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A HOUSE AND A TERRITORY. IDEAS, VALUES, STRATEGIES

DOM I TERYTORIUM. IDEE, WARTOŚCI, STRATEGIE

Abstract

In this article, the territorial aspects of the idea of *tomorrow's house* are viewed from two perspectives; the theory of urbanism, and as a technical issue concerning the formulation of principles of a spatial policy towards the housing environment as well as respective planning techniques with particular reference to the code of practice developed in order to translate these policies into specific regulations and design guidelines.

In planning practice, concretizing the general rules of a spatial policy requires a reference to *structural urban units*. However, while defining their properties in spatial planning documents, we ought to pay more attention to the relationship between the architectural and anthropological attributes of this category of urbanized space and its impact on the utilitarian values of a place of residence. The author also indicates some interdependences between the land use planning techniques, applied as environmental policy tools dedicated specifically to urban structural units, and respective policy statements used in socio-economic planning to guide housing development in accordance with strategic goals. Certain similarities between these strategies are presented as are such theoretical concepts as *the architecture of the city*, *space syntax* or *the just city*.

Keywords: architecture of the city, anthropology of the city, urban unit, housing environment, spatial planning, spatial policy, urbanism

Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule terytorialne aspekty idei domu jutra rozważane są z dwóch perspektyw: teorii urbanistyki i jako zagadnienie warsztatowe dotyczące formułowania zasad polityki wobec środowiska zamieszkiwania oraz technik zapisu ich ustaleń. W praktyce planistycznej konkretyzowanie ogólnych zasad polityki przestrzennej wymaga ich odniesienia do strukturalnych jednostek urbanistycznych. Jednak określając ich właściwości w dokumentach planowania przestrzennego, należałoby zwrócić większą uwagę na związek między architektonicznymi i antropologicznymi atrybutami tej kategorii przestrzeni zurbanizowanej i jej wpływ na wartości użytkowe miejsca zamieszkiwania. Autor wskazuje też na współzależności między techniką zapisu ustaleń polityki przestrzennej w układzie jednostek urbanistycznych i ustaleniami strategii rozwoju terytorialnego. Dostrzega powinowactwa tych strategii z takimi koncepcjami teoretycznymi, jak: architektura miasta, *space syntax*, miasto sprawiedliwe.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura miasta, antropologia miasta, jednostka urbanistyczna, środowisko mieszkaniowe, planowanie przestrzenne, polityka przestrzenna, urbanistyka

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1. Introduction

The starting point for the considerations presented in this paper includes the following five assumptions:

1. There are some causes which justify the introduction of changes in the principles and techniques of urban planning and designing which would lead to a radical redevelopment of cities¹.
2. Such a challenge requires redefining the basic concepts of urbanism, especially rethinking mutual relations between the idea of *tomorrow's house* and urban categories relating to the notion of *territory*².
3. Taking new *house and territory* type interdependences in planning methods and techniques into consideration is a serious task for spatial policy, both in its conceptual (political, social-economic, anthropological, functional-spatial, engineering and artistic) and instrumental layers.
4. The interdependences mentioned in item 3 can be translated into relationships between architectural and urban strategies so as to lead to engineering solutions cohesive with *value networks*³ which could be approximately defined on the grounds of the anthropology of the city for a given urban territory.
5. There is real probability that within systems of market economy and democratic society there will be conditions making it possible to introduce such changes – first in the experimental zone, then in the form of policies conducted on the scale of individual urban territories⁴.

In other words, the question about *tomorrow's house*, posed in the context of a reflection on the notion of *territory*, touches upon the basics of urbanism – the conceptual and technical matters relating to the philosophy of land use controls in urban space. This issue also recalls a number of questions of a technical and methodological nature which set the architectural criteria and strategies of building a house among the instruments of spatial policy. As a result, the tools of steering changes in urban space may influence the improvement of the condition of a housing environment more effectively, making it more harmonious and just.

