

## “KARMELICKA MAGIC TRIANGLE” – THE CRACOVIAN VERSION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### Abstract

The plot near Karmelicka Street is located about 200 meters from the core of the Old City of Kraków. The empty site covers 8,222 sq meters. The former agricultural area was adopted in the 19th century as a barracks square. Once the army left at the end of the 20th century, the plot became municipal property. Since that time, the area has been sold, changing owners three times; finally it returned to the Krakow commune. This paper presents the clash between the concepts of the city authorities, and the expectations of the local community regarding redevelopment of this unique place. The issues will be discussed in the context of history, as well as the significance of this area to Krakow's heritage.

*Keywords: Kraków heritage, sustainable development, social engagement*

### 1. Introduction

The aim of the historical outline summarised in the first part of this article is to present the complex and fascinating nature of the history of the area discussed, including the myriad traces of medieval activity that have become its intangible heritage. History has come full circle – those people who initiate a discussion on the history of the area today make reference, consciously or unconsciously, to the things which used to be the very essence of the former Garbary *jurydyka*: local trade, craftsmanship, green gardens, tradition, and culture.

#### 1.1. A Historical Perspective on Urban Outline – The Oldest History of the Garbary *jurydyka*<sup>1</sup>

In terms of geographic conditions, the areas west of Wawel were marshy, located below the Okół hill, and frequently flooded by the Vistula. However, these factors made the soil fertile, and the most precious soil type, Chernozem, or ‘black earth’ – is reflected in the name of a suburban settlement – Czarna Wieś, or ‘Black Village’. Yet the key factor that precipitated the appearance of human settlements on the western side of the city – and the subsequent development of the *jurydyka* – was the presence of the river Rudawa. The river's branches – each with its own name – twisted and turned, and the river itself was an exceptionally rich reservoir of water. As early as the 13th century, ditches were constructed to create an entire ditch network supplying urban moats and providing buildings – cloisters and mills – with water. Both the waters of the Rudawa, as well as the numerous ponds and lakes found on the western areas, abounded with fish, the basis of the local population's economic activity. Once again, traces of this activity are reflected in local names used today, such as Rybaki (‘Fishermen’) or Stróża Rybna (‘Fish watch’). One

of the Rudawa's arms flowed across Piasek (‘Sand’); also in this case, the topographical name of the area is associated with the activity of the river, which deposited sand and eroded troughs between hills.

Along with the development of the settlement and determination of the economic profile of the area (which benefitted from the presence of the river), the previous geographical name was superseded by a new one, one related to human activity. The formerly farming-gardening nature of Piasek developed into a craftsmen's settlement of tanners, and the *jurydyka* they inhabited started to be called Garbary, from the Polish ‘garbarz’ – tanner. This name appeared as early as the 15th century when numerous tanneries appeared along the river, closer to the city; while further towards Czarna Wieś, one could also observe pottery workshops taking advantage of the abundance of clay on the wet areas. Since access to water enabled the cultivation of plants, the artisans' workshops and households were surrounded by arable fields, orchards, and gardens.

1363 marks an important moment for the development of Garbary, as in that year the area of the *jurydyka* was significantly extended. In general, the 14th and 15th centuries were a period of particularly dynamic economic development of this area. To paint a picture of the people's vibrant craft and manufacturing activity, it is sufficient to say that, as early as the 16th century, the area was swarming with 160 tanneries, as well as brickyards, malt houses, and mills. The western areas of the settlement were known for the activity of goat producers (in Polish – krupnicy), who gave the name to one of the most important streets of the *jurydyka* – Krupnicza. The development of craftsmanship is associated with royal permits, which provide an additional confirmation of the prestige and importance the area enjoyed; one example is the permit for the operation of a mill (polishing shop) near Szeroka (currently Karmelicka) issued by Kazimierz Jagiellończyk, the king of Poland, in 1448.

