Brześć – the city of an eastern borderlands, architecture of the 2nd Republic of Poland

Krystyna Paprzyca

kpaprzyca@pk.edu.pl

Katedra Kształtowania Środowiska Mieszkaniowego, Instytut Projektowania Urbanistycznego, Wydział Architektury Politechnika Krakowska

Summary: The borderland, often called „ land lost" are becoming the places we often return to in our memories, the need of rediscovering them arises. The past might be described in a different way: through pictures of different life styles, architecture, people, tradition. It is natural they create longing and sorrow caused often by the lack of acceptance of modern life styles. Because borderland towns are located abroad, their architecture, tradition, culture, literature are our cultural heritage and we shall not forget it.

The phenomenon of the lack of bond of people and places observed today, makes "places with no soul". Steering and controlling people, people's needs, emotions, make a person an object. A man loses oneself, loses one's soul. Many places are being ruled by a moment, similarity, rush and loneliness There are no history, past in them, there is only the present moment and they are characterized by the similarity. We cannot interpret them and we have no bonds with them.

Key words: identity of a place, ethnical identification, ethnical identity, architecture and urban planning of a place

A man lives through understanding places. The more content he can learn through his own openness and sensitivity, the wider his spiritual topography is and the richer his world becomes. Widening his world he also shapes the size of his soul.[1]

Introduction

We live in times of constant changes and people moving from place to place, which is visible especially in towns. Traditional town space, that used to identify us, stopped its functioning as a place of particular values we experience, and which influence people in a great way.

This movement of people, constant change of a place bears a need of stopping and reflecting. Nowadays' space so dominated by a fast pace becomes " alienated' and "extirpated".

In any town space we can see long forgotten places or buildings which actually are situated in great locations. Sometimes useless and alien, the buildings have their own history, depending on the kind of an ownership they can be neglected, showing visible signs of time passing and changes connected with the ownership, but also they can keep their glory.

When those buildings encounter with the flash of a photo camera there is a chance of catching an attention and those buildings in the photos become alive.

An empty house without residents does not seem to be secure, friendly and warm. It is not a kind of the house we remember with pleasure. Nobody returns to abandoned houses, nobody wants to return. A house is always connected with human fate from the birth to the death.

---

1   S.44 H. Buczyńska – Garewicz, Miejsca, strony, okolice, przyczynek do fenomenologii przestrzeni. UNIVERSTAS, Kraków, 2006

Thanks to photographs forgotten places or houses start living again, we can turn our attention to them, ponder on the present moment, passing away and oblivion. Places we do not care of or we do not remember about are disappearing, they become erased from our memory.

The past can be recalled, described in different ways, it can create nostalgia, sorrow for something lost. When a crowd of unknown people accompanies a person the lack of trust is born, we do not open towards people or places. Staying silent is also one of current styles of life. Today's man moves from place to place with 'baggage of own experiences' from the previous place and one is an example of an 'extirpated man'. [2]No sentiments, emotions, bonds, traditions, history connect him with a new place. Constant choices, fast changing style of life have dominated modern life of a man.

This impersonality and anonymity of life in town space is being seen in their character. Our lives are dominated by non-places, places where people meet briefly. Our social life is led in such non-places. They not only escalate, but also create a feeling on " extirpation".

These is the space of existential loneliness, characterized by the lack of address, unification, without hints of identity[3]

Present "unfamiliar and familiar citizen"

"*Unfamiliar citizen*" is one who very often moves from one town culture to another, with his "baggage of experiences" connected with the previous places to want a new place of a living soon. " Unfamiliar" claims a place as his own only for a short moment. Nothing connects him to this place, no emotions, bonds or people. "*Familiar citizen*" model is social in his character, he realizes himself through non-materialistic values: spiritual and symbolic.

