



Design Philosophy

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City-forming solutions for quarter development in the designs of the Grupa 5 Architekci studio

Introduction

The Warsaw studio Group 5 Architects (in Polish: Grupa 5 Architekci) is not a classic design team. Founded on the wave of transformation in 1998 by five young architects with different creative personalities, in a short time it began to meet the challenge of large commercial orders. Building an effective studio was done in a hurry, whereas the lack of experience was made up for by the determination of the multi-person management team. Within a few years, the studio grew to a team of several dozen designers who with each subsequent year grew into an increasingly efficient structure.

At that time, we did not have time to develop a precise design philosophy. The relations between the partners were democratic, there was no ideological leader among us. The dynamically changing Polish reality, the constant evolution of the standard of living and social needs, as well as the changing intellectual climate around architecture, verified the sense of the creative priorities developed in the studio several times.

For 25 years, Grupa 5 has been developing in two ways. The first aspect of our activity is related to the challenges posed by the realities of the market and the development of complex methods of managing a modern design studio. The second path of our exploration concerns architectural creation. Importantly, these two issues are inseparably linked and they influence each other. We have always tried

to find a balance between them so that neither of them dominates our approach to the profession, which in itself is a kind of operating philosophy. In 2018, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Grupa 5, we published a book entitled *Życie i przestrzeń* [Life and Space] dedicated to the history of our team, in which we described both the business and creative face of the studio in the convention of a double narrative. Written in an accessible language, the story was also intended for non-professional readers, and its journalistic and non-scientific character was intentional. The free dialogue present in the book between the people managing the studio was supposed to foster a joint attempt at ideological self-definition [1].

The role played by market realities and organizational issues in an architect's workshop, underestimated in the academic community, has been scientifically researched in recent years by a member of the management board of Grupa 5, namely Michał Leszczyński, who has been the company's president for several years. In his doctoral dissertation, using the achievements and experience of the studio, he put forward the thesis that [...] *during the period of political transformation in Poland, in the dynamically changing conditions of planning and implementing architectural and urban projects, the group of participants in the design process is expanding. The role of the demiurge architect is transforming and moving towards a creative coordinator* [2, p. 14].

Despite our mastery of the rules governing the contemporary architectural market and the consistently developed concept of an effective studio, devoid of a clear hierarchy, but based on a constant exchange of experience, cooperation and coordination, the design method itself in

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Grupa 5, which is the result of the professed ideas regarding space, has not been implemented to this day in a categorical definition. In the publishing announcement of the above-mentioned publication from 2018, the areas of our creative interests were described in a literary formula like this: *projects are created having in mind the need for rooting, common space and everyday relationships between people* [1, cover]. We do agree on the importance of these concepts, however, each time they are translated into the designed space, the process bears the mark of various people co-creating the studio and their different sensitivities. Sometimes we meet with the opinion of critics and colleagues that Grupa 5 lacks a clear architectural language [3]. By improving the studio, we see the advantages of this. The work of Grupa 5 still has a flexible and open formula. Questions about aesthetics and creating the right living environment through architecture are constantly being raised, which is a key development impulse for us.

As a member of the management board of the studio and its co-founder, when describing the creative phenomena taking place in Grupa 5, in which we can find a common ideological denominator, I must make it clear that I am trying only from my own perspective to capture the current moment of development of the constantly evolving, today two-generation group of designers. At the same time, I can no longer precisely separate my own views from the beliefs we all share within the group. This is influenced by mutual inspirations lasting for 25 years and the deeply collective nature of our work.

Revaluations

In 2002, describing one of the studio's first projects, which was a housing estate in Strumykowa Street in Warsaw's Tarchomin district, Hubert Trammer, an architecture critic, stated that [...] *designers from Grupa 5 define the style of their architecture as humanized modernism. In fact, many of their realizations can be classified as post-modernism, which is becoming popular again. However, there is a taboo on architects admitting to using this style* [4, p. 20].

Regardless of how distant the above statement juggling "isms" in designing may seem today, it is characteristic of the Polish discussion about the architecture of the beginning of the century and concerns the essence of the dispute between the older and younger generations of native architects, which actually took place at that time.

The designers who manage Grupa 5 today studied at the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology in the 1990s. They received a solid lesson in modernism as listeners of Professor Lech Kłosiewicz's lectures and as students of the generation of functionalists who were still present at the university, although starting to depart, such as Witold Benedek, Jan Zdanowicz, Halina Skibniewska, Hanna Adamczewska-Wejhert. The opposite pole was represented by the key Warsaw postmodernists teaching at the Faculty, i.e. Marek Budzyński, Andrzej Kiciński or Magdalena Staniszkis, and the then dean of the Faculty, Konrad Kucza-Kuczyński, who stood somewhat apart from the architectural discourse. The

confrontation of both of these epochs in design, which in Poland was additionally overlapped with the change of the political system, resounded loudest in the mouth of Czesław Bielecki, an architect, a former oppositionist and author of a groundbreaking essay on continuity in architecture [5], who in the early 1990s gave a series of brilliant guest lectures at the Faculty, depreciating the dogmatism of the Athens Charter and its architectural heritage. Ambitious students of the Faculty carefully followed the arguments of both sides, mostly keeping a generational distance. Although they perpetuated the lessons of errors of modernism, the historicizing Polish postmodernism for many of them was not an alternative, but a synonym for the provincial character of the native construction of those times [1].

When we were finishing our studies, an interest in modernist avant-garde realizations returned in Western European architecture. The urban dogmatism of functionalism was rejected, but the minimalist aesthetics still aroused deep emotions. Soon, also in Poland, neo-modernism was to become the hallmark of the young generation of architects. It was reflected in the nationwide meeting of young architects *The Young to Łódź*, organized in 2003 by the editors of the "Architektura Murator" monthly. The architects from our studio played a significant role in it [6].