The influx of people, mostly motivated by the developing craftsmanship, stimulated the expansion of the road and urban planning system of the quarter; new streets

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<sup>1</sup> A Polish term for an independent settlement directly outside a royal city, held under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastic or secular lord who chartered, founded, and owned it.

were given names related to the types of businesses found on them, usually clustered in particular areas. The older, northern part of Garbary, and its planning outline (developed in the 13th century), have survived until today. Although the streets have changed their names, disappeared, or altered their course, the network of key roads for the area has remained intact since the Middle Ages. The oldest of them is Karmelicka, which has remained one of the major streets of the city's downtown area, extending from its strict centre. In its earliest days, it was a track towards Łobzów; it was referred to as Droga Łobzowska, although its upper part (between the city walls and what today is the Carmelites church) was called Szeroka (Polish for 'wide'), since it functioned as a market and as *jurydyka*'s central square. The oldest record concerning the street comes from 1392. Garbarska Street, running along the river, can boast of a similarly old documented history. Since one of the riverbanks was overgrown with gardens belonging to the Carmelite monastery, the street remained inhabited only on the side closer to the town. Yet another street that has remained until today is Półwie (later on referred to as Św. Piotra Street, currently Łobzowska Street), which served as a track to Nowa Wieś. On the other hand, the street leading west towards Czarna Wieś was Czarna (currently Czarnowiejska), connected by a street across (formerly Dolna, currently Rajska) with Szeroka. Rajska received its name in the 19th century, because its route passed near the "Raj" (in Polish 'Paradise') garden. Garncarska Street (currently Krupnicza), was created in the 16th century, or at least this is when the first solid buildings were erected, including a pot makers' guildhall (mentioned in records) and an inn. Although the *jurydyka* extended to a much larger area, this paper will focus only on the section directly related to the topic of this study.

Over an eight hundred year period, the *jurydyka* was destroyed twice. On the first occasion, it was set on fire during an invasion by Prince Maximilian of Habsburg in 1587. Jan Zamoyski, who was leading the city's defence, decided not to abandon the quarter (it was a frequent defensive strategy to evacuate districts and set them on fire) and erect strongholds along its borders. However, this strategy turned out to be unsuccessful, as eventually the line of defence moved to the very heart of Garbary, and battles took place near the walls of the Carmelite monastery. As a result of the *jurydyka*'s German inhabitants' decision to treacherously support the invaders by attacking the Polish army from behind, the consequences were drastic: more than seventy German tanners were found guilty of treason and executed, while their houses and workshops were burned. This decision not only destroyed the quarter, but also decimated its craftsmen. However, the *jurydyka* managed to recover quite quickly – in 1632 there were 200 houses, residences, and several city palaces. The view of Garbary at that time can be seen in the city panorama from *Civitate-sorbis terrarium*.

The final end to economic prosperity was brought about by the Swedish Deluge, when the suburb was burned, its churches looted, and its inhabitants murdered.

The invaders did not even spare the water infrastructure. Following this destruction, the *jurydyka* has never regained its former economic dynamism and importance. What used to be craftsmen's workshops were turned into farmland and gardens, and thereby the initial agricultural and semi-rural nature of the quarter was restored. In 1791, Garbary – historically the largest of the suburban *jurydykas* – was annexed into the administrative area of Kraków. Only in the 19th century, as a result of an economic boom, were new streets marked out and city palaces erected. This is also when Garbary became an integral part of the town. The gardens were parcelled out for development, with only a few sections left at the back of the buildings (as in the case of Krupnicza Street), which became surrounded by developed quarters. This layout survived almost substantially intact until the 1990s, with courtyard gardens behind the walls of city houses.

## 1.2. Piaski Church

The Carmelite Order's Annunciation Church remains the focal point of Garbary. This order was brought to Kraków by Władysław Jagiełło – a fact worth mentioning, as Kraków was one of the two cities, along with Poznań, where the Carmelites first arrived in Poland. They took over a special place (a venue for a cult that dates back to at least the 11th century), on the bank of the river flowing through Garbary. The earliest records mention the area as "Suburbium Arenae" – "in Arena" and refer to a chapel erected on a sandy island by, as legend provides, Duke Władysław Herman, as a *votum* for miraculous healing. The chapel was located on a sandy bank, hence its name "na Piasku" (on Sand). One cannot exclude the possibility that the first Romanesque building was made of wood, yet later on a brick Gothic church was erected. Meanwhile, the gardens located near the monastery were established during the reign of Władysław Jagiełło. The remains of the Gothic church, burned during the Deluge, were incorporated into a Baroque structure (the present church was consecrated in 1679), which influenced the spatial plan of the interior, deprived of its transept. The most important place in the na Piasku Carmelite church is a chapel with a miraculous picture of St. Mary ("Matka Boska Piaskowa") which dates from the 16th century. The layout of the monastery – with equipment, wall paintings, and marvellous gardens – has been preserved almost intact until today. Currently the Carmelite church is the parish church, performing the very important function of integrating the local community.

