

ARCHITEKTURA

CZASOPISMO TECHNICZNE  
TECHNICAL TRANSACTIONS

ARCHITECTURE

WYDAWNICTWO

POLITECHNIKI KRAKOWSKIEJ

3-A/2010

ZESZYT 6

ROK 107

ISSUE 6

YEAR 107

WHITNEY LYNN CHASE\*

## MEETING THE NEEDS OF ALL TYPES OF RESIDENTS

### ZABEZPIECZANIE POTRZEB WSZYSTKICH MIESZKAŃCÓW

#### Abstract

This paper summarizes the issues facing urban development as more people are moving to the cities. Through the perspective of an international exchange student, it focuses on the needs of city dwellers and how those needs can and should be met through their housing environment. Due to the scale of new development, spaces are created within the buildings, not between them. A single building now houses the entire functions of a couple city blocks. New ideas about mixed used buildings allows a person to live, work, shop and see a movie all without leaving their housing complex. Modern architecture is changing the way housing is defined through larger more inclusive complexes.

*Keywords: changes in urban design, urban housing, exchange student, outside perspective, city centers, dormitories*

#### Streszczenie

W niniejszym artykule poruszane są problemy, przed jakimi staje projektowanie urbanistyczne w sytuacji ciągle zwiększającej się liczby ludności zasilającej miasta. Potrzeby mieszkańców i sposób, w jaki powinny być one zabezpieczone w środowisku zamieszkania, omawiane są tutaj z perspektywy studenta zagranicznego przebywającego czasowo, w ramach wymiany, w obcym mieście. Z uwagi na skalę charakteryzującą nowe zespoły, przestrzenie wspólne tworzone są wewnątrz obiektów, a nie pomiędzy nimi. Jeden budynek zawierać dzisiaj może całe bogactwo funkcji dostępnych dawniej w obrębie kilku bloków miejskich. Nowe koncepcje promujące mieszanie funkcji pozwalają współczesnym mieszkańcom miast mieszkać, pracować, robić zakupy, a nawet chodzić do kina bez opuszczania swego kompleksu mieszkaniowego. Współczesna architektura zmienia sposób, w jaki definiowana jest zabudowa mieszkaniowa poprzez projektowanie i budowanie coraz bardziej złożonych obiektów.

*Słowa kluczowe: zmiany w projektowaniu urbanistycznym, miejska zabudowa mieszkaniowa, student zagraniczny, sposób postrzegania miasta przez osoby przebywające w nim czasowo, centra miejskie, domy akademickie*

\* Whitney L. Chase, student, University of Tennessee, College of Architecture & Design; exchange student WA PK, Spring 2010.

Cities grow and people multiply; architectural design changes repeatedly to deal with these issues. Today more and more people are moving to the urban areas in and around cities, demanding housing and a healthy living environment. Contemporary housing developments need to offer a sense of security and identity while providing a comfortable living environment. As an exchange student it is easier for me to see which of our needs, as residents in the city, are fulfilled and which are overlooked. This outside perspective has emphasized which needs are priorities and how they can be met.

As we move further from smaller, central cities, the needs of residents have changed completely. In Kraków, for example, as the city developed the basic needs of the residents could be found within a few blocks of their homes. People lived upstairs and could work on the main level of their homes. The scale of the city was much smaller and easily accessed. Today, cities are larger and city centers and main market squares are not well defined and harder to recognize. Development is expanding further and further away from the idea of a main 'city center.' Public spaces are created within buildings or complexes, and private interior courtyards are slowly disappearing. A good view is sometimes even hard to find as cities become full of high rises and taller built structures. Spaces for gathering and interaction are vital in creating an enjoyable living environment that promotes community and a sense of belonging. Issues of scale and proportion are also important as the need for larger living facilities close to the city become more necessary. Well designed urban housing structures today have to combine these elements with local influences as well. Urban development is a struggle, in general, and specifically in Poland because of the tension between the post war development and historical redevelopment or restoration. When designing new buildings in Poland both types of structures have to be considered. Architecture has to maintain strong ties to past historical development of cities but remain progressive in ideas about how the city and the needs of citizens are changing. Considerations need to be taken for what the future of urban development in Kraków should encompass.