¹ Cf.: arguments concerning the role which can be played by city redevelopment in strategies of overcoming a crisis. Such argumentation may be exemplified by Laura Burkhalter and Manuel Castells' speech at the 4th International Conference entitled *The New Urban Question – Urbanism beyond Neo-Liberalism* organized within the International Forum of Urbanism (IFoU) entitled *Beyond the Crisis: New Urban Paradigm*, 2009, Amsterdam/Delft, *The New Urban Question – Urbanism beyond Neo-Liberalism*.

² The validity of this assumption is confirmed by conclusions from research on the experiences of modernism as well as analyses of the ideological premises of New Urbanism and designs being flagship examples of these ideas.

³ This term refers to connections between values defined on the more or less objective areas that can be named as “the subject-matter layers” as well as on the ground where the differences between specific values – or value systems – express themselves as conflicts between different interest groups.

⁴ The term ‘urban territory’ is used in order to emphasize that one should go beyond the city while considering the house-territory relation.

2. The Idea of a House and a Value Network

After the decline of the modernist revolution, there were a lot of concepts associating innovative ideas for a house with visions of the city of the future. Let us at least mention proposals known as *the ecological house and the ecological city* and *the smart house and the smart city* as well as a series of other projects creatively matching the ideology of New Urbanism or the doctrine of sustainable development. It seems, however, that in the respect of boldness, momentum, versatility, impact and architectural maturity, these concepts do not equal Le Corbusier's ideas and works. By no means does this comment aim to challenge the rightness *this doesn't work here, consider changing to something like quality or reliability* of many critical assessments which addressed the results of his creativity, rather, to draw attention to these aspects of modernism which make us treat this movement as a significant civilization project. Obviously, there is no room here for analyses and arguments justifying this opinion. However, it is appropriate to emphasize again one of the aspects of modernistic ideology concerning the relationships: *a house and a territory*. The reason is that a critical analysis of the relationships between these elementary categories of architecture and urbanism so far makes a good starting point for creating concepts whose effects may be new *urban constructions*. Phrase: "urban construction" is defined here as a set of spatial and functional elements which create the framework structuring housing environment in accordance with principles recognized as more appropriate for the contemporary condition of both a community and an individual. An individual who is searching for his/her own *place-territory* in the mosaic of expanding territories of urbanity *grammatically, this is not a valid sentence, meaning unclear*. In this way, we touch upon the territorial aspects of the idea of a house. To a certain extent, a look at a house through the prism of a territory joins the trend of philosophical and anthropological narration regarding the 'insideness' and 'outsideness' of a house. The notion of *territory* appears in a double meaning here – as *the outsideness of a house*⁵ and as the subject of a territorial policy. These two perspectives encounter each other in areas to which the notion of *an urban unit*, i.e. a quasi territory used in the planning and management of the development of a city, refers.

A house is a cultural form⁶ and an engineering structure. It makes a special kind of 'elementary particle' within the housing environment to which values are attributed concerning such notions as: forms of ownership; parameters of location; standards of engineering solutions; architectonic form; social behaviors; economic and anthropologic values. These latter values especially seem to draw increasingly the attention of researchers on the architecture, including both urban and suburban housing environments. Studying urban literature from previous decades, we can notice a kind of anthropological offensive. Reading publications on the anthropology of the city opens new research perspectives. In this context, in ruminations on the urban dimensions of *tomorrow's house*, it seems advisable to complement engineering, artistic and functional premises for building its form

⁵ Cf. Emmanuel Levinas' comments on the household; E. Levinas, *Całość i nieskończoność. Esej o zewnętrzności*, PWN, Warszawa 1998.

⁶ A cultural form is one with which man expresses his attitude towards nature as well as his aesthetical preferences and abilities to solve functional, constructional and economic problems.

with some elements of discussion on *the anthropology of an urban form*. This, in turn, casts new light on the question of the relationships between the values of a household, urban tissue and urban units *please make sure that my corrections here have not changed your intended meaning*.