## 1.3. The Army Barracks, Avenues and Cigar Factory

In the 19th century, the Austrian authorities began implementing a plan to transform the city into a stronghold. The area of one of the tanners' granges was allotted for the construction of a barracks for infantry. a strip of land along the northern development line of Rajska Street was to be developed, one that consisted of a building with a drill square at the back, and closed with a hospital from the west (Dolnych Młynów Street). This complex was erected

from 1860–1862, according to a design by Feliks Księżarski, an architect from Kraków. It is worth mentioning that the layout coincides with the outline of the former grange. Although a fragment of the plot was separated to form a square, it was never developed; today this area is referred to as “the Karmelicka plot”.

During the period of 1886–1887, an embankment was constructed to set the so-called ‘circumferential line’ along the western development line of Garbary. Later on it was used for a narrow gauge rail connecting the stronghold facilities. The closure of the railway in 1911 and the levelling of the embankment gave way to the construction of a representative urban artery, known as *Aleje Trzech Wieszczów* (or ‘Three Poets’ Avenue’); it delineates the western border of the former Piasek district today.

Another important investment was the construction of a cigarette production plant. The facility was erected on the area of the former “Raj” garden located in the upper section of Czarnewiejska Street. The first developments were constructed in 1876, but new structures kept being added until 1895. 1912 and 1924 marked the dates of the subsequent stages of the plant’s development. Today the former “cigar factory” complex comprises ten buildings of different sizes, but with a stylistically coherent form. The former owner’s old villa at Czarnewiejska 6 has also been preserved. The factory now forms one of the largest complexes of historical industrial buildings in the city. Cigarettes were still produced there at the beginning of 1990s. The plant had its own nursery and maternity schools, while gardeners looked after the belt of greenery near the street where a game park was organized for the maternity school pupils. However, soon afterwards, the new owner of the plant – a foreign corporation – transferred production to the outskirts of the city and sold the property on Czarnewiejska Street. Since then, the unused buildings have been falling into disrepair, and – like the Karmelicka plot – have changed hands repeatedly.

#### 1.4. The History of the Plot Over the Last 20 Years

We have already outlined the key elements of the urban plan for the area being discussed: Karmelicka and Krupnicza, which spring from one corner near the Planty city garden and are connected by the Avenues to the west. This outline makes a nearly equilateral triangle with the Karmelicka plot in the middle (Fig. 1).

In 1998, the property – recovered once the army left the barracks – was put up for sale by the commune. The transaction was an event in local real estate trade history; the media wrote at length about the skyrocketing price obtained. As things turned out, the empty plot was purchased by an ordinary person, who resold it to the Portico Galicja Company only a year later. Since one of the terms and conditions for selling the perpetual usufruct right to the plot was the construction of a multi-storey car park, this was the direction of the investment plans; the design prepared by Portico stipulated the construction of a cinema multiplex and a hotel with a car park. The works were supposed to

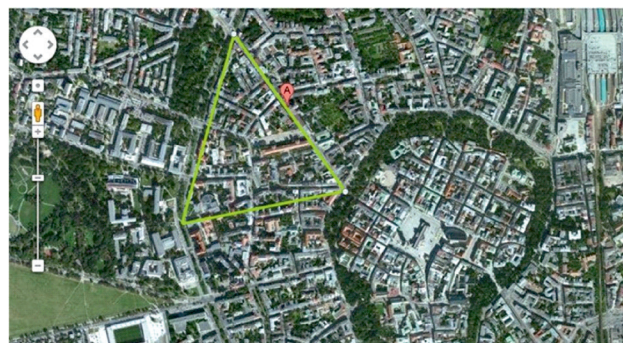


Fig. 1. The Magic Triangle: the Old City with the Market Square, and the top of the Triangle with Karmelicka Street on the right and Krupnicza Street on the left; they are connected by the Avenues. The plot is in the center. Note the Carmelite medieval gardens – opposite the plot and numerous small inner gardens – an important element of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Kraków city development