Adhering to neo-modernism in the first years of our activity, in the course of time we realized the pointlessness of the dispute over style, which does not bring any important content to the art of shaping space, excluding the sphere of design itself. The orientation towards the aesthetic universalism of the avant-garde turned out to be a limited formula. Years later, it was evocatively described by architect and art historian Błażej Ciarkowski: *Neo-modernism is full of contradictions. It is perceived as a continuation of modernism, while contradicting its fundamental premises. It is associated with modernity, but it is not modern. It is a non-modern modernity or a post-modern modernism* [7, p. 95].

This does not change the fact that the fascination with the visual attractiveness of minimalism and the avant-garde idea of geometric abstraction, expressive in our first projects, still has its loyal followers both in the studio and among the architects cooperating with it [8]. Tarchomin realization of a residential quarter at Odkryta Street from 1999 (Fig. 1), a farmer's house near Warsaw built four years later, a residential house at Morskie Oko Street in Warsaw and an office building at Komandorska Street in Wrocław erected much later, in the next decade (Fig. 2) as well as many other projects in which we participated testify to the everlasting seductive power of the international style.

City-forming space

Persistent and constantly developing ideas present today in Grupa 5 appeared where the architect touches urban planning. The dynamics of the times of transformation helped in this. In the first two decades of the 21st century, consistently modernized Warsaw is becoming an attractive European city. The development of local self-government and urban movements indicates new fields of research,

sensitizing architects to social thinking. Journalism and architectural criticism are developing creatively. For the first time, the works of the classics, freshly translated into Polish and widely discussed in Poland, appear on the publishing market, including those of Le Corbusier, but also of later urban theoreticians who opposed the achievements

of the avant-garde, such as Jane Jacobs, Christopher Alexander, Leon Krier or Jan Gehl, postulating the perception of the city not as a rational, coherent work of art, but as a place of development for human activity. At the same time, in the architecture of the West, the intellectual twilight of the age of starchitects begins.

Fig. 1. Wróblewo 2 Housing Estate at Odkryta Street in Warsaw (2003, designed by Grupa 5 Architekci, photo by M. Czechowicz)

Il. 1. Osiedle Wróblewo 2 przy ul. Odkrytej w Warszawie (2003, proj. Grupa 5 Architekci, fot. M. Czechowicz)



Fig. 2. Office building at Komandorska Street in Wrocław (2017, designed by Grupa 5 Architekci / Studio Kosmos, photo by M. Czechowicz)

Il. 2. Budynek biurowy przy ul. Komandorskiej we Wrocławiu (2017, proj. Grupa 5 Architekci / Studio Kosmos, fot. M. Czechowicz)



In pluralistic times, which Zygmunt Bauman calls post-modernity, there is no chance for charismatic doctrines worthy of the modernist avant-garde [9]. Urban planning of cities of the 21st century faces issues of multi-layeredness and participation, which require the will and ability to cooperate on the part of many stakeholders and users of space, and to reconcile contradictions. Although at present there is no unambiguous method for coherent shaping of the urban spatial structure [10], along with the growing local awareness there are more and more interesting possibilities of local interventions in a quarter, street, square or park on a scale available to an architectural designer.

In Grupa 5, the experience of urban threats resulting from the confrontation of the development market and city officials does not lead to reconciliation with Rem Koolhaas's diagnosis of junkspace, popular 20 years ago [11]. We have always perceived his essay as a catchy demiurgic rhetoric that disregards the values inherent in the urban fabric and the community that inhabits it. We are seduced not by the structure of global cities, but by the identity of the place and the power of locality. And this has a chance to emerge not through design, but in a consciously designed and experienced space at the junction of architecture and urban planning. We believe in the value of city-forming architecture, the creation of which consists in using the potential hidden in the existing context, not only cultural but also social, when the city creates the building, and the building co-creates the real city.

Warsaw reminiscences

On the contemporary market of ideas, New Urbanism is an inspiring direction for us, even if its co-creator Leon Krier, entering the field of architecture design, does not meet our minimalist tastes. *The Charter of New Urbanism*, published in Poland in 2005, emphasizes shaping the city by creating spaces that are conducive to neighborhood communities, creating inclusive public space and

protecting heritage while respecting the continuity and evolution of urban communities [12].

When looking for solutions in Warsaw that can be a point of reference here, we can reach for examples from the first decades of Polish independence, when the capital city's planning reached an impressive level of competence. In the modern parts of the city created at that time, such as Żoliborz, Bielany, Mokotów, Ochota or Saska Kępa, it was possible to maintain the continuity of urban space with its characteristic size, legible streets and public spaces. Modernist in its rationalism, but not yet avant-garde urban planning of that time overcame the ills of the 19th-century city, providing buildings with sun, greenery and decent hygienic conditions long before the radical postulates of the Athens Charter. The culmination of the achievements of urban planners of the interwar period was the General Plan of Warsaw [13] approved in 1931, creating not only a consistent and clear structure of the metropolis, but also a potentially communal city, which today, in accordance with the terminology of New Urbanism, we would call polycentric [14]. The way of shaping the urban structure in interwar Warsaw, based on modernized quarter buildings and largely on participatory cooperative housing, was at that time similar to the achievements of urban planners in other European cities, e.g. associated with the Amsterdam School (whose achievements the architects from Grupa 5 became interested in, which resulted in organizing a few-day reconnaissance of the entire studio in Amsterdam in 2016).

Analyzing the intersection of architecture and urban planning in Warsaw's interwar projects, which interests us, we see the development of Kolonia Lubeckiego in Stara Ochota as an exceptional example. Its location a short distance from the first seat of the studio in Sękocińska Street and the fact that two partners from Grupa 5 have been its residents for years, allowed us not only to thoroughly experience the space designed here, but also to observe how its spatial solutions stimulate the local community. Until the end of the 20th century, the urban structure of Kolonia Lubeckiego remained underestimated in scientific studies. Also nowadays, it is rarely mentioned in architectural journalism. According to architect and urban planner Andrzej Kiciński, this was due to ideological and personal reasons related to its creators [15], who did not fit into the post-war narrative of modernism. The architecture of the complex itself is mostly historicizing or embedded in the Art Deco trend [16], only in some places it is purely modernist, and therefore incomparably less "modern" than the pre-war buildings of the Warsaw Housing Cooperative in Żoliborz, most often referred to in publications.