Choices concerning the form of a house, the location of a household and the activity of residence refer to a relatively wide range of values. They are preceded by a more or less insightful analysis of the attributes of location and the corresponding costs even though these apparently rational decisions actually reflect, to a large extent, ideas and expectations closer to the world of dreams and intuitive movements being an expression of individual attitudes towards the spatial environment and social behaviours. Looking at a house from the philosophical perspective, one can notice a certain curiosity. Emmanuel Levinas writes about it, *In the system of objectives where human life proceeds, the house takes a special place*⁷ but then he explains his idea with the following sentences: *However, the special role of a house does not consist in the fact that it makes the purpose of human activity, but in the fact that a house is its condition and beginning in this sense. Concentration necessary to perceive and transform nature so that it could present itself in the form of a world is realized as a house*⁸.

As the smallest portion of a territory matching the existential space of a family as well as, more and more frequently, a one-person household, a house communicates with its surroundings creating complicated geometries of *relational space* responding to physical connections and contacts realized by means of an ICT network and symbolical *consider changing to 'symbolic' as it is in much more common usage* relationships. Networks of these connections are sometimes expressed in a graphical shape (techniques of visualizing/notating a relational space) but we can imagine that there will be models making it possible to describe these kind of relationships as *value networks* in the immediate future. The concept of a value network binds the idea of a house with the category of a territory. It can be useful in work on building the methodological bases for strategic urbanism⁹. The notion of an urban unit plays a similar role in this task.

3. A House and Urban Units

In the field of urbanism, factors influencing various categories of the value of a house can be expressed by the set of parameters ascribed to specific urban structural units. It results from the following way of thinking: a house is the basic *ingredient* for building the main types of urban tissue. They constitute defined configurations of architectonic forms and units of urban territory whose properties should be taken into account while settling the general rules of a spatial policy. This methodological postulate should be respected on three levels of policymaking. On the higher level, it should be observed while formulating housing policy guidelines for the entire city – or the whole municipality – within the process of making

⁷ Cf. E. Levinas, *op. cit.*, 173.

⁸ *Ibidem*, 174.

⁹ The author presented some assumptions of strategic urbanism in his book entitled *O tożsamości urbanistyki*, Cracow University of Technology Press, Krakow 2008.

so called preparatory land use plan known in Poland as *the study of the preconditions and directions of development*. Secondly, these typological criteria of urban fabric and housing environment have to be taken into consideration in analyses carried out locally for the purpose of a local development plan. And finally, on the lowest level of hierarchy often used for the description of the decision making process, these issues should be analyzed or before issuing a planning permit. The most important types of urban units are presented in Tab. 1.

Table 1

Types of urban units

No.	Symbol	Type of urban unit	Criteria of distinguishing, their function/role in managing the city and steering changes in its spatial development; sample names of units
1	H	Historical	Acquired on the basis of historical research, materials making it possible to define the borders of former settlement units and the responding historical urban layouts; these units play a significant role while formulating the directions of a restoration policy (e.g. old towns/historical districts).
2	A/S	Anthropological/social	Social bonds, neighbourly units and other types of housing environment units defined and designed for perceiving and stimulating forms of contact for social integration and other behaviours being the subject of research on the sociology and anthropology of the city <i>This sentence is much too long and is therefore confusing and unclear; it also contains grammatical errors. I suggest that you rewrite this as at least two separate sentences.</i>
3	M	Morphological	Morphological types of urban tissue; types of buildings distinguished on account of their architectural and urban form.
4	F/LU	Functional/land use	Prevailing type of land use; classification of urban units/neighbourhoods/functional areas commonly included in spatial planning, especially in its modernist formula; contemporarily, this type of zoning is frequently suppressed by multi-purpose units distinguished according to the degree of diversity of the forms of land use.
5	A-L	Architectural-landscape	Architectural-landscape ¹⁰ ; cf. also morphological types of units.