start by 2000, however, the date for the commencement continued to be postponed, and the building permit was extended three times. Finally, the plot changed owners again, having been purchased by Howard Holdings. In May 2007, the media announced that the new owner had just received a building permit, while the press published interviews with the designer of the “Krakow Silver Screen”, Romuald Loegler. Pursuant to that information, the Karmelicka plot was to be developed with a four-star hotel, a cinema, and a car park for 400 cars. The visualisations depicted a building with a glass facade filling the entire plot, from Karmelicka to Dolnych Młynów – longer than the nearly 200m long neo-Gothic army barracks from which it was to be separated by a narrow belt; this was allotted for the purposes of an access road to the multi-storey car park. Heated online debates focused on the architectural form of the planned facility, while the discussion once again was limited to such arguments as “it fits / it does not fit”, and whether it was “a contemporary-secondary design”. Having given numerous interviews establishing his development vision for this part of town, the new owner of the plot got down to work enthusiastically.

By 2008, the old wall separating the barracks from Karmelicka was torn down and an archaeological excavation performed. However, the start date of the actual construction work continued to be postponed, and in 2009, the investor eventually withdrew his plans. Following some jostling, it turned out that the company had taken out a mortgage to pay for the plot, failed to meet its obligations towards the commune, and, what is more, was in default with real-estate taxes. Consequently, the case ended up in court. Meanwhile, tax encumbrances on the plot increased so much that the only way to compensate for the dues payable to the commune was to return the plot itself. Ultimately, it was released to the city in 2012.

Although the subject of this study is the current vision of this immensely important fragment of the city (from the perspective of urban planning and architecture), it is obvious that one cannot disregard the market phenomena observed



over the last twenty years. This includes, in particular, the period of property speculation that Kraków experienced in the first decade of this century, which significantly affected both the fate of the plot and the form of its development. It should be clearly emphasized that when the first decision on selling and developing the area was made, no public debate concerning the expected functions of this plot took place. It was obvious that the seller – the municipal commune – only paid attention to two factors: first of all, it wanted to sell the property for the highest price possible (and interestingly, this objective was attained without any complications). However, to make that possible, the commune had to give the potential buyer complete freedom in terms of the development of the area. These two factors made any social debate impossible. In this context, the introduction of the only condition – to construct a multi-storey car park – may be interpreted as cynical; in the case of service-related investments, the investor would plan a parking space anyway. The foregoing situation is a typical example of the common way of thinking about the city at that time, construed by representatives of the authorities and municipal officers as a complex of more-or-less attractive development plots, whose market value would be improved if potential investors were not burdened with any restrictions. At this point, one might inquire about the role of architects and urban planners. The case of the Karmelicka plot offers an explicit response – this group was keen to satisfy investors' expectations first and foremost, excusing their position by "the lack of legal regulations", ones pertaining either to local development plans, the excessively generic provisions of the zoning plans, or by putting forward a bold postulate of facilitating a "dialogue between the old and the new" and "creative incorporation into the historic tissue".

The local community perceived the area on Karmelicka Street as an unpleasant gap in the dense and coherent urban space of a 19<sup>th</sup> century town. The dominant impression was that of an "empty and neglected place"; the situation could only be remedied by filling it quickly with a building, the largest possible. It was this "cubature" which – pursuant to urban planners and decision-makers – was guaranteed to "civilize" the area. One can't help noticing that this way of thinking lacked any reflection on the historic urban outline of the quarter, the needs of its inhabitants, and any thoughtfulness regarding shaping a common space.

However, in February 2013, town councillors decided to sell the plot they had just recovered once again. The media clearly suggested that the actual scope of the investment was to be left at the discretion of the future owner, since no development plan had been adopted for the plot; the provisions of the Local Zoning Plan allocate this land for residential and service purposes. The head of the town hall's spatial planning committee, Grzegorz Stawowy, even called the plot "a perfect opportunity for investment hunters". This situation finally roused the inhabitants and district councillors of Krakow from their lethargy. First, they raised the reasonable question of why an area, protected as a monument of history and constituting an integral part of the Krakow's Old Town, does not have development plans, and why the urban outline

of the former Piasek quarter was not recorded in the register of monuments as a whole? Simply put: why is it that this precious area of high importance to the city has no binding regulations as to the size, nature, or scope of investments?