In the most interesting part of Kolonia Lubeckiego between Solariego and Krzyckiego Streets, the urban tissue was designed as a series of cooperative quarters forming a frontage along Filtrowa Street with mutually open green courtyards (Fig. 3). Across the quarters, thanks to the wide clearances between the buildings, rows of greenery have been planted, creating unique walking routes linking the public courtyards. The intimate atmosphere of the short access streets located along the quarters was obtained thanks to the trees growing in the adjacent front gardens. These

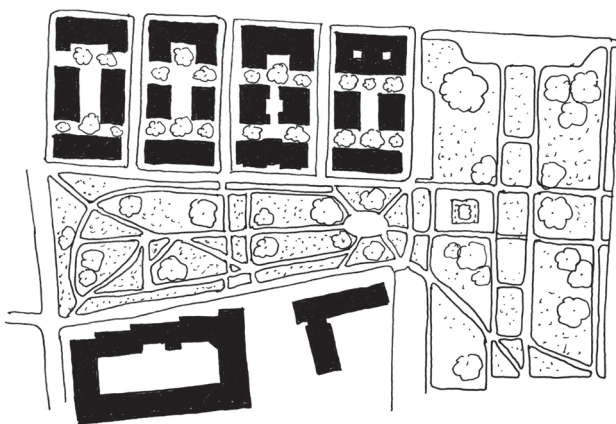


Fig. 3. Sketch of a fragment of Kolonia Lubeckiego in Warsaw between Górnickiego and Krzyckiego Streets (drawing by K. Mycielski)

Il. 3. Szkic fragmentu Kolonii Lubeckiego w Warszawie pomiędzy ul. Górnickiego a Krzyckiego (rys. K. Mycielski)

streets end in a park. To this day, it serves as a space integrating the community of the estate. The designed structure of each quarter consisted of diversified buildings: a large-city tenement house located along Filtrowa Street, with two three-storey stadt-villas designed at its back and a two-storey terraced house erected behind them, closing the quarter and adjacent to the park (Fig. 4). Thanks to such a game of scale, the size of the buildings was gradually homogenized towards a green public space [18].

The layout of the buildings designed in this way is an inspiration for us for several reasons. It respects the identity of the city in which it was built, preserving the legibility and dimensions of its frontage buildings. By hierarchizing the scale of buildings according to a clear rule, it offers residents a harmoniously differentiated housing estate space. Thanks to the short quarters and pedestrian routes connecting the backyards intersecting with intimate streets, and above all thanks to the consistently maintained idea of accessibility of public and semi-public spaces, it creates the possibility of choosing many walking routes around the estate. The access streets, leading users towards the park, create a centripetal compositional arrangement in which the public space is not only a compositional but also a functional keystone of the entire space. The pro-social nature of Kolonia Lubeckiego, erected several decades ago, and its local identity shaped over several generations, is evidenced by today's activity of its inhabitants. Neighborhood events are organized in the park every year. The community of the colony has been successfully defending the park managed by the city against ill-considered interventions of decision-makers in its space for years [19]. It also initiates many important participatory events in Ochota, such as multi-stage public consultations organized by the city in 2016 regarding the modernization of the nearby Pola Mokotowskie, taking into account the diverse activity of their users.

Quarter development potential

The advantages of compact quarter development were described by Czesław Bielecki in the well-known book *Gra w Miasto* [City Game] [20], which was famous in the 1990s. Following Christopher Alexander, he divides the external space in the city into positive and negative, the first of which means *drilling the interior in one solid*, and the second *arranging interiors from different solids*. Bielecki states that when choosing between these two types of spaces [...] *it is about the original intention of the architect: whether he starts from urban interiors or from buildings; whether the public space of the city is divided by volume or it is made of blocks. This distinction does not concern the interiors of buildings, but the way in which buildings form the urban tissue of streets and squares* [20, p. 57]. Alexander himself states directly that [...] *People feel comfortable in spaces which are "positive" and use these spaces; people feel relatively uncomfortable in spaces which are "negative" and such spaces tend to remain unused* [21, p. 519].

The quarter gives the opportunity to identify residents with the area they own. It enables clear typologization of

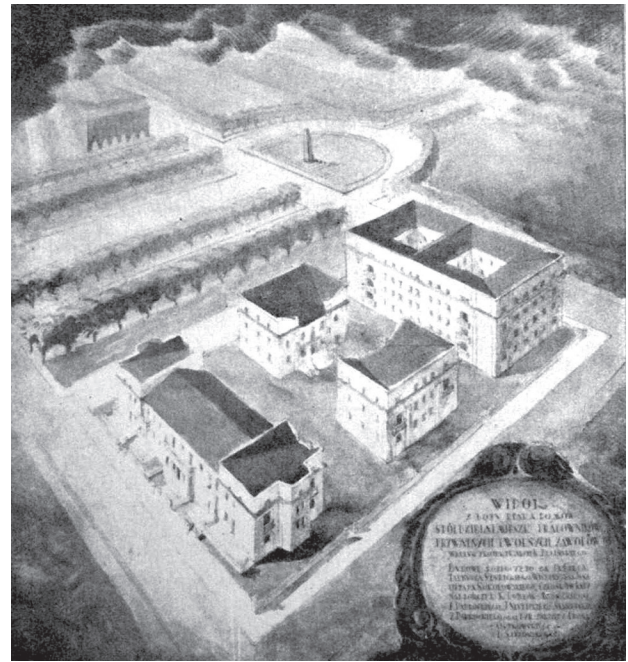


Fig. 4. Development quarter of Kolonia Lubeckiego in Warsaw (1928) designed by R. Feliński (source: [17, Fig. 45, p. 86])

Il. 4. Kwartal zabudowy Kolonii Lubeckiego w Warszawie (1928) zaprojektowany przez R. Felińskiego (źródło: [17, rys. 45, s. 86])

space, dividing it into public and semi-public [22]. In the first years of transformation, which were a formative period for the founders of Grupa 5, in Warsaw, struggling with its functionalist heritage, the quarter grew to the rank of an urban archetype, becoming a synonym of traditional urbanity.