Since the early beginning people have realized their common aims in community. The identity has been the effect of strong social bonds. The two models can be read as some kind of the manifesto of discord. Nostalgia, security, being in the opposition towards globalization, technology, consumerism, movement of people.[4]

Meanwhile Parsons, an author of the functional- structural theory of social systems believes a man in his contact with the modern world needs to discover own identity. He claims the individual identity results from his participation in social life, that he considers gradually as his own. Totality of patterns, ways of behavior binding a particular society, but also the norms, symbols and cues are becoming understandable for the people and due to that they can shape efficiently the behavior and identity.[5]

Town identity vs ethnical identification[6]

Cities and towns have bonds with the history of their development, planning idea, design and building, which are visible in urban planning and architecture. " *To full identification of a place we do not only need the knowledge of physical parameters, but also we need to know human activities which are connected with this place, or*

2   More M. Auge, Nie – miejsca, wprowadzenie do antropologii hipernowoczesności, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2012, Marc Auge to światowej sławy francuski etnolog i antropolog kulturowy.

3   Good points of the perception of public space are researched both in the field of urbanization and environmental sociology and psychology. When speaking about sociology we need to turn out attention to the research connected with town space, social issues and a person. Patrick Geddes, sociologist and naturalist, was speaking in 1904 about the use of sociological knowledge during building of towns. The most known of his continuator were Lewis Mumford, Paul A. Bell, Florian Znaniecki, Stanisław Ossowski, Aleksander Wallis.

4   Paprzyca K. „Terytorium, sieci, plemiona", Monografia / Politechnika Krakowska im. Tadeusza Kościuszki, Seria numer 546, 2017, ISSN 0860–097X s.151–169, 2017

5   More PARSONS T.(1951), The social system, Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press

6   Identity – relation between each object and the object itself, identity, equality " New Encyclopedia PWN, Warszawa 1997, book 6, page 433" Identity is the 'deepest ' dependence taking place between perceived surrounding together with its historical elements: content (culture, tradition of a place) and form (canon of a place), page 24 Z. Myczkowski, Ladscape as the identity expression in chosen protected places in Poland, Kraków Institute of Technology, 2003. Identity is one of the most important characteristics of culture and art. Identity stems from the relation between the architecture of a place with space where it is created, integral part of the nature and with people who live in the space.

which are associated or forecasted, also a description of terms possessed by people about the ways of behavior in a particular surrounding.... It can be stated that the profound urban and architecture project is to create places[7]

Architecture and architectural content of a place can change through time[8] and are dependent on environment, society and architecture.

Małgorzata Bieńkowska-Ptasznik believes ethnical identification[9] and ethnical identity is created based on the opposition between "familiar" and "unfamiliar". It has always been one of the vital aspects of molding spiritual values and the identity both in space and society. Sensually remembered details lead to spiritual reflections and experiences. Color, sound, taste are the impulses moving us in time and space to loved places. The skill of seeing reflections or values with our own senses, teaches us to take joy from ephemeral moments lived in different places in our life.

At the borderland we can meet constant stress on ethnical identity. Different ethnic groups coexist there and they have quite complex relations. Ethnicity makes a specific kind of a symbolic capital, a language is strictly connected with ethnical identity. Ethnical identity can be seen in everyday life, through a language, behavior, bonds, outfit, cuisine, religion and architecture.

Brześć on the Bug – architecture of the 2nd Republic of Poland

Brześć is the town with unpleasant fate, begrimed by wars, catastrophes and victories. The location was not in its favor. Today it's located near the border with Poland, at Belarus side. Once a Polish town with the majority of Polish residents[10].

During the annexation of Poland, its urban structure reminded a village, with no town center with historic buildings. Because of the WWI, Polish – Bolshevik war, millions of buildings were destroyed as well as the railway infrastructure of the town. For a long time this place remained backward and neglected by the authority. The majority of buildings in Brześć were wooden and seldom higher than one floor. While in that time at the Prussian Partition other cities enjoyed bricked buildings. Russian authorities, contrary to the Prussian one, did not invest in building public buildings. Such a situation led to the fact the architecture of that time was visually unattractive.