At this point, it is worth mentioning that the empty area at Karmelicka Street is the only undeveloped plot of this size belonging to the commune that is located in the tightly defined centre of Krakow. The analogy with the decision made twenty years ago (which actually made it impossible for the plot to be developed by the commune, thus subjecting it to real-estate speculation) is obvious. The will to sell the plot quickly at the highest price possible – and therefore without any specific restrictions for the investor – prevailed over care for the urban space. Once again – though today the options for including inhabitants in the decision-making process are much broader than they were twenty years ago – no attempt at social consultation or debate between specialists on the possible options of area development was made.

In response to the city's decision-makers' actions, urban activists joined forces to organize a cycle of debates involving representatives of the city, regional authorities, architects, developers and, most importantly, residents. The meetings served as an opportunity to present – among other things – work by students of the Faculty of Architecture of the Krakow University of Technology, projects prepared during international workshops or practical classes. In addition, young people had an opportunity to discuss their visions. The Union of Polish Architects hosted a meeting attended by the 'Silver Screen' designer, Romuald Loegler, former city architect, Stanisław Deńko, and representatives of the Architecture Department from Kraków City Hall. The J. Dietl Association organised an open community debate at Małopolski Ogród Sztuki. The conclusions arrived at during the meeting are summarised briefly in the following ways:

The city should not put an area located in such a precious place on sale without setting any rules for the manner of its development; in other words, without adopting a development plan for it. Ergo, the decision on the sale of the plot was premature.

Particular professional and social groups see the future development of the plot in the following way: representatives of the city authorities and developers: the plot should be developed with the largest building possible, in order to make the investment profitable (with the reservation that only a lack of restrictions, in terms of construction, ensures "profitability" both for the buyer and the seller); architects: the plot should be developed, yet some portion of the area could be allocated to greenery; residents and district councillors: the plot should be used to create a park. Another important voice in the case was the declaration of Jerzy Woźniakiewicz, director of the Provincial Library, which borders on the plot; he would be keen to use the plot to create a "green reading room", thus allowing residents to use the library resources in the fresh air.

The results of the discussions and decisions made by the city officials have proven one thing: the city lacks

a clear vision of development for the district, and any written strategies and declarations on sustainable development, revitalization, or social participation remain void.

Social pressure and heated debate concerning the Karmelicka plot have resulted in a suspension of the sale until a development plan is adopted (in view of the lack of potential buyers, despite two tender announcements). This decision takes action against the extension of the conservator's protection for the entire area, and the development of a so-called 'social plan for plot development' whose assumptions are discussed below.

## 2. Community Plan of Development for the Karmelicka Plot

The historical analysis of the Piasek district leaves no doubt that we are dealing with an area of exceptionally rich history with numerous preserved relics of old settlements. The substantial metamorphosis and current nature of Piasek is mainly a consequence of the expansion of the district in the 19th century. This area has not only preserved its original urban layout (with its tracks and streets already set out in the Middle Ages), but more importantly, residential buildings. The present image of Piasek is determined by the classical 19th century quarter development with internal gardens. City houses, erected mainly in a historical style, still possess a number of sculptured details and original equipment elements, such as floors, wall tiles, balustrades, and wall paintings preserved in their halls. At the back of the buildings, there are some more modest annexes, but most importantly, the remains of courtyard gardens can be found.

### 2.1. Cultural Values

Piasek is an area with an interesting history, but also one with unique cultural traditions which point to an intangible heritage. The proximity of the Market Square and universities – the Jagiellonian University and the Academy of Fine Arts encouraged academics, painters, politicians, representatives of important local families, and (after the war) writers to move into flats in the area. The richest of all the quarter's streets – whose history has already been codified in a monograph – is Krupnicza. Surprisingly, this potential served as the basis for the contemporary nature of the street: today Krupnicza is the site of two theatres(!), one art gallery, and a branch of the National Museum. One of the most important university facilities, the Auditorium Maximum, was specifically erected on Krupnicza since it connects the Old Town to numerous university buildings which are located within the Avenues. These include the campus and, most importantly, the Jagiellonian Library. Just a few steps away on Rajska Street, facing the Małopolski Ogród Sztuki building, the former army barracks of Franz Jozef have been converted into the Provincial Library, which opened in 2011. It functions as a theatre, a multi-media centre, and art library. Next door to both buildings, there is the seat of Małopolski Instytut Kultury on Karmelicka Street. The Magic Triangle is also the location of two kindergartens, a charter elementary and

junior secondary school, secondary schools, a hospital, and university buildings.