¹⁰ The author of this notion: *architectural-landscape unit* and the method of demarcating it was Prof. Janusz Bogdanowski.

6	A	Administrative	Administering/managing defined urban complexes; estates, districts.
7	R	Registration	Statistical functions of a unit of urban space to which data acquired during censuses and other statistical data about territorial units are referred to.
8	STR	Structural	Planning functions: 'tuning' the general rules of spatial policy formulated on the scale of a city to particular features of 'a portion of territory' related to a given local community.
9	S	Strategic	Referring the directions of a developmental strategy, and operations related to their implementation, to space units matching these actions (areas of strategic programmes and projects).
10	D	Developer	Urban units defined for the purpose of specific housing development projects both private and public/private.
11	GIS	Geographic information systems	Spatial units defined in order to gather information resources and manage databases on a land/space included in geo-information systems used in city management.
12	IM	Infrastructure management	Units/areas designated with particular reference to the ranges of the management/areas of basic communal services particularly technical infrastructure and exploitation systems concerning water-waste management, power industry etc.
13	PS	Public services	Ranges of basic public services, e.g. parishes, deaneries, post office precincts, fire brigades, the police, education, health etc.
14	C/S	Cadastral/Surveying	Criteria applied while building an information system associating cartographic materials with data concerning forms of rule, exploitation etc.; cf. also GIS.

From among various types of urban units, structural urban units are of special importance for defining the principles of spatial policy. In planning practice¹¹, they are distinguished according to historical, morphological, functional and spatial criteria as features of urban tissue as well as the character of landscape forms. Thus, we can define a structural urban unit as a 'portion' of urban space distinguished on account of the configuration of the foregoing attributes (mostly morphological) assuming that such demarcation of a territory

¹¹ E.g. preparing studies of the conditions and directions of the spatial management of communes (exemplified by communal studies for Wrocław, Poznań, Katowice or recently Kraków).

can be helpful in interpretations of the spatial structure of a city and thus useful for clarifying urban concept in structural terms. On this account, in the characteristics of a structural urban unit, we must define such elements crystallizing an urban structure as public places as well as basic functional and compositional problems influencing the evaluation of the developmental potential of this territory.

4. The Strategies and Architectonics of the City

Considering the technical aspects of the *house-territory* interdependence, we should also ask about its relationships with the techniques used planning in planning for territorial development. We have to take into consideration the fact that techniques used in spatial planning and urban design differ substantially from the techniques used in socio-economic planning – both strategic and operational. This issue will gain importance with the progress of work on the introduction of a model of integrated planning. In this new planning formula, both written policy statements and respective graphic/cartographic notations: maps, diagrams, conceptual sketches and other forms of visualizations characteristic for spatial planning must be more coordinated with the techniques of notations used in strategic planning. In this case, strategic urban units defined in a preparatory land use plan will become a frame of reference for information and settlements within the policy of territorial development recorded in communal strategic documents. This task is related to three kinds of planning activities. They could be described with the following keywords: aggregating, tuning, configuring¹². In this case, ‘aggregating’ means grouping urban units according to the main structural areas in the city, such as its centre, suburban zone or middle zone (dominated by estates built in the modernist period) with separated junction areas in the city centre and other ‘urbanity nodes’ forming the polycentricity of an urban structure. ‘Tuning’ refers here to a phase of conceptual activities where urban units receive actions responding to defined types of urban strategies¹³. It consists of mutual tuning of the distinguishing features of a given unit with suitable conceptual assumptions for a general strategy of the development of a city that can be expressed in spatial categories. In this sense, we can talk about the ‘strategic tuning’ of a concept relating to the spatial management of the city. At this development stage in the conceptualization of an urban strategy, there should be another adjustment of general ideas and solutions – as well as strategic urban projects – proposed for the whole city to the local preconditions and local guidelines defined in a preliminarily land use plan. We should also check how – after such a tuning – these project can be *configured* vis a vis a logic of urban development process. ‘Configuring’ refers also to the process of grouping projects into larger packages so as to enhance the logic of connections between specific projects. This – in turn – may increase the probability of gaining synergic effects.

