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RATIONALITY AND INTUITION – DIALOGICAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN ARCHITECTS AND BUILDING USERS

RACJONALNOŚĆ I INTUICJA – DIALOGICZNA WYMIANA POMIĘDZY TWÓRCAMI ARCHITEKTURY A UŻYTKOWNIKAMI BUDYNKÓW

Abstract

Inspired by the psychology of perception and research in social sciences, reflections on the meaning of dialogue – as a creative and turbulent exchange of ideas – in the creation of architecture. The axis of dialogue is conflict caused by various interpretations of architecture – as the implementation of abstract “concepts” (designers-creators) or as a world built of “physical things” and referring to specific life experiences (recipients). Both groups interested in architecture display rationalistic and intuitive attitudes, but these attitudes often lead them to different conclusions. The problem is particularly evident when the rationality of architects collides with the intuitive approach of the recipients or when the architect’s intuition hits the audience’s criticism raised on the basis of rational thinking.

Keywords: architecture, creative attitude, building user, rationality, intuition

Streszczenie

Artykuł przedstawia inspirowane psychologią percepcji i badaniami nauk społecznych rozważania na temat znaczenia dialogu jako twórczej i burzliwej wymiany myśli w tworzeniu architektury. Osią dialogu jest konflikt spowodowany różnymi interpretacjami architektury – jako realizacji abstrakcyjnych „pojęć” (projektanci-twórcy) albo jako świata zbudowanego z „rzeczy fizycznych” i odnoszącego się do konkretnych życiowych doświadczeń (odbiorcy). Obie grupy zainteresowanych architekturą cechują przy tym postawy racjonalistyczne i intuicyjne, jednak prowadzą one często do odmiennych wniosków. Przedstawiony problem ujawnia się szczególnie wyraziście, gdy racjonalność architektów zderza się z intuicyjnym podejściem odbiorców lub wtedy, gdy intuicja architekta trafia na krytykę publiczności wyrosłą na gruncie myślenia racjonalnego.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura, postawa twórcza, użytkownik budynku, racjonalność, intuicja

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“Need” and “desire”¹ are two reasons why architecture is created; the first refers to the necessities of life, the second, primarily, to emotional and spiritual needs. They are responded to by two different ways of reasoning – rationality and intuition – both being complementary elements of the thinking process that accompanies designing. Good architecture requires wisdom, imagination and foresight as well as skills and creativity. For this one needs both specialist knowledge that develops from the earliest times and is the basis for solving repetitive problems, but also a creative genius or intuition that allows one to see things differently – beyond the obvious limitations – to solve new and unusual situations. Common sense and research persistence lead to producing tried and tested solutions that provide users with not only functionality and durability of the architectural shelter, but also with accomplishment of needs not determined by Vitruvius, such as comfort or privacy. On the other hand, architecture supported by intuitive thinking can make the ordinary human needs and the corresponding things achieve a more universal dimension – a poetic and imaginative reading of reality. Thus, the realization of the need may become the realization of the desire.

The paradox that combines these two ways of thinking is related to the general strategy of solving problems. Rational thinking, which is based on manipulating initial knowledge and adding to it statements about new situations, leads to the constant development of the “state of knowledge” along with each new “operation” that helps to solve the task². Architectural design is a special case of reflection aimed at solving an open task; the number of possible answers is virtually unlimited here. In this sense, architecture depends on the context in which it arises. It is difficult to understand whether it is good or bad without knowing the design strategy applied and assumptions adopted. It is assumed that problem-based design which is the basis for teaching architecture consists of: *recognizing the problem, understanding its constraints, and using creativity, reasoned judgement, interpersonal abilities, and <reflection-in-action>*³ This approach is intended to combine rational thinking and creativity. The first is based on systematic activity, the elements of which are: emphasis on achieving goals through development of the design process and not the final product, clearly defined project methodology (strategy), focus on solving objective problems, social responsibility of architects, and involvement in empirical research supporting decision making. The latter is based on free associations, subjective aesthetic experiences, and – above all – striving for a form⁴ that becomes the final product. The importance of architecture is built on the fragile balance between these two approaches; creates a socially useful and practical reality, and yet an object that can become a work of art.