Karmelicka Street has preserved its historical function – that of a city commercial promenade. The last preserved historic pharmacy in Krakow is located there. In the Magic Triangle, one may still find a relatively large number of small shops – some of them survived the transformation period, but many opened afterwards. All have their unique characteristics and faithful customers. They include the 'Green Shop' which sells organic food on Krupnicza, the only well preserved pre-war grocery store on Rajska, and Michałek's confectionary store on Krupnicza (which also boasts a tradition that goes back many generations).

### 2.2. Transport

Seen from a broader urban perspective, the arms of the Magic Triangle form very important transport routes to and from the city. Importantly, two of them, along Karmelicka and Krupnicza, have a clearly pedestrian nature. By contrast, the Avenues – a section of the so-called "second ring road" – is where important public transport stops (providing access to universities) such as the hub where Plac Inwalidów is located. The Piasek streets connect the outer parts of the city with its narrowly construed historic centre. The importance of this fact for the contemporary nature and dynamics of the development of the area cannot be underestimated. Every day, thousands of students and university employees walk down Krupnicza, Czysa, and Karmelicka, since the Magic Triangle borders on the campus of one of the city's largest universities – the University of Science and Technology – as well as the University of Agriculture, and several Jagiellonian University buildings. The Provincial Library's resources (located next to "our" plot), are used every day by thousands of scientists, pupils, and students. These massive human flows have stimulated the development of small catering businesses, which in turn have radically changed the peaceful, but highly neglected nature of the area. The ground floors have been occupied by lovely, originally refurbished cafes, bars, and bistros that offer tables on the outdoor terrace; this additional seating encourages passersby to sit and admire the area. In the evenings, one can observe theatre lovers rushing to a performance in one of the district's three theatres. These processes are accompanied by a community initiative to convert the Czysa-Krupnicza route into a pedestrian-bicycle track, thereby restricting car access to these streets – both in terms of traffic and parking. Therefore, the Magic Triangle has a highly cultural-academic nature, and the economic liveliness observed in the area is directly and logically linked to it. What's most precious about this area is that the nature of today's Piasek is a consequence of a naturally occurring evolutionary process.

### 2.3. Problems

So, what are the greatest problems for the area? The first one, applicable to the entire Śródmieście district, is depopulation, which is particularly grave in the case of the Old Town. The scale of this phenomenon in Krakow is

very serious, and the unfavourable economic aspect seems unimportant when compared to the social and cultural context; the Old Town in Krakow was one of very few large city centres which survived the transformation period in the 1990s, while preserving its former inhabitants. Many families had lived there for 100 years or longer. The presence of residents made the district lively and allowed for avoiding the “open air heritage park” effect, into which so many historic towns in Western Europe have turned.

Unfortunately, this unique community – one where neighbours knew each other; consecutive generations of children attended the same schools and took their first communion in the same churches as their grandparents; where the yard gardens offered a place to rest and play safely – was practically doomed to disappear after 2005. Poland’s accession to the European Union meant that all her borders were wide open, inevitably leading to a real-estate boom. Historic city houses started to be vacated on a mass scale and turned into hostels, offices, and flats for rent, while many properties became subject to speculation. The statistics are shocking: in 1961, Krakow’s town centre was inhabited by 52,000 people; in 2003, there were approximately 5,000 residents. Currently this number has plummeted to 3,720, more than 1,000 people less than in 2012.

However, the boom gave way to a market crash; what used to be a lively neighbourhood has grown deserted. Majestic 19th century city houses now stand empty. A walk down Magic Triangle streets would reveal rows of dark windows. Wonderful townhouses, many of which could be referred to as ‘urban palaces’ abundant in historical detail, are falling into disrepair – damaged rain pipes, peeling wall paint, and uneven pavements all contribute to the depressing look. Here and there, tourists and students have taken the place of former residents. Though this situation has its advantages, it should be emphasized that it does not facilitate the strengthening of community ties, nor the development of a responsible, caring attitude toward one’s living environment.

The flight from cities is taking place in other major urban centres. This phenomenon contradicts the traditional view that associates the central location of one’s residence with benefits and prestige. Apart from the economic reasons, residents refer to other factors related to the inconveniences of city life which stimulate migration: limited green areas, the high crime rate, pollution and noise, dense residential development, and the lack of places for recreation and relaxation.