Our interest in the quarter dating back to the beginnings of the studio has a strong ideological foundation resulting from personal experience of space, but to a large extent it is also dictated by the pragmatics of the investment. On today's Polish construction market, where profit optimization is a priority, quarterly development is an effective way to use the plot area, guaranteeing high margins. The decision to use a quarter in a project is often unavoidable. It is the result of the investor's guidelines set out in the contract regarding the expected usable or leasable area and the need to fit the building layout into the external conditions dictated by the conditions of local planners. When recalling inspiring quarterly solutions from the past, such as Kolonia Lubeckiego, we should bear in mind that today it is an almost unattainable model due to the difference of circumstances. Direct application of a similar idea of an intimate housing estate completed with a park in today's realities is very difficult to achieve. It was established as an enterprise of housing cooperatives benefiting from public preferences for construction in the first years of independence [18]. This is an investment model focused not on profit, but on the quality of space. This is what makes it different from today's market of tenants and developers.

Nevertheless, the type of development discussed here, which today is not threatened by the 19th-century claustrophobia of well yards, if only because of the restrictive provisions in Polish law regarding the obscuration and required access to the sun, may be an architectural material on a human scale and susceptible to countless modifications, even though minor, but important for the comfort of space. In the achievements of Grupa 5 we will find many examples of implementation that prove this.

The idea of an open courtyard

In his reflections on positive outdoor space, Alexander recalls the results of the analysis of the 19th-century Austrian urban planner Camillo Sitte, which shows that well-liked and eagerly visited squares are characterized by two features: *On the one hand, they are partly enclosed; on the other hand they are also open to one another, so that each one leads into the next* [21, p. 520]. The above rule for city squares can also be applied to the interiors of



Fig. 5. Apartment building at Leszczyńska Street in Warsaw:

a) land development plan with ground floor plan, b) building façade (2006, designed by Grupa 5 Architekci, photo by M. Czechowicz)

II. 5. Budynek apartamentowy przy ul. Leszczyńskiej w Warszawie:

a) plan zagospodarowania terenu wraz z rzutem parteru, b) fasada budynku (2006, proj. Grupa 5 Architekci, fot. M. Czechowicz)

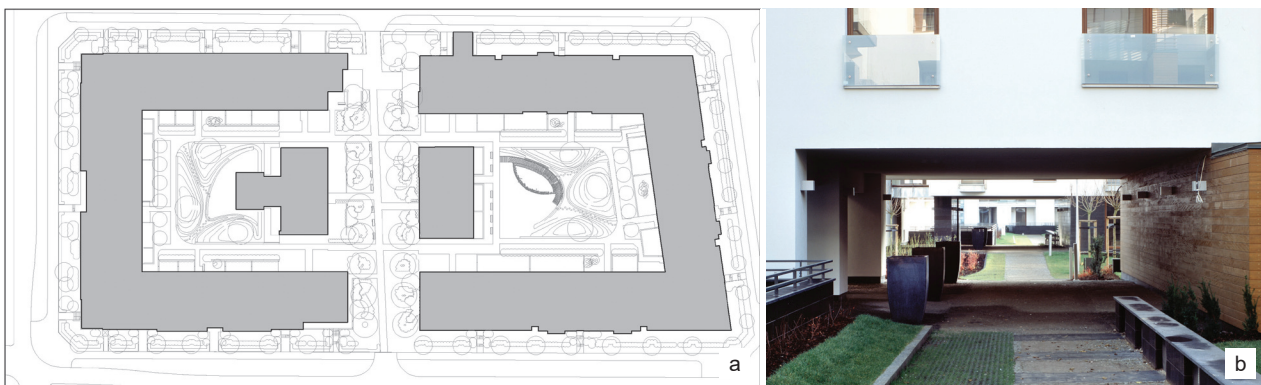


Fig. 6. Residential quarters at Sarmacka Street in Warsaw:

a) land development plan, b) clearance between courtyards (2006, designed by Grupa 5 Architekci, photo by M. Czechowicz)

II. 6. Kwartaly mieszkalne przy ul. Sarmackiej w Warszawie:

a) plan zagospodarowania terenu, b) prześwit pomiędzy dziedzińcami (2006, proj. Grupa 5 Architekci, fot. M. Czechowicz)

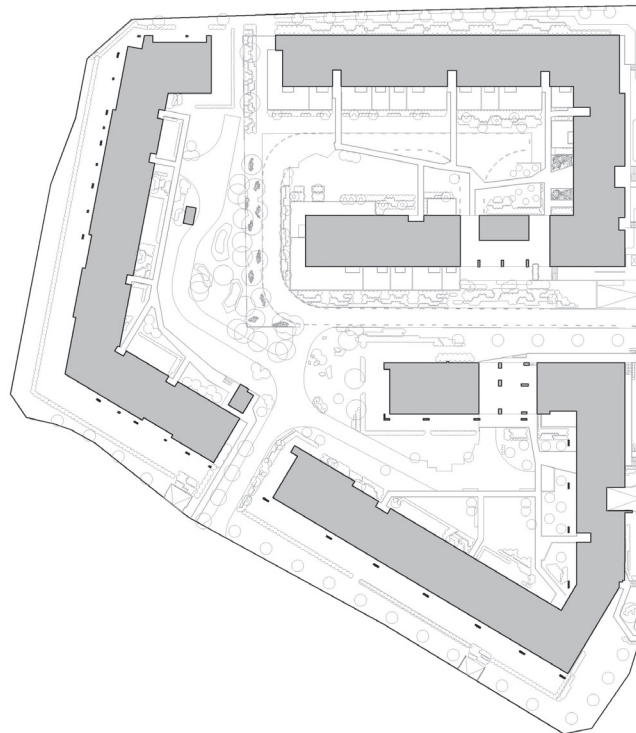
quarters. In our projects, it means striving to create a clear relationship between the courtyard and the neighboring spaces. We use several solutions here.