¹ Desire, not need, leads to great art as Kahn used to say, adding that the great artistic achievement (such as Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony) may become a new need. [P. Goldberger, *Why Architecture Matters*, Yale University Press, New Haven, London, 2009, p. 47].

² P. H. Lindsay, D. A. Norman, *Procesy przetwarzania informacji u człowieka: Wprowadzenie do psychologii*, PWN, Warszawa, 1984, p. 505.

³ S. Nazidzaji, A. Tome, F. Regateiro, *Search for design intelligence: A field study on the role of emotional intelligence in architectural design studios*, *Frontiers of Architectural Research* (2014) 3, p. 414.

⁴ Bernard Tschumi (1987) wrote: *The paradigm of the architect passed down to us through the modern period is that of the form-giver, the creator of hierarchical and symbolic structures characterized, on the one hand, by their unity of parts and, on the other, by the transparency of form to meaning* [Fortry, A., *Words and Buildings: A Vocabulary of Modern Architecture*, Thames & Hudson, Londyn, 2000, p. 149].

In the theory of architecture and design practice it is observed, however, that this needed balance is often the subject of dispute, resulting from the creative attitude of the architect himself and the values he recognizes. Architectural reflection is then dominated by one or the other; thinking exclusively rational or implicitly intuitive. Such a biased approach may lead – on the one hand – to extreme objectivization of goals, uniformity or minimalization (not only costs, but also the possibility of experiencing), and on the other hand to pure formalism resulting from devaluation of the context and the needs of others⁵. This type of bias may be related to the ethical attitudes and personality of the creator – whether he pursues primarily external (including economic or technological) goals or his own goals (such as expanding his personality through creativity). Lack of balance may also result from interpretation of the meaning of architecture and art in general – as a self-sufficient, abstract goal in itself (art for art's sake) or a thing that serves specific social needs. Of course, this problem is much more complex; different proportions in the application of existing knowledge and feedback may also depend on external, cultural or symbolic conditions independent of the architect, and related primarily to the investor's influence on the design process or the wider geopolitical and social conditions that originate the design.

Another aspect of this issue is that the gap between rationality and intuition, which accompanies thinking about architecture, is present not only in the process of its creation, but also in processes related to its perception. Architecture's recipients also rationalize their knowledge and use intuition for interpretation of architectural forms. Rational judgment in the perception of architecture is sometimes used to understand the applied "convention, use, purpose or value", in turn the recognized meaning – which is essential to both "the use and enjoyment of architecture" is unquestionably involved with human feelings⁶. In this respect, there are the biggest discrepancies. They are caused by previous experiences of the subject of perception and also with its current mode of activity, associated with targeting for a specific purpose or a fuller opening to environmental stimuli. Ecological psychology is particularly important for understanding the mechanisms of perception. According to this theory, people and the environment function "on the principle of complementarity"; perception is possible due to the special properties of places that constitute collections of qualitative elements of the environment, called *affordances*. They "offer, create and *afford* the possibilities of: seeing, hearing, feeling vibrations, walking"⁷. What issues is that *meanings* are part of the environment that surrounds us; they hold a potential that may be discovered during the process of perception. The perception of the environment (including the architectural environment) is understood here as discovering of these potentialities, acquisition of competences for their use and a release of targeted behaviours that the given environment allows. Perception therefore consists of the *abstract* stage, which is the initial phase of perception ended with a *concrete visualization* when the object's meaning is fully assimilated.

⁵ This type of approach may originate in narcissistic personality [of creator], "exploding <Self>". Those who manifest them feel "oppressed and enslaved" by needs of others. This may lead to the devaluation of purposeful action for the analysis of one's own feelings (Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of Self*, 1971) [R. Sennet, *Razem: Rytuały, zalety i zasady współpracy*, Wydawnictwo MUZA, Warszawa, 2013, p. 235].

⁶ R. G. Hershberger, *A study of meaning and architecture*, [in:] J. Nasar, (ed.) *Environmental aesthetics: Theory, research, and applications*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 175.