Inconveniences related to vehicle traffic pose yet another problem for the area. Moving around jammed streets with pavements almost completely usurped by parked cars discourages residents from walking and decreases the quality of life. This situation is also troublesome for drivers, but it should be noted that most of them are people commuting to the town centre – in the evenings and on holidays both streets and pavements are empty. This is not surprising; ultimately few people live there. Interestingly, the reason for this situation is not the insufficient number of parking spaces, but a disregard for the law and lack of any effective law enforcement. Although there are as many as

twenty car parks within the Triangle (some of them owned by institutions, some publicly available), they are hardly ever full, while the Karmelicka plot, currently the largest municipal car park in the centre, is practically always empty. At the same time, cars are parked in prohibited places, including along Rajska Street, damaging local trees. The implicit consent of the city authorities for breaking the law discourages residents from observing legal provisions and provokes a sense of cheapness and negligence. Since, as already mentioned, the area is dominated by pedestrian traffic, the conflict is growing; pedestrians and cyclists are trying to fight for their right to use the common space freely.



Fig. 2. The plot by Karmelicka with the car park.  
Photo by M. Bogdanowska, 2014

However, the most important problem brought up by the residents of the Old Town is the lack of recreational space. Within the Triangle, there is no such space at all, and, what is worse, despite the vicinity of Park Krakowski and Planty, these places do not have any space allocated for children – there are no playgrounds or football pitches. The nearest areas of this kind may be found in the Park Jordana playground, but, given the general shortage of recreational and green areas in Kraków, that park is used by the inhabitants of the entire town.

#### 2.4. The Community’s Vision for Development

In the foregoing context, the greatest paradox is the behaviour of the city authorities. Faced with the depopulation of the city centre, demographic decline, a growing number of uninhabited buildings and a financial crisis, the only vision for using the Karmelicka plot supported by the city involves an intensification of development! Meanwhile, this is specifically the most serious threat not only to the quality of life in the Triangle, but also to its identity and nature. Putting aside the expectations of the residents – who are often accused of being biased and having a so-called NIM-BY attitude in consultations and debates – suggestions may be drawn from the EU Shrink Smart report, which outlines





Fig. 3. The proposed development of the multiplex Silver Screen, author Atelier RomualdLoegler, (online): <http://www.urbanity.pl/malopolskie/krakow/z8549>

some approaches to mitigating urban degradation processes. According to the authors of that study, one should aim to develop friendly centres, revitalise them, and invest in green areas and sports facilities. None of these guidelines has been taken into account in the plot development concept promoted by city authorities.

With a working name of “The Library Garden”, the community’s vision for development of the Karmelicka plot takes account of its context and characteristics, not only of the plot itself, but of the entire area. It draws on the area’s tradition and historic urban outline, based on quarter development, with green internal yards; most importantly, it provides a response to the needs of residents who, according to a survey carried out by district councillors, would prefer the plot to become a park.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the functional assumptions respond to a broader range of issues: the lack of recreational space, especially for children and young people, and the urgent need to prevent further degradation of the district. Development of the plot in-line with the community vision will mitigate ongoing destructive processes, and, what is more, will become the seed for the revitalization of the whole area.

The community vision assumes the functional separation of three parts of a diversified area. These parts would be allocated to a car park, a building, and a green recreational area. The car park would be accessible from Dolnych Młynów Street. Open to the general public, parking would be available for a fee. The location does not create an inconvenience to residents. From Karmelicka, the plot could be developed with a building, or a complex of one-storey facilities separating the internal area from the street. Small catering facilities would encourage visitors to visit the area on one hand, and would provide services to the users of the Garden and Provincial Library on the other. Both the facility on Karmelicka and the car park would be

of a commercial nature. The resulting funds would allow for co-financing of the central Gardens.

The central part of the plot should be converted into a large green area. It would comprise two zones with different functions: one recreational (playground for small children, a basketball court, and street workout facilities). The other, a cultural zone, would be functionally connected to the Provincial Library and Małopolski Ogród Sztuki (the Małopolska Garden of the Arts). It could become a venue for open-air events (e.g. chamber concerts, summer cinema screenings, book fairs, and theatre performances). Both of these zones would be connected by greenery, creating an inviting space full of trees, bushes, and climbing plants that ensure peace and quiet, a reference to the courtyard gardens created in the 19th century.