The simplest of them concerns places where the quarter meets the street. We believe that in the case of intensive downtown development, where the gate clearance is used, it should be as wide as possible, so that there is a real penetration of public and semi-public space, and the moment of crossing the border between them is clear. In Warsaw, similar solutions from the interwar period can be an inspiration here. We used them in several of our projects, for example, in the apartment quarter at Leszczyńska Street in Warsaw's Powiśle (Fig. 5).

When designing larger-scale housing estates, containing several hundred premises, we try to divide the space into several cooperating backyards. In the case of two residential quarters at Sarmacka Street in Warsaw's Miasteczko Wilanów, we turned the designed buildings towards each

other, creating a system of three green courtyards interpenetrating each other through wide openings in the ground floors (Fig. 6). Each of the backyards fulfills a different function in the estate, from the courtyard for quiet relaxation, through a common tree-lined passage between the buildings, to the space with a playground for children. All spaces are connected by a path running around the courtyards, which makes pedestrian communication in the estate more legible.

Positive reception by the users of the space designed at Sarmacka Street strengthened our belief in the adopted solutions. A similar sequence of spatially semi-autonomous courtyards connected to each other, between which it is easy to move around using housing estate paths and wide openings, was used by us in the Brzozowy Zakątek estate, which ten years later was also implemented in Miasteczko Wilanów (Fig. 7). Clearances not only serve as expressive openings between yards and are responsible



a

Fig. 7. Brzozowy Zakątek Housing Estate at Branickiego Street in Warsaw:

a) land development plan,
b) clearance between courtyards
(2018, designed by Grupa 5 Architekci, photo by M. Czechowicz)

II. 7. Osiedle Brzozowy Zakątek przy ul. Branickiego w Warszawie:

a) plan zagospodarowania terenu,
b) prześwit pomiędzy dziedzińcami
(2018, proj Grupa 5 Architekci, fot. M. Czechowicz)



b

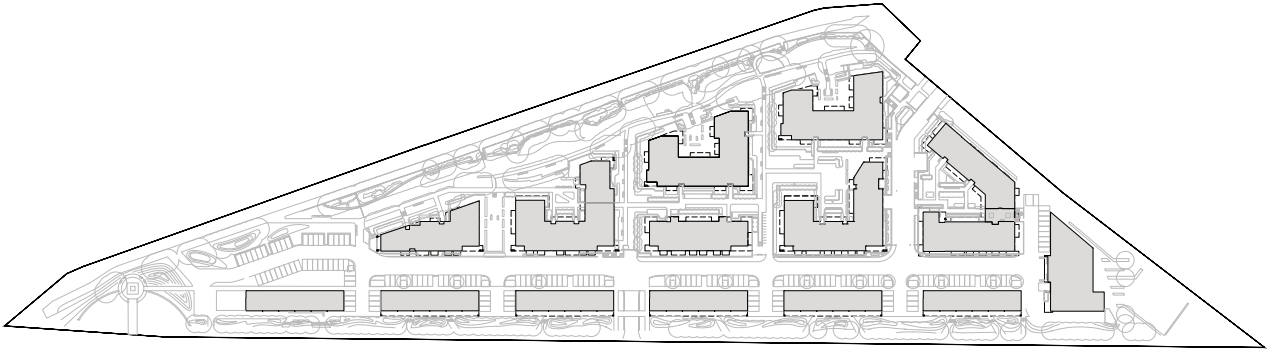


Fig. 8. Land development plan for Tivoli Estate at Malborska Street in Warsaw (2008, designed by Grupa 5 Architekci)

Il. 8. Plan zagospodarowania terenu osiedla Tivoli przy ul. Malborskiej w Warszawie (2008, proj. Grupa 5 Architekci)

for the effect of multi-plan space, but also have a utilitarian meaning, fulfilling the function of roofing for bicycles.

An example of a realization based on similar, although slightly modified, assumptions dictated by a specific context is the Tivoli housing estate in Warsaw's Targówek district. On a stretched triangular plot, we managed to create a whole series of intimate common spaces connected with each other (Fig. 8). You go from one to the next, they have different proportions and scale. The internal pedestrian route running along the estate and connecting the courtyards slightly changes direction several times, which is consistent with the theories of Krier [14], who emphasized the need to enrich the perspective. The courtyards open not only to each other, but also towards the Bródnowski Canal overgrown with old trees, running in the immediate vicinity of the housing estate.

Experiments with a courtyard remaining in spatial contact with the surroundings and constituting a harmonious part of a larger spatial composition do not apply only to residential architecture in Grupa 5. Similar searches are made in the design of public utility buildings. In office projects, we are dealing with a different geometry of the buildings due to the greater width of the routes and different requirements for shaping the enclosed space between them. In one of our early projects, the headquarters of Bank Millennium, located in the center of the Eko-Park estate in Warsaw's Mokotów district, intimate green courtyards have a linear character and have been located on the second floor level in order to create an environment of rest and integration for office employees (Fig. 9). These spaces have been partially closed. Their frames are the walls of office tracts and bay windows of conference rooms