⁷ James Gibson (1979) after: A. Bańka, *Spoleczna psychologia srodowiskowa*, Scholar, Warszawa 2002, p. 64.



Ecological theories facilitate understanding the differences in perception of architecture between groups of designers and laymen. In contrast to architects who usually pay a lot of attention to design ideas and concepts (such as form, space, function) as well as architectural style, non-architects more often make assessments based on general affective impressions or describe a building basing on its physical characteristics or associations. What is really interesting for people is the set of qualities that makes the place private, nice, bright and well-designed, in other words, whether it encourages one to stop here, to stay for a while or to settle down. The non-architects usually do not share the admiration for the form of the buildings or the composition of the view; they do not formulate their opinions in a generalized symbolic form, they focus on individual impressions⁸. This does not mean, however, that their architectural reflections are devoid of intensity and, primarily, analysis based on knowledge and intuition. What really differentiates the perception of architecture by professionals and laymen is the way it is pictured; architects see buildings through their iconic images (sketches) and abstract representations (plans, sections, axonometry), laymen through *places* and *potentialities* they create. In a sense, architectural education seems to distract students' and then architects' attention from natural processes of perception, which develop gradually in time and transit from abstraction for visualization and experiencing things. It happens by emphasizing the reduction of life experience to abstraction leading to a quick definition of the final product, which is obviously in contradiction to the speed and direction of the natural processes of perception. Differences in the perception of architecture and its descriptions – both as regards the method and the content – inevitably lead to conflicts between the architects and the recipient. Hypothetically, this problem could be solved – as Robert Hershberger (1992) suggests – in three ways: (1) reorienting the architectural education in such a way that it does not change architects' manner of experiencing architecture from that which they had as pre-architects; (2) teaching architects how spatial forms and buildings are interpreted by laymen; or (3) increasing the efforts to educate the general public to see and appreciate architecture in the same way as architects⁹.

Achieving this aim seems, however, insufficiently real, considering that there are significant differences between the architects and users relevant not only to the description of the architectural environment, but also to the assessment of what is important and desirable in architecture. The design of the house seems to be a particularly sensitive area. For architects, this is a task like any other, possibly less involving because of the apparent obviousness of the subject; for inhabitants, this is the most important topic – no other architectural object raises the interest of a layman like his own home or housing estate. Lack of synonymity and consent

⁸ Non-architects, in contrast to architects (architecture students), use more descriptions in type of general impressions of buildings than those relating to spatial shaping, form or function. For example, often appearing terms are: “cozy”, “sympathetic”, “warm”, “alive” or “overwhelming”, “crumbling”, “old-fashioned”, “gray”, “gloomy” (adjectives come from students' descriptions of building; students of Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow and the Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw – own research, 2017).

⁹ R. G. Hershberger, *A study of meaning and architecture...*, *op.cit.*

III. 1–3. The *Portland Building* – architecture as a tool to represent a symbolic reality:

[1] The general view of the building

[2] The street (5th Avenue) adjoining the main entrance below the statue of Portlandia

[3] The statue of Portlandia as seen from the entrance level



III. 4-7. The *Portland Building* – the connection with the street life:

[4] The loggia as seen from the 5th Avenue

[5] The ground floor as seen from the 4th Avenue (the street adjoining the park)