The Library Garden concept assumes changes to transport tracks around the plot. First, the plot would become accessible for pedestrians from Kochanowskiego Street, which is currently separated from the area by a wall. By opening the internal section from that side, it would become accessible for children attending the school and kindergarten on Michałowskiego Street. a pathway would also enable one to access Karmelicka from Dolnych Młynów Street by crossing the site. The Garden would be accessible from the Provincial Library as well, as its main entrance would be located on Karmelicka Street. Due to the nature of the area, the gateways will be of a “pedestrian” nature, and would be closed at specified times; for security purposes, the Garden itself would be covered by adequate surveillance.

The community vision of the plot development makes use of the unique cultural potential of the place. It creates a space which the Provincial Library and Małopolski Ogród Sztuki can ‘enter into’ with their educational and artistic activity. The place would ‘capture’ visitors – everyone would find something attractive there. The implementation of the Library Garden concept would boost the attractiveness of the entire area, increasing its utility and economic value. However, perhaps most importantly, the plan’s acceptance would be a breakthrough in terms of the

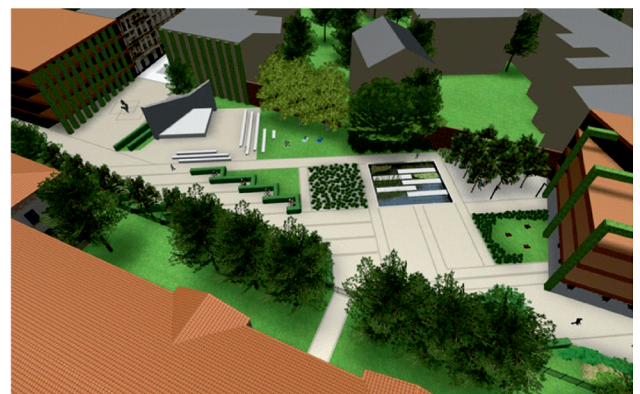


Fig. 4. The community vision of the plot development with the library Gardens divided into sub-gardens related to theatre, green reading-rooms, sports, and relaxation. Authors: J. Mazur-Żądło, K. Wątor-Kmita, 2013, see (online): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjCHYfV8GpQ>

<sup>2</sup> The initial concept can be seen on Youtube visuals created by architects Julia Mazur-Żądło and Katarzyna Wątor-Kmita, (online): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjCHYfV8GpQ>, (date of access: 13 04 2014).

attitude of Krakow's authorities to urban resources, public space, and community participation in co-creating the city.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Karmelicka Magic Triangle acts as a lens, allowing us to focus on the most important problems of a contemporary Polish city: a historic town in decline, the neglect of urban planning, the lack of care for public space, the weakness (or absence) of legal regulations, the arrogance of the authorities, and the helplessness of residents. In the case of Krakow, it is surprising, given the fact that we are talking about a city with unique potential and opportunities. Fate has restored the plot to the commune twice, giving it ample time (and the chance) to change its way of acting and thinking. However, to date, the municipal authorities have not been willing to make the most of this opportunity.

While this study was being prepared (at the beginning of 2014), the situation was as follows: the city suspended the sale of the plot, while the authorities drafted a spatial development plan. However, the plan that's currently been developed – despite all the comments submitted by the community – still assumes the development of the plot with buildings for residential and service purposes. The Provincial Conservator is working on an application to

enter the former Piasek district into the register of monuments; the protection is to be extended to the former Tobacco Plant complex as well. EU revitalisation programmes offer a unique chance to receive funding for urban investment in degraded areas. However, the Krakow authorities, constantly complaining about the lack of municipal funds, “see no possibility” of investing in recreational and green spaces. At the same time, the Architecture Department of Krakow City Hall keeps receiving new applications to issue a decision on the development conditions for the Karmelicka plot, and District I councillors continue to issue negative opinions in this respect. The projects applied for include primarily residential construction to the maximum scale in terms of surface and height allowable under construction law. Sadly, the city authorities, town hall officers, investors, planners, and architects present a coherent position, which has remained unchanged for twenty years. The vision of the city which still prevails in the town hall is perfectly summarized by the former city architect and co-author of the latest version of the plan, Stanisław Deńko, who publicly declared that one needs to accept the fact that the city centre is dominated by dense development. According to the architect, the alternatives are either living outside the city, amongst greenery – and commuting to work – or living in the centre and accepting the lack of green areas...

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