worries expressed by some turned out to be irrelevant when Poland joined the European Union. The fear was that it would have a huge impact on the nation's integrity and identity. "It will also have a significant impact on the state of their conscience and patriotism, it might also fade away our national and cultural identity. There will be, indeed, unfavourable moral changes"[11]. A decade from the union, one can say that the Polish attachment to their history, strong ethnic conscience and national patriotism have been an effective barrier for the fears expressed previously. We must add that this refers mainly to the older generation who, because of their age, do not have special ambitions or materialistic needs. For the young society, the easy way to move around the world have initiated the changes in the stable man-home relation, clearly leaving the emotional and social part behind and pointing out to one's uniqueness that shapes an individuality. "In other words, the narratives on home are currently being redefined, reflected on and negotiated, and the conclusions can only be accepted conditionally and temporarily"[12]. For the new, pragmatic generation, comfort is the most important criteria of a modern house. For the architects designing a new place, it is a must, a service to be advertised and sold. The idea of comfort covers all those elements of a house that help to care for

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[9] The main responsible for this were the developers. The strenght of the construction lobby at the time is reflected in the legal changes.

[10] M. S. Szczepański, *Od identyfikacji do tożsamości.* UŚ Gazeta Uniwersytecka, Wydanie nr 1 (131) October, 2005.

[11] S. Wojtkowiak, *Tendencje globalistyczne a sprawa zachowania polskiej integralności i tożsamości narodowej,* Towarzystwo Kultury Świeckiej im. Tadeusza Kotarbińskiego. http://www.kulturaswiecka.pl/node/73

[12] M. Łukasik, M. Jewdokimow, *Socjologia zamieszkiwania. Narracje dyfuzje interwencje,* Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie Kardynała Wyszyńskiego, Warszawa, 2016, p. 10.

one's health, leisure, and will ensure an easy connection with the omnipresent digitisation of lives. Surrounded by a wall or hidden behind a security door, people forget about neighbourhood or generation bonds. Behind their threshold, there is only anonymity. These changes are clearly resulting from the culture of materialism dominating for a long time, so criticised in the recent years by anthropologists who were trying to foresee the results of civilisation progress. Social changes that made us *homo consumens* have caused that the characteristics typical a while ago for western countries have become our own, too. We cannot deny it in the economic aspect, as it is an important development factor not only for a city, but also a whole country[13].

During the process of reaching the European level of wealth, new problems concerning all the societies of the Maastricht Treaty occurred. Today, the entire Europe is facing more difficult challenges. The Arab Spring in the years 2010–2013 brought an uncontrolled influx of people from a foreign, for most of the European countries, cultural region, from the countries of North Africa and the Middle East in particular. The range of this phenomenon is currently causing extreme emotions, even among societies known for their tolerance and empathy. Immigrants, just like us in previous years, are looking for their new place in Europe. The difference is that this new place is supposed to help them survive, and only for some, it has become a pretext to a comfortable, social life. This uncontrolled influx of such a big number of people is a real problem for our cities, our homes, our slowly lost but still existing identity. "Every space has its own, unique history which cannot be compared to another in terms of its culture or geography. Sudden changes in the population structure of a particular region devalue the bonds between the place and its inhabitants. Hence, resettlements cause the destruction of a culture of a particular place"[14]. Newcomers who depreciate values expressed for many years cause the local people to cut off from their roots, especially those locals who were born and grew up in a particular place. People lose emotional bond and stop identifying themselves with a place when they cannot find their values in the new reality. "The conscience of one's own place is more collective than individual state, and it refers to the individual, to objects and places as well as the society which lives in the area, ensuring that the space is important in building identity"[15]. When a place like this is lost, usually, one is trying to change their living place and build a new home. This type of phenomenon could have been observed for many years in the South of France, which is a result of the country's former colonial politics. Apart from Europe, we can find the division into "coloured" neighbourhoods in most of the large U.S. cities. The difference is that the displacement of white by coloured people is a part of the cultural landscape, and the link between the living place and its inhabitants is much more loose. Is the European identity based on the common cultural origin able to overcome the existing situation resulting from

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[13] We came to like shopping centres as places where we can enjoy being together in one common space. The wide walk-ways, open spaces, thermal comfort, and above all, the roof over our heads, make such places the substitute for contemporary public spaces that for many seem even better that those "open" ones as they are safer, guarded, and give a sense of being together and having one, common goal – to own more and more.

[14] T. Budzik, *Przestrzeń jako składnik tożsamości w świecie globalizacji,* Historia-Kultura – Globalizacja nr 11. Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2012, p. 18–19.

[15] *Ibidem.*

global politics? Europe, our common home that used to be the symbol of peace, openness and solidarity, is changing its image and becoming a symbol of isolation, separation and selfishness. Will the new Europe, emerging in front of our eyes, give birth to a New European who will inhabit a new European house? Or maybe Europe, as we have known so far, the most impressive political construction of modern times, is at the end of its road?

"A place means safety, a space means freedom. We are attached to the first one and we miss the second one. There is no place like home"[16].

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