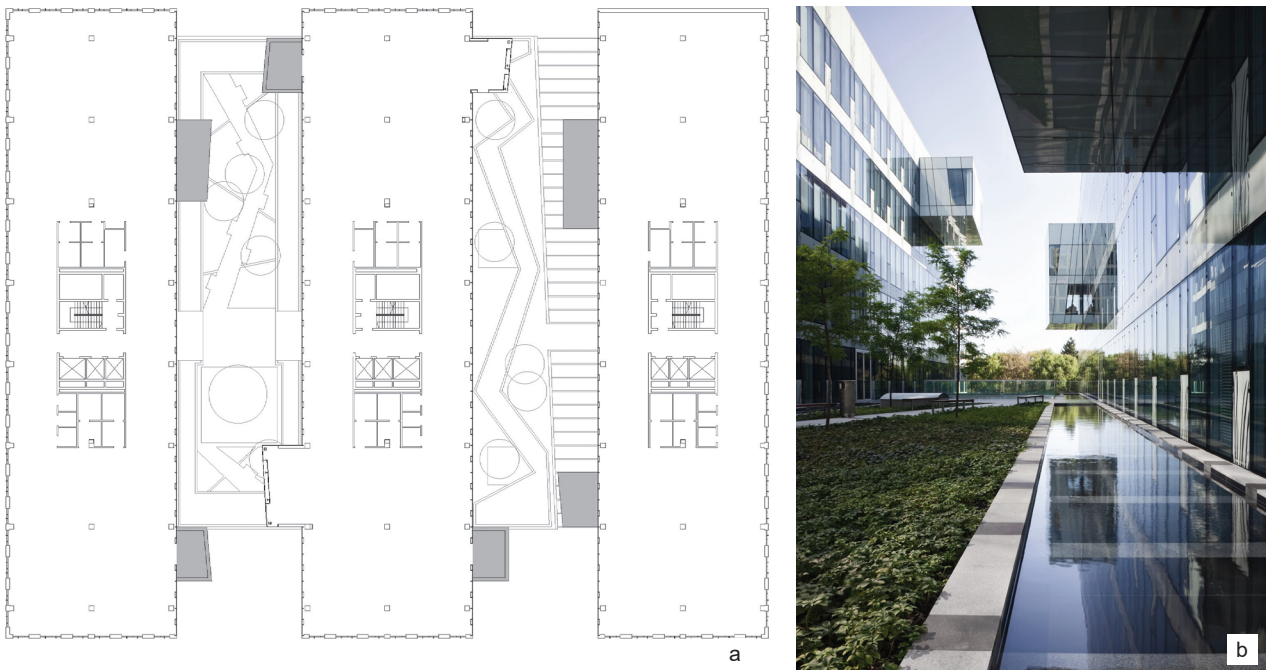


Fig. 9. The seat of Bank Millennium in Warsaw at Biały Kamień Street:

a) plan of the 2nd floor, b) courtyard between the building's tracts (2009, designed by Grupa 5 Architekci, photo by M. Czechowicz)

Il. 9. Siedziba Banku Millennium w Warszawie przy ul. Biały Kamień: a) rzut drugiej kondygnacji, b) dziedziniec pomiędzy traktami budynku (2009, proj. Grupa 5 Architekci, fot. M. Czechowicz)



Fig. 10. The Monopolis office and service complex at Kopcińskiego Street in Łódź (2020, designed by Grupa 5 Architekci, photo by M. Czechowicz)

Il. 10. Zespół biurowo-usługowy Monopolis przy ul. Kopcińskiego w Łodzi (2020, proj. Grupa 5 Architekci, fot. M. Czechowicz)

suspended at various heights. The courtyards at one end open to the treetops of the neighboring allotment gardens, and at the other end to the central public space of the estate. Located among residential houses, the office building with its distinctive semi-public spaces blends in with the urban code of the surroundings, the tissue of which is quarter development.

Experiences with the open space of the courtyard, scaled for people, which is conducive to interpersonal contacts, translated into decisions in the project of revitalizing the historic post-industrial buildings in Łódź in the Monopolis office and service complex. The intimate nature of the factory quarter is additionally emphasized here by a recessed square offering greenery and attractive solutions of small architecture, as well as access to services located under the historical tissue (Fig. 10). An elongated square on the scale of a larger courtyard maintains a visual and communication relationship with the entire complex, being one of several publicly accessible public spaces adjacent to each other.

Quarter and identity

The implementation constituting the essence of the approach to shaping the city described here is the headquarters of the Faculty of Radio and Television of the University of Silesia in Katowice, appreciated around the world (Fig. 11).

This is an example of identity building by creating relationships between designed and existing spaces.

We participated in this project as co-authors and a studio coordinating the work of an international team of architects. The starting point for the project was the recognition by our Catalan partners of unique local values existing in a Silesian family apartment house which was intended for demolition, and in the fragmented structure of courtyards of the dilapidated 19th-century quarter, inside which the designed building was to be built. The new facility, with the scale of its courtyard, precisely fit into the existing tissue. By lowering the height of its rear bays, the designed courtyard established a spatial dialogue with the existing courtyards. The austere mood of the hundred-year-old outbuildings literally penetrated the interior of the new film school.

According to similar assumptions, the seat of the Katowice faculty affects the recipient from the side of the street. The openwork façade, made of raw ceramic hollow bricks, creates a background architecture for the *familok* (Silesian family apartment house) that has been saved here. There is also an important city-forming accent here, thanks to the deep arcade highlighting the transparent zone of the entrance to the building and connecting it with the courtyard. It makes the street penetrate into the building, and the university overlooks the street.