[6] The stairs leading to the loggia level

[7] Interior of the loggia elevated above the street level

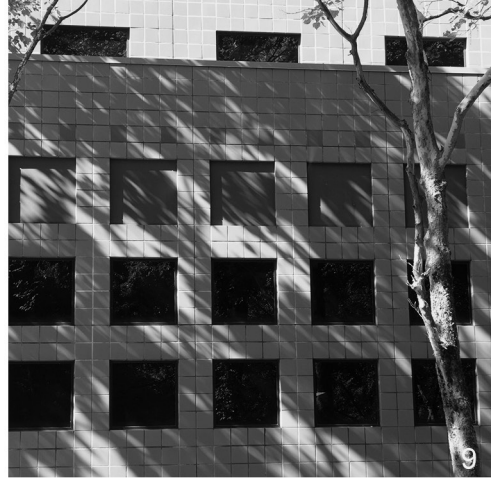
about the meaning of the house (and the meaning of architecture in general) is basically originated by the lack of direct contact between architects and users. It started to be a problem together with the great implementations, in which the investor ceased to be the same as the inhabitant, and the designers began to apply an extreme objectivity of goals. This is about the first modernist projects of low-cost housing estates in which the ideas of prefabrication of building elements and building typology were applied. The designers of these housing estates focused on solving specific priorities of residential architecture, such as: direct access to daylight, fresh air and common areas, improvement of sanitary conditions, providing little gardens and – above all – reduction of construction costs by complete or partial prefabrication of the structure. Despite the unquestionably correct assumptions, the practical goals have not always been achieved. For example, the windows on the *Törten* estate in Dessau (design by Walter Gropius, project 1926–28) due to repeatable units and the plan of the estate were not always directed towards the sun; there were also problems with opening them, and the use of the garden was disturbed by a quite unpractical house plan. However, the real challenge for the residents of the new estates was to face the modern, abstract language of forms without decorations. Buildings at the *Quartiers Modernes Frugès* estate in Bordeaux-Pessac (designed by Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, 1925) – simple geometric blocks with equally looking openings of doors¹⁰, windows and balconies, were painted in abstract colours (black, light blue, light green, white, yellow and grey). Forms and colours as well as the lack of symbolic references to the architecture of the house (such as the stressed entrance or the sheltering roof) were disturbing for contemporary observers. Also in later years (1960), various individual alterations of façades and plans were used to adapt the buildings to suit the needs of users

In these first projects of modern housing estates¹¹, the architectural and building experiment associated with their implementation has also become a social experiment which has generated a new type of architecture's client – the anonymous user. The definition of his needs may be explicitly seen in the design of *Unité d'Habitation* by Le Corbusier (1947–52). The super-unit that he designed consisted of many apartments of 23 types, organized according to a specific model of modern family life. Their plans were both simple and refined by a strong emphasis on inner spatial arrangement (including two-level space, arrangement of rooms to ensure comfort and privacy for residents, central kitchen as integrating space) and dimensional coordination. They were also intelligently distributed within the building structures and interspersed with semi-public commercial and recreational spaces common to inhabitants which was made to enforce “a strong sense of the social bond”¹². The subject of criticism from the residents was primarily the brutality of this architecture – caused both by the general impression, the material used (raw concrete) and detachment from the ground (important in the symbolic and practical sense – through the lack of contact with life on

¹⁰ According to the psychology of perception, doors are a particularly important element of the structure of the building, their meaning is easily recognizable, they are associated with the safety and warmth of the interior, and at the same time the connection with the external world [*ibidem*].

¹¹ It is also about estates in Frankfurt, designed by Ernst May such as: *Römerstadt*, 1927–28, *Heimatsiedlung* 1927–34, or *Westhausen*, 1929–31 and WSM housing estates in Warsaw: on Rakowiec, designed by Helena and Szymon Syrkus and Żoliborz designed by Barbara and Stanisław Brukalski (1934–39).

¹² Ch. Jencks, *Le Corbusier – tragizm współczesnej architektury*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa, 1982, p. 162.



III. 8–11. The *Portland Building* – space and light problem:

[8] Detail of the lower floors elevations – a series of small square windows with a dark glass

[9] Ceiling above the main entrance hall

[10] Interior of the main entrance hall

[11] A low and dark space adjoining the entrance hall with central block of elevators

the street), and minimalization of the living space and the height of the rooms (reminiscent of “railway compartments rather than sleeping rooms”¹³). The *Unité d’Habitation* was also criticized by some architecture and urban theorists; Lewis Mumford for example claimed that Le Corbusier “betrayed the human contents to produce a monumental effect”¹⁴. Nevertheless, the unit set a new standard in housing, which has become a reference point for many generations of architects