Fig. 1. Brześć nad Bugiem (Białoruś) ul. Unii Lubelskiej currently ul. Lenina, photo K. Paprzyca 2018 r.

Brześć on the Bug was destroyed, when in 1831 the city was almost totally demolished due to Russian order. On its place Fort Brześć – one of the most powerful fortresses- was built. At north- east side a new town was created, with a very regular plan. The laws forced the architectural character, mostly wooden structures,

7   K. Lenartowicz, On psychology of architecture, Institute of Technology, Kraków, 1992, page 35

8   „Pondering on a Man, characters of community life, culture there is a conviction of extraordinary importance of space which made and still can make an objective base of shaping the bond between people", page 59, R. Dyoniziak ,K. Iwanicka ,A. Karwińska ,Z. Pucek, Society during the process of changes, Framework of general sociology, Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 1994 r.

9   Małgorzata Bieńkowska-Ptasznik „ Individual Ethnical Identity in a contest of borderline" „ Ethnical identity is one of the crucial kinds of identity. Individual identity has been treated for a long time as something that shapes itself up to a certain moment, later is becomes something permanent in human's life." Page 324 Małgorzata Bieńkowska-Ptasznik

10 More Dołgowski Andrzej, Brześć on the Bug, Travel Through Time 1919- 1939, W.L.Anczyca S.A. Publishing, Kraków

bricked ones had limited height and they appeared sporadically[11] The main axis was created by Unii Lubelskiej Street (currently Lenin Street), along which many public – usefulness buildings were built. Till today they have been a showcase of that time. (Fig. 1.)

In the face of a difficult socio- political situation of the 1920s and 1930s Polish authorities, state and local, undertook investment actions that could help increase the level of residents life. The works connected with railway infrastructure, roads, sewage and pipes systems, building sites were introduced. The town structure was reshaped. Many architectural projects were realized in the interwar times and some of them still play a great role.

Banks, cinemas, sport facilities were being built; parks and greenstones were created. Those buildings were responsible in a great way for socio- cultural changes, due to them the life style was changed: sport activities, going to the cinema, doing shopping in elegant shops. The architecture that was created at that time was traditional at first, later gradually it became more modernist.

A crucial aspect connected with urban change in Brześć was the action of building residential houses. It was realized after 1924 and it was focusing on buildings built for Polish state officials (so-called official colonies). The most remarkable architects were invited to the Project, and they were designer and built in many borderland towns, also in Brześć. They often based on the concept of town- garden, they characterized with symmetrical town zone. They consisted of loose residential houses, surrounded by greenery, connected by streets or lanes. Official district in Brześć has high quality of architectural form and urban planning. The projects remains in a great shape even today. Most buildings were planned by Julian Lisiecki, some project were made by Marcin Weinfeld.

Fig. 2., 3. Brześć nad Bugiem (Białoruś) so-called official colonies, photo K. Paprzyca, 2018

Fig. 4., 5. Brześć nad Bugiem (Białoruś) so-called official colonies, photo. K. Paprzyca 2018

11 More Pczczółkowski Michał, Modern Borderland, Architecture at the Eastern Lands of the 2nd Republic of Poland 1921–1939, Księży Młyn Publishing, Łódź 2016

The main architectural pattern was Polish manor together with typical elements like porch, arcades, corner buttresses, tall – two –four hip roofs. One of the life centers was official casino, having more expressive style (Fig. 2., 3., 4., 5.).