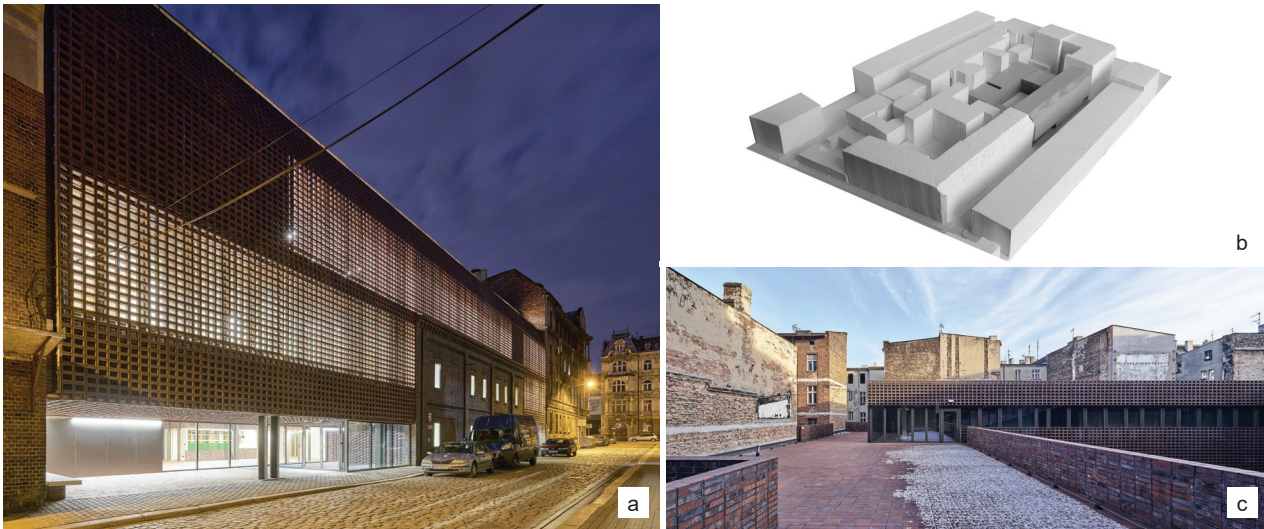


Fig. 11. The headquarters of the Faculty of Radio and Television of the University of Silesia in Katowice at St. Paul Street in Katowice (2017, designed by BAAS Arquitektura / Grupa 5 Architekci / MAŁECCY Biuro Projektowe):

a) façade (photo by J. Certowicz), b) competition model,
c) terrace on the roof of the building surrounded by historic outbuildings (photo by J. Certowicz)

Il. 11. Siedziba Wydziału Radia i Telewizji Uniwersytetu Śląskiego przy ul. Św. Pawła w Katowicach (2017, proj. BAAS Arquitektura / Grupa 5 Architekci / MAŁECCY Biuro Projektowe):

a) fasada (fot. J. Certowicz), b) makieta konkursowa, c) taras na dachu budynku w otoczeniu historycznych oficyn (fot. J. Certowicz)

Quarter in public space

Although, as the authors of the modernization of the square in front of the Main Railway Station in Wrocław, we have experience in creating a large-format public space that shapes the city, we have not been involved in any projects in which, in a broad urban context, the idea of

mutual relations between publicly accessible urban space and quarter development would be clear. We performed several such exercises that ended at the conceptual stage. Among them were competition projects of large-scale housing estates developed together with friendly urban planners who identified themselves with the ideas of New Urbanism.

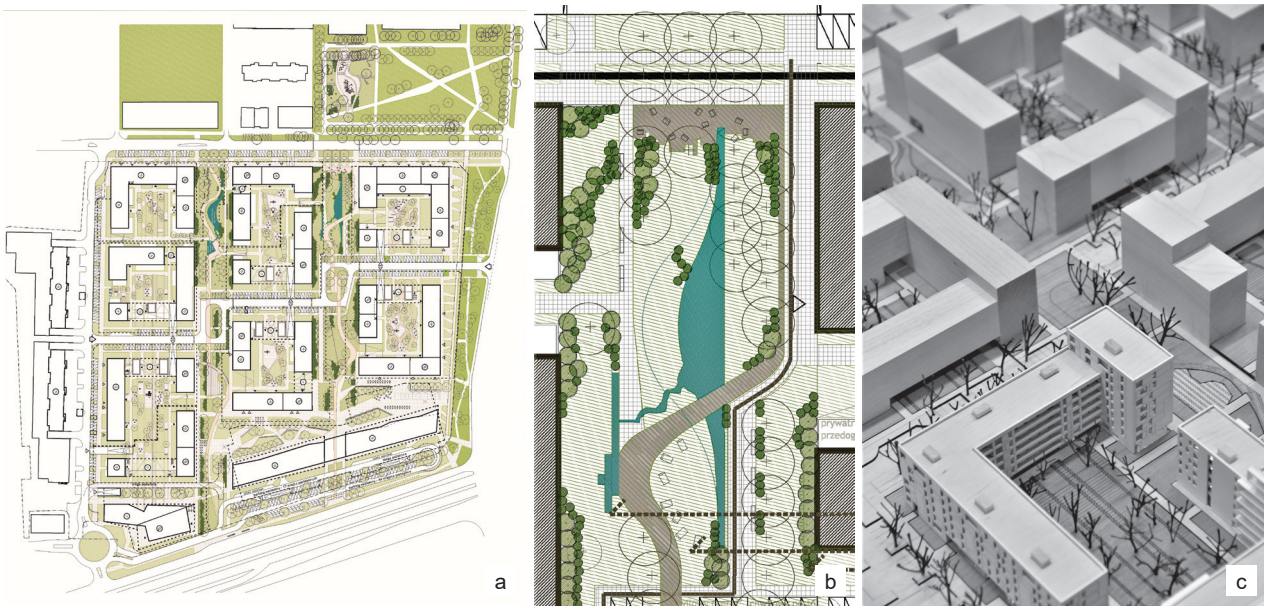


Fig. 12. Unrealized competition design of “Śródmieście Leśne” Housing Estate in Bydgoszcz: a) land development plan, b) fragment of the linear park design with a pond, c) competition model (2015, designed by Grupa 5 Architekci / OWAD Michał Owadowicz Architekt)

Il. 12. Niezrealizowany projekt konkursowy osiedla “Śródmieście Leśne” w Bydgoszczy: a) plan zagospodarowania terenu, b) fragment projektu parku liniowego z oczkiem wodnym, c) makieta konkursowa (2015, proj. Grupa 5 Architekci / OWAD Michał Owadowicz Architekt)

In the competition project “Śródmieście Leśne” [Forest Downtown] made for a developer company from Bydgoszcz, we designed a system of two wide pedestrian routes in the form of linear parks, intersecting with a meandering residential street with slow vehicular traffic divided into three sections (Fig. 12). The residential quarters, which thus have become part of this arrangement, open up to the surroundings in two ways, namely, at the junction with linear parks through wide breaks in the buildings so that the greenery of the pedestrian route merges with the greenery of the courtyard, while at the junction with the street through wide openings in the ground floors of buildings. In the latter case, the relationship is more visual in nature reduced to the effect of permeation and multi-plane space, which would create a unique atmosphere of the designed street.