Starting from the 1950s, there has been a development of mass construction based on defined housing standards (minimal living space requirements) and experimental solutions (such as external galleries, overground passages, internal shopping streets, roof gardens, etc.). Modern housing units modelled on the *Unité d’Habitation* began to appear in various places around the world. Two famous examples of such realizations: *Wendell Pruitt and William Igoe Homes* (called *Pruitt Igoe*) in Saint Louis (project by Minoru Yamasaki and George Hellmuth, 1952–55) and *Robin Hood Gardens* in London (project by Alison and Peter Smithon, 1968–72) aroused the most controversy and eventually ended in failure. The spectacular downfall of the Saint Louis estate (in 1972 it was demolished), became the climax of the crisis, which was to announce the end of modernism popularised by CIAM. The gigantic *Pruitt Igoe* estate (consisting of thirty iterative 11-storey units), built to receive a huge wave of emigration from villages, was supposed to be a “paradise on earth”¹⁵, but soon became a place of wretched existence of the very few remaining inhabitants cut off from the media and city life. The decline of the estate was not only an architectural event; the demolition of the estate shown in the extraordinary *Koyaanisqatsi*¹⁶ documentary film has become one of the most suggestive parts of the narration of this wordless film which was to prove what happens when man disturbs the environment by his actions (the English subtitle of the film was *Life Out of Balance*). Two decades later – the *Robin Hood Gardens* estate was an example of intelligent building fitted to post-industrial, urban conditions; completely different from the non-contextual, mechanical design of *Pruitt Igoe*. In spite of many innovative ideas used in this super-unit, such as: wide galleries called ‘streets in the sky’ and ‘pause places’ dedicated for residents to arrange, solutions to improve the acoustic comfort of residents, diversity of the size and layouts of the apartments and their destination¹⁷ – the housing environment was getting worse and worse, sometimes serving for the dark scenery of detective stories. Despite the intentions of the architects, the housing estate was criticized for the lack of semi-private spaces and safety (becoming a model example of poor design in this respect). An additional problem was defective construction and the quality of workmanship. In 2008, about 3/4 of the residents of the housing estate supported the application for its demolition (!). Many famous architects, among others Zaha Hadid, Richard Rogers, Robert Venturi and Toyo Ito ranged themselves on the side of the building’s defence. In 2017 it was demolished

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 158.

¹⁴ A. Fortry, *Words and Buildings ... op. cit.*, p. 113.

¹⁵ *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth: an Urban History* – stories told by the residents of the estate can be viewed at <http://kinoplex.gazeta.pl>.

¹⁶ Documentary film *Koyaanisqatsi* (director: Godfrey Reggio, music: Philip Glass, photographs: Ron Fricke), 1982.

¹⁷ <http://municipaldreams.wordpress.com/2014/02/04/robin-hood-gardens-poplar-an-exemplar-a-demonstration-of-a-more-enjoyable-way-of-living>.

nevertheless... The problem revealed by these projects¹⁸ has become a challenge for modern architecture; the rational thinking of designers here clashed with the opposition of residents' intuition. The architects failed to convince inhabitants about a modern home vision based on the speculative reasoning of professionals. Certainly, these solutions were rationally justified in architectural concepts – by saving costs or convenience of use, but they did not agree with the imagined home of the most of their inhabitants. And thus, the whole new purpose of architecture – as expressed by Herman Hertzberger – has become “to enable <users [to] become inhabitants>” and to create for them “<the freedom to decide for themselves how they want to use each part, each space>”¹⁹ of the built environment.