¹² Thus, this authorial proposition of an outlined method can be acronymed ATC.

¹³ Five types of strategies are suggested: 1) construction of polycentricity, 2) integration, 3) conversion (revitalization, regeneration), 4) conservation and rehabilitation, 5) construction/articulation of identity.

All the foregoing comments on structural areas, strategic projects and typologies of urban structural forms¹⁴ applied in urban design, spatial and strategic planning ought to be complemented with a commentary on the relationships between new territories of urbanity. They should also correspond with proposals of morphological systematic of urban tissue in the light of such theoretical notions as “the architecture of the city” or “space syntax”. For instance, following Aldo Rossi¹⁵, Bill Hillier [3], Peter Calthrope [2] or Anne Vernez Moudon [5], we can ask about the possibilities of complementing their research on the morphological types of urban tissue and geometries of networks structuring urban tissue¹⁶ with motifs concerning:

- 1) architectural strategies matching urban operations carried out in relation to the implementation of a strategy for the development of a city;
 - 2) anthropological questions related to the social results of implementing these operations.
- However, discussing these questions in detail is a theme for a separate publication.

5. Conclusions

This article includes some questions in the field of urbanism with which the problems of shaping a housing environment situates itself in the trend of a theoretical reflection on the oddities of two categories of relations. One of which concerns the logic of connections between normative postulates defined as the principles of urban design and the complexity and uniqueness of the formal structure of an individual urban project. These questions can be treated as an incentive for an interdisciplinary discussion on the universality and validity of postulates concerning urban regulations introduced on the basis of research on a collection of individual projects. The other type of relationship concerns the circumstances under which artistic creation, expressed in the categories of urban design, is subordinated to the rules established by planning regulations and design guidelines. In other words, it is a question how real it is to adjust subtle relations of architectural and urban form defined at the conceptual stage to the rigors of urban planning. To some degree, this “technical problem” can be formulated as a “language problem” in a sense that through administrative procedures the language of architecture and urbanism is confronted with the ‘soullessness’ of formal and legal formulations used by the planning language: both in the case of spatial planning and operational urbanism. In practice, this problem can be equalled to questions about formal and legal solutions putting decisions within urban design into three kinds

¹⁴ Cf. classifications according to the kinds of exploitation, the types of structural forms or divisions of the territory of a city into auxiliary types: estates, districts, neighbourhoods, precincts etc., applied in spatial planning, distinguished on account of the necessity to administer and manage defined zones of urban life as well as to collect data/information responding to these zones (e.g. census districts and other statistical units); cf. Tab. 1.

¹⁵ Cf. A. Rossi, *Architecture of the City*, MIT Press.

¹⁶ For instance, according to Bill Hillier, configuration of a spatial network is the basic driving force which shapes models of mobility and, as a consequence, the generator of changes in the geometry of a street network.

of decision-making systems and the responding characteristic features of the notional apparatus. We mean three types of procedures:

- 1) decision-making procedures responding to the economic aspects of the investment process;
- 2) “legislative” – accompanying the elaboration of local spatial management plans;
- 3) administrative – related to the procedures of issuing or rejecting of planning/building permits.

In each of these three types of procedures, premises concerning urban composition, formulated by the author of a design, are subordinated to substantial modifications. These modifications – in turn – reveal two types or categories of problems associated with territorial planning and its functional relations with urban design and housing development. The first category can be described as relations between projects and plans and refers mostly to the differences between grasping the concept of territory in planning and design. The second one refers to methodological and procedural issues of formulating design guidelines for housing environment. Both categories of relationships lead to the question about the role urban design plays in the practice of shaping public spaces in European cities and the place this important instrument of spatial policy takes in contemporary European theories of urbanism.

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