The basic needs of permanent residents and transient residents are the same. On the most basic level, both groups of people need spaces for transportation, recreation, and community. The difference is the frequency in which they use these spaces, and to what extent they rely on the availability of these spaces. For example the transportation system within a city; if you know you are only living in a place temporarily, you have a more relaxed view of how different elements work. The need for the diverse spaces is there, but the quality of the spaces can be less stressed if a dweller knows the situation is only temporary. Little conveniences like proximity to certain public spaces or to bus stops can also be considered less important. Whereas a permanent resident needs to be able to rely on these spaces daily. They expect the bus will be on time, the park will be available for a morning jog, and the square will be full of vendors. It is true; these needs should be met daily for everyone so they can be healthier and happier.

As an exchange student I understand these things to be true. The public transportation is our main source of circulation through and around the city. Travel time to the city center is about a 30-45 minute bus ride and we always allow for an hour because we do not completely rely on or understand the bus routes. Visiting the city center is usually a pretty well planned event and the lack of convenience in traveling makes the simple task of gathering for a meal or enjoying a walk around the square scarce.

Also within the dormitory there is very little community space. On occasion we gather in the kitchen to cook a meal or in the laundry room to catch up, but with the scale of the dorms there is not a 'living room' area where we can all get together on a daily basis. As the weather warms up students are starting to cook out and gather around grills more often. They have created a public gathering space out of necessity. Even with cook-outs, forming a real sense of identity and community within the different dorm buildings can be tough. First, the sheer scale of the buildings is quite intimidating. There are three dormitory buildings with a couple hundred students living in each dormitory. Occasionally we see the same faces, but never enough to actually engage in conversation or to form a relationship with them. Without the barbecues you could live here forever never realizing how many other people lived around you. Also, the lack of a unified gathering space within the dormitories creates a lack of community on the smaller scale within the individual buildings, which hinders getting to know more of the community as a whole. Knowing the community as a whole is essential as we try to develop a sense of identity within our living environments.

With the social events held by the school, there is a sense of identity established in that realm of our exchange here, and it creates such a strong contrast to measure against our lack of identity within our housing community. Even just having to remove our dishes from the kitchen sets the standard for how much of the dormitory we can really call our own. Forming a sense of identity within your housing environment is important to establish a feeling of belonging and safety, somewhere you can call home.

These issues are the top priority when designing good public spaces in the contemporary housing environment. New forms of public spaces are created as the designs of an urban housing environment develop. The public space itself idealistically is the same, but how it is achieved differs. Due to the scale of new development, spaces are created within the buildings, not between them. A single building now houses the entire functions of a couple city blocks. New ideas about mixed use buildings allows a person to live, work, shop and see a movie all without leaving their housing complex. Instead of a public space for the city, public spaces are more focused on a set group of individuals living within the building. Different programmatic elements can be used to bring in outsiders, but then a semi-private public space for residents, becomes a completely public space.

Traditional urban public spaces, streets, parks and squares, in the historical city center are the places people use to gather and share in the community. They are the most important elements in the urban housing environment because as the scale of the city increases these elements are still there tying everyone together. Beyond the city center, they are used on a different scale within the housing community. At one scale in multi-use residential structures they become the corridors and entry plazas. On another scale they form the spaces in between different building structures, creating satellite city centers.

Futuristic systems of design should seek to meet the needs of the people living in the urban housing environments. Well-designed schemes start to address issues of identity and scale as they break down the overall scale of larger building complexes by infusing mixed use elements with the residential layers. Public spaces are created between and around residential apartment towers as well inside individual towers. This gives residents a smaller sense of community, while still allowing them to belong to the complex as a whole. Urban housing projects have become small cities within the city, supplying the needs of living, working and playing within one complex.