The problem in the sphere of public architecture is slightly different; for architects, it is usually a prestigious challenge, with a large symbolic potential, for users it is often an ‘external’ scene of their everyday life. Unlike in the case of residential architecture, the intuitive approach of the creator is measured here with the rational thinking of users. A valuable example is the iconic Public Services Building in Portland (*Portland Building*) designed by Michael Graves and realized in 1980–82. From the beginning and throughout its history, this building has caused stormy polemics; arousing the admiration of some critics (“the most important public building of the decade”²⁰), the ironic comments of others regarding mainly the artificiality and cheapness of applied decorations (“pop surrealism”²¹; and “noble failure”²²). In recent years, the building – containing the offices of the city administration and apartments – has been renovated many times (for the first time in 1990, only 8 years after commissioning), and several times (on the occasion of subsequent alterations) demolishing it was considered. What probably caused that this did not happen is the fact that in 2011 the building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of the uniqueness of the project; the *Portland Building* is, it is believed, the first major object realized in the postmodernist spirit, challenging the dominant functionalism. In his project, Graves focused on a plurality of meanings; there are archetypical geometric solids (wide base or cube of the main body of the building), formal references to the architecture of the Grand Central Terminal in New York and the Chrysler Building, “supersigns” referring to the concept of the gate or triumphal arch, grand urban mirror or colonnade, also garlands (to be a symbol of welcome) and a huge statue of *Portlandia* (as an allegory of the city)²³. The building represents and celebrates above all the reality of a symbolic narration, it has become a recognizable sign of Portland (ill. 1–3), its Eiffel Tower. For Graves, the building would remain “his most famous (and infamous) design

¹⁸ In Poland, an example of this type of housing estate – experimental and modern, similar in terms of general idea and residents' assesment to the *Robin Hood Gardens*, created almost at the same time, is the *Przyczółek Grochowski* estate in Warsaw, designed by Oskar and Zofia Hansen (realization 1968–74).

¹⁹ H. Hertzberger, *Lessons for students in Architecture*, 1991 [Fortry, A., *Words and Buildings ... op.cit.*, p. 312].

²⁰ P. Goldberger (*New York Times*, 1982) [L. Manfra, *Architects, Critics Reflect on the Portland Building: The Michael Graves legacy remains as contentious and confounding as ever*, 2006, <http://www.metropolismag.com/architecture/portland-building-1982.13>].

²¹ W. V. Eckardt, (*Time*, 1982) [*ibidem*].

²² Quotation from local Portland newspaper – *Willamette Week* (2006) [*ibidem*].

²³ H. Klotz, *Postmodern visions: Drawings, Paintings, and Models by Contemporary Architects*, Abbeville Press Publishers, New York 1985.

The subject of criticism from the users of the building (who are divided into several different groups including: employees of municipal offices and their clients, users of commercial premises and residents of the upper floors apartments), is primarily its non-functionality and lack of connection with the city's life. All users have difficult access to the building due to the characteristic formation of its lower zone, which on the one hand resembles the base of a classic column, on the other hand, a classic portico (or loggia). Both these forms – based on the rules of classical architecture – practically exclude each other: the column base (in fact it contains 3 floors) is elevated above the street level, and the portico should be directly connected with it; but in postmodernist architecture – all tricks were allowed and used to achieve the intended result. The column is associated with monumentality and was probably to represent the seriousness of the office (although many critics believed that the appearance of the building – especially the trashy garlands and motley colours – are its negation); and the loggia was to represent connection with the street life – a feature otherwise characteristic for many postmodern projects. However, the specific slope of the terrain, probably forced elevation of the level of the loggia above the street level. As a result, the intended interstitial space between the building and the city is a false trail: besides a crowded main entrance only two side stairs lead to its level; it became a sparsely used space, slightly dead, which instead of connecting actually cuts the building off from the street in a functional and visual sense (ill. 4–7). The same is true of the entrances to the building – considering the scale of the object, there are very few entries – the main entrance to the office and two rear entrances leading to staircases, located just next to the entrance to the underground parking lot. Clients and employees of the office also complain about the cramped and dark entrance hall to the building (ill. 8–11), as well as dark, unpleasant and “claustrophobic” office rooms and other public spaces in the building²⁴, generally deprived of sunlight or lit by small square windows that do not allow much light because of the dark glass. A striking aspect is also that the building is standing with its back to the neighbouring park, to which open buildings of the Town Hall and the County Courthouse standing on both sides of it. The *Portland Building's* elevation facing the park is unfortunately relatively closed with an entrance to the underground car park. Responding to the criticism of the building, it was decided in 2017 to thoroughly reconstruct it. The main purpose is to renew the façade of the building (replacing cheap ceramic tiles in the lower part with waterproof terracotta tiles of larger dimensions, covering the plaster layer in the upper part with aluminum cladding and replacing the windows with transparent ones) and to introduce some changes in the plan of the lower floors. The proposed changes in respect to its functional plan are primarily the opening of the ground floor space for office users including the incorporation of so far commercial spaces and parts of the open loggia into the public interior area. In this way the whole groundfloor area is to create one public space. The existing underground garage is to be replaced by a garage for bicycles and fitness rooms. The whole reconstruction will be a costly undertaking, but it is intended to seriously improve the technical and functional quality of the building, as well as its appearance (to be more smart and modern) – at the same time preserving the original idea of form and colours as designed by Graves. One may ask: will it remain the same building, or different, will it be an evolution or a revolution, and does it make any sense (?). Certainly