We adopted similar solutions in the competition concept of the model housing estate Nowe Jeziorki in Warsaw,

which was to be implemented in one stage and intended entirely for rent as part of the Mieszkanie Plus housing program (Fig. 13). In our project, the role of the communication and functional backbone of the building complex was taken over by the street with basic services located along it, while the compositional keystones of the complex are the bazaar at the suburban railway station and two city squares connected by a pedestrian green route, where social functions are located. According to the postulates of American activist Jane Jacobs, the quarters forming the tissue of the estate are short, which makes it possible to turn the corner and choose different walking routes [23]. The courtyards of the quarters, opening onto each other on the ground floor with wide openings, visually “seize” fragments of public spaces into their interiors.

In both of the projects mentioned above, due to their urban scale, a significant issue is to combine the greenery of



Fig. 13. Unrealized competition design of model housing estate Nowe Jeziorki in Warsaw.

Land development plan with shown spatial relations between courtyards

(2018, designed by MAU Mycielski Architecture & Urbanism / OWAD Michał Owadowicz Architekt / Grupa 5 Architekci)

Il. 13. Niezrealizowany projekt konkursowy modelowego osiedla mieszkaniowego Nowe Jeziorki w Warszawie.

Plan zagospodarowania terenu z pokazanymi relacjami przestrzennymi pomiędzy dziedzińcami

(2018, proj. MAU Mycielski Architecture & Urbanism / OWAD Michał Owadowicz Architekt / Grupa 5 Architekci)

the courtyards with the landscape of public spaces. According to the competition description by Justyna Dziedzicko, a landscape designer cooperating with the Grupa 5 Architekci studio, [...] *the concept of "Śródmieście Leśne" merges the idea of combining modern architecture and nature. [...] Linear parks have the character of landscape gardens. [...] Courtyards within quarters have a development character different from linear parks and a more urban landscape style* [24, pp. 14–15].

On the other hand, in the concept of the Nowe Jeziorki housing estate, the intended advantage of the project was the layout of the courtyards on real land, not on underground garages, thanks to the location of all housing estate parking spaces outside the quarters in separately designed parking buildings. This allowed for the introduction of high greenery with a park character into the space of the courtyards.

Distinctive signs for both concepts were natural retention reservoirs in the form of ponds designed in the public space. All the above solutions in the field of landscape architecture are related to the use of species biodiversity postulated in the context of climate warming and the avoidance of the so-called heat islands by increasing the porosity of the urban tissue.

Summary. Design philosophy

Concentrating on a fragment of our creative search, in this case regarding the model of quarter development, I tried to show how spatial solutions, which are most often the result of a specific architectural task contracted, can affect the beliefs of designers.

In autumn 2019, architects from Grupa 5 presented their achievements at a meeting in the Zodiak architecture pavilion

in Warsaw. For the first time, they decided to summarize their shared approach to the profession in the form of several theses, which became a pretext for discussion with the audience. By referring to them, even in the journalistic form in which they were written, we can arrive at a summary of this article as follows:

1. Design is a complex process involving many architects and engineers with different competencies. For this reason, a modern architectural studio should be based on perfect partnership cooperation between people. The strength of such a model is the exchange of ideas, and above all diversity, which is in contradiction with the star image of the architect promoted by the media.

2. We do not die for architecture (which we emphasize at every interview with job candidates). We do not have to prove anything with our work, let alone be avant-garde. An architect must have time for himself, time needed to experience ordinary everyday reality, from which he draws reflection and inspiration for design.

3. It is not our goal to design visual gadgets or spectacular spaces that look good in visualizations and photos. What we aim at is to create a valuable environment for life – to live, to work, to study, to spend time in the city... An environment with which a person will identify. Equally important to us as the buildings themselves is the space between them and what can happen between people in it [25]. It is not a coincidence that the title of the book devoted to our studio does not include buildings, only "life and space".

4. When we design in the existing context, to us as important as *genius loci* is the user's sense of identity with the place.

Translated by
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Abstract

City-forming solutions for quarter development in the designs of the Grupa 5 Architekci studio

The Warsaw-based Grupa 5 Architekci studio is a team of several dozen designers operating on the Polish construction market, shaped by the experience of the Polish transformation. After two decades of activity, the architects who created it undertook a joint attempt at ideological self-definition.

The aim of the article is to show how personal conclusions drawn from education, subsequent practice, the evolution of the theory of architecture as well as personal beliefs and experiencing space translate into specific design solutions. Since one of the architectural threads connecting people co-creating the studio are achievements in the field of designing quarter development, the method adopted in the article is a detailed analysis of this part of the work of Grupa 5, from the implementation of individual buildings to the urban planning assumptions of large housing complexes.

The article ends with the author's theses on the philosophy of design, which result from design practice.

Key words: Grupa 5 Architekci, quarter development, design philosophy, Polish architecture, architectural identity

Streszczenie

Rozwiązania miastotwórcze dla zabudowy kwartałowej w projektach pracowni Grupa 5 Architekci

Warszawska pracownia Grupa 5 Architekci to działający na polskim rynku budowlanym kilkudziesięcioosobowy zespół projektantów ukształtowany przez doświadczenia polskiej transformacji. Po dwóch dekadach działalności tworzący go architekci podjęli wspólną próbę ideowego samookreślenia.

Celem artykułu jest pokazanie, jak osobiste wnioski płynące z edukacji, późniejszej praktyki, ewolucji teorii architektury oraz z osobistych przekonań i doświadczenia przestrzeni przekładają się na konkretne rozwiązania projektowe. Ponieważ jednym z architektonicznych wątków łączących ludzi współtworzących pracownię są dokonania w zakresie projektowania zabudowy kwartałowej, metodą przyjętą w artykule jest szczegółowa analiza tego wycinka twórczości Grupy 5 od realizacji pojedynczych budynków do urbanistycznych założeń dużych zespołów mieszkaniowych.

Artykuł zamykają płynące z praktyki projektowej – autorskie tezy dotyczące filozofii projektowania.

Słowa kluczowe: Grupa 5 Architekci, zabudowa kwartałowa, filozofia projektowania, architektura polska, tożsamość architektoniczna