Brześć, the same as other borderland towns from that period of time, had master plans ("Wielki Brześć" 1929). They aimed to integrate city terrains with suburbs, creating one big city organism. A lot of projects were not realized before the WWII.[12]

Architectural form of the buildings built in Brześć and other borderland towns mirrored stylist tendencies created by the best architects: Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, Stefan Szyller, Kazimierz Tołłoczko, Szymon Syrkus, Bogdan Lachert and many more. In this way they tried to integrate borderland with the rest of the country. The national style was dominant, aiming at familiar effects through characteristic details and elements of Polish historic architecture. One of the popular models was a model of a manor, with simple mass and slopping roof. New architectural projects appeared with time – public buildings with their neoclassical style. This style represented seriousness, representativeness and it was esthetic. The building of Polish Bank may be an example, it has remained in a good state till today. A designer Stanisław Filasewicz used neo-classical convention (Fig. 6.).

Fig. 6. Brześć nad Bugiem (Białoruś) The building of Polish Bank, photo. K. Paprzyca, 2018

Fig. 7. Brześć nad Bugiem, Provincial Department in Brześć and Health Organization building, photo K. Paprzyca, 2018

12 More Pszczółkowski Michał, Modern Borderland, Architecture at the Eastern Lands of the 2nd Republic of Poland 1921–1939,, Księży Młyn Publishing, Łódź 2016

In the late 1020s so-called functionalism appeared in the designs, depending function on the form, flat roof, windows in the shape of stripes, modern steel or concrete construction. It dominated the school and medical facilities architecture. Health organization building in Brześć May be the example. Designed by Szymon Syrkus, has the same function in our times (Fig. 7.).

Conclusion

Borderland that gradually receive the status of „lost lands" are becoming places former residents return to and also the need of rediscovering them arises.

Sentiments connected with places we live in reject global culture of " shock", culture of risk that is a threshold of development of civilization. Bonds, social identification with a place of the living, the sense of identity and lasting do not have a place in modern relative and commercial world.

The need to live and be in "own place", "own town" resulting from the needs and styles of life, may become one of the crucial guidelines for modern people. It can also be one of the most important models of human lasting and events.

Town environment has always been the place of creating important values for civilization development: material, cultural, esthetic, emotional, spiritual; but also the processes, like: communication and social exchange, identification, information. They were characterized by values, like: material, cultural, spiritual, quality, rareness, identity and climate.

Because borderland towns are located abroad, their architecture, tradition, culture, literature are our cultural heritage and we shall not forget it.

Literature

[1]   M. Auge, Nie – miejsca, wprowadzenie do antropologii hipernowoczesności, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2012

[2]   Buczyńska-Garewicz H., Miejsca, strony, okolice, przyczynek do fenomenologii przestrzeni. UNIVERSTAS, Kraków, 2006

[3]   Dołgowski A., Brześć nad Bugiem, Podróż w czasie 1919- 1939, Drukarnia Wydawnicza im W.L. Anczyca S.A. Kraków

[4]   Dyoniziak R., Iwanicka K., Karwińska A., Pucek Z., „Społeczeństwo w procesie zmian, zarys socjologii ogólnej „,Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych UNIVERSITAS, Kraków 1994 r.

[5]   Lenartowicz K., „O psychologii architektury", Wydawnictwo Politechniki Krakowskiej, Kraków, 1992

[6]   Myczkowski Z.," Krajobraz wyrazem tożsamości w wybranych obszarach chronionych w Polsce", Wydawnictwo Politechniki Krakowskiej, Kraków 2003

[7]   Paprzyca K. „Terytorium, sieci, plemiona", Monografia / Politechnika Krakowska im. Tadeusza Kościuszki, Seria numer 546, 2017, ISSN 0860–097X s.151–169, 2017

[8]   PARSONS T. "The social system", Glencoe, Illinois, The Free Press, 1951

[9]   Pszczółkowski M., Kresy Nowoczesne, Architektura na Ziemiach Wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej 1921–1939,, Księży Młyn Dom Wydawniczy, Łódź 2016

[10]   Riesman D., Samotny tłum, Wydawnictwo vis-a-vis/ Etiuda, Kraków 2011

[11]   https://repozytorium.uwb.edu.pl/.../Małgorzata%20Bieńkowska