²⁴ G. Merin, *AD Classics: The Portland Building/ Michael Graves*, ArchDaily 2013, <http://www.archdaily.com/407522/ad-classics-the-portland-building-michael-graves>.

not everyone believes that the project will be successful; as one critic wrote a few years ago: “Post-Modernism proposed architecture so impoverished and flat that it had no possibility for evolution. Michael Graves’s *Portland Building*, while certainly a monument to the zeitgeist of the 1980s, has little to offer the contemporary world²⁵.”

<Dialogicality>, as Sennet writes, is in fact the new name of the old narrative practice, which serves to view a given phenomenon from every possible perspective²⁶. Dialogue, it seems, is better than a dialectical debate, it allows one to look at things more objectively, regardless of whether the matter relates to logical or emotional arguments. Typical for the dialogue, a balance between cooperation and competition requires that people be not too remote and not too independent, and that their exchanges be not over determined by the short term²⁷. The sense of the dialogue is also such that it does not have necessarily lead to a conclusion on who is perfectly justified (in this case: architects or building users). Reasons are various, sometimes contradictory and on both (or more) sides. The analysis of the few selected examples was aimed to demonstrate this. Some arguments used in architectural reflection are purely logical (technical, economical, functional), and others result from someone’s feelings. Typically, it is believed that logical, rational ones are more important than emotions; but yet, it is primarily the feelings of the residents that led to the ruin and then the spectacular defeat of the previously described housing estates. In the case of the *Portland Building*, a different way was chosen – expensive repairs and improvements, without them this building would have crumbled many years ago like the *Robin Hood Gardens*.

When designing and then building, it is always worth thinking about the fact that architecture, once built, becomes a living environment for people which is more durable than their lives, and that it is a space where previous and future generations of users will meet. Each of them would want to have something of their own there, adjust architecture to their own ideas. This is also a space where temporary and unchanging needs would meet the ‘here and now’ of the location. The uniqueness of architecture today lies also in the fact that although more and more things and relationships become virtual, it is just as has always been, a physical thing and an idea at the same time. Good architecture should be, however, “alive” and “full of voice”²⁸ – this is why it must both react to the needs of modern people and remember what it is in fact. It is not possible to assess a public or a residential building solely on the basis of what it looks like nor exclusively on how it works and how much it costs to maintain or repair it. Separately – its practical reality or its meaningful form do not exhaust its significance. Each building also creates its own separate social and political reality, it also has its own history and memory. It creates a place where people should be able to meet, no matter what their beliefs are, and what they think about the building they are in, having in mind, however, that there is something which unites them. This could be the architecture.

²⁵ The statement of Tom Wiscombe (*Emergent*) is an answer to question: *What do you think of the Portland Building?* (2006) – L. Manfra, *Architects, Critics Reflect on the Portland Building ... op.cit.*

²⁶ R. Sennet, *Razem: Rytuały, zalety i zasady współpracy ... op.cit.*, p. 358.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ ‘Voicefulness’ is a term created by John Ruskin (*The Seven Lamps of Architecture*); interpreted by art theorist Michail Bachtin it describes typical feature of human science works [including works of art] on contrary to works of technical sciences [F. Choay, *L’orizzonte del posturbano*, Officina Edizioni, Roma, 1992., p. 55].

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*All figures are photographs taken by the author in 2014.