



EUROPEJSKIE MIASTO POTRZEBUJE POMOCY¹

EUROPEAN CITY NEEDS HELP

Sławomir Gzell

prof. dr hab. inż. arch.

Politechnika Warszawska
Wydział Architektury
Katedra Projektowania Urbanistycznego i Krajobrazu Wiejskiego

STRESZCZENIE

Miasta europejskie mają swój specyficzny obraz, jakkolwiek różnią się między sobą. Każdy z tych obrazów to przestrzenna ekspresja miejskiej tożsamości. Budują ją dzieła architektury, ale przede wszystkim harmonia miejskiej przestrzeni. Tworzenie jej oraz utrzymanie w epoce rozpraszania się miast wymaga rozmaitych zabiegów, oczywiście że w tym także z dziedziny planowania. Być może dotychczasowe metody planistyczne, w epoce niesprzyjającej tradycyjnemu patrzeniu na miasto należy uzupełnić o nowe podejście, bardziej zbliżone do potrzeb wynikających z innego niż kiedyś pojmowania świata, który nas otacza

Słowa kluczowe: miasto europejskie, nowe planowanie, rozpraszanie się miasta, rozwój harmonijny.

ABSTRACT

European city has certain specific image, however images of different cities differ. Each of those different images it is spatial expression of city's self-identity. City's image is build for most of us by quality of architecture, but first of all by spatial order, by harmony in city's space. It is not easy task to keep such a harmony in a city of sprawl. New planning tools are needed, closer to contemporary understanding of the world which is around us

Key words: European city, harmonious development, new planning, sprawl.

¹ Przedstawione w tym artykule w języku tylko polskim zagadnienia, o tożsamym tytule zostały przedstawione na II KONGRESIE KONSERWATORÓW POLSKICH *PRZESZŁOŚĆ DLA PRZYSZŁOŚCI* w 2015 roku

1. EUROPEAN CITY ®

European City has certain specific image, and because of it the name European City means something for us. This image is for EC a kind of identification mark, let say ™ or ®. It means that European City™ or EC® exists. It is not only rhetoric figure, it is true: EC is kind of mark in economic sense, and such a fact should have in global economy its financial aspect. The question is, if Europe has registered her mark? Up to our knowledge rather not.

Images of different European cities and towns of course differ, however (of course again) they have very much in common. Each of those different images it is a spatial expression of city's self-identity. We hope that city's inhabitants identify with it or within it. Thus all of us identify with each and any European city. So within class of EC® there are Warsaw®, Bratislava®, Tirana®, London® etc.

Image for most of inhabitants and visitors mean quality of architecture first of all. Is there anything new that might be said about the new architecture of Europe, specially about Great Constructions, Grandes Travaux? There are several different attitudes as to its standard. First, it usually appear with political influence. Second, if we would like to fight for a better future in our part of the world, this battle should take place in every branch of industry and development. A country will never achieve a status of the regional leader without trying to construct a 'Beautiful City' full of perfect architecture. Third, the greatness of architecture is not perceived through the size of the buildings. What is more important is a unique design, even if seemingly impossible for construction, and belief in the ability of the architect who makes the impossible happen. Such policy should provide positive emotions which additionally financed, give the possibility to create next Great Constructions in European cities.



Fig. 1. Florence, Italy, panoramic view of the city from San Miniato. Source: by S. Gzell, 2015.

Nowadays, it is said about our contemporary architecture that the main construction element is a change in the state of existence - and true enough, this effect can be easily perceived throughout Europe. It is said the constructed edifices will in their form reflect

the phenomenon of implosion, dividing the former world but picking up the pieces and using them all over again - it seems that at the moment we are observing this process in Europe, hence the architects have more possibility to join in the pursuit in the new beauty trends, throwing away traditional rules of composition, hierarchy and order. It is possible to perceive such new contemporary elements as predominance of conflict over synthesis, of fragmentation over unity, as well as of pure madness and joy over careful procedures. Even though we had to accept the loss of impoverished aesthetic of old cities, we still have no idea as to how create the new world. Hence, sometimes, we have to live with various different designs parachuted into our cities by developers.

Image of each EC helps while competing with other European cities, but certain synthetic image of average EC keeps helping Europe in rivalry with other continents. If such a phenomenon (influence) exists? Experiences at least of American New Urbanism are for 'yes' answer. One could add that it is very fashionable around the world to shape city's public spaces (public realm) to resemble EC image. In the result being in Texas or in California we are in 'Italy' or in 'Paris', or even in 'old Tallin'. If such a facts are used to promote EC, thus Europe, promote in USA, within Far East, in metropolises of Africa and South America all what we produce, culture included? We know that if city development is concerned situation is quite opposite - city models are coming to Europe from around. So, we are trying to do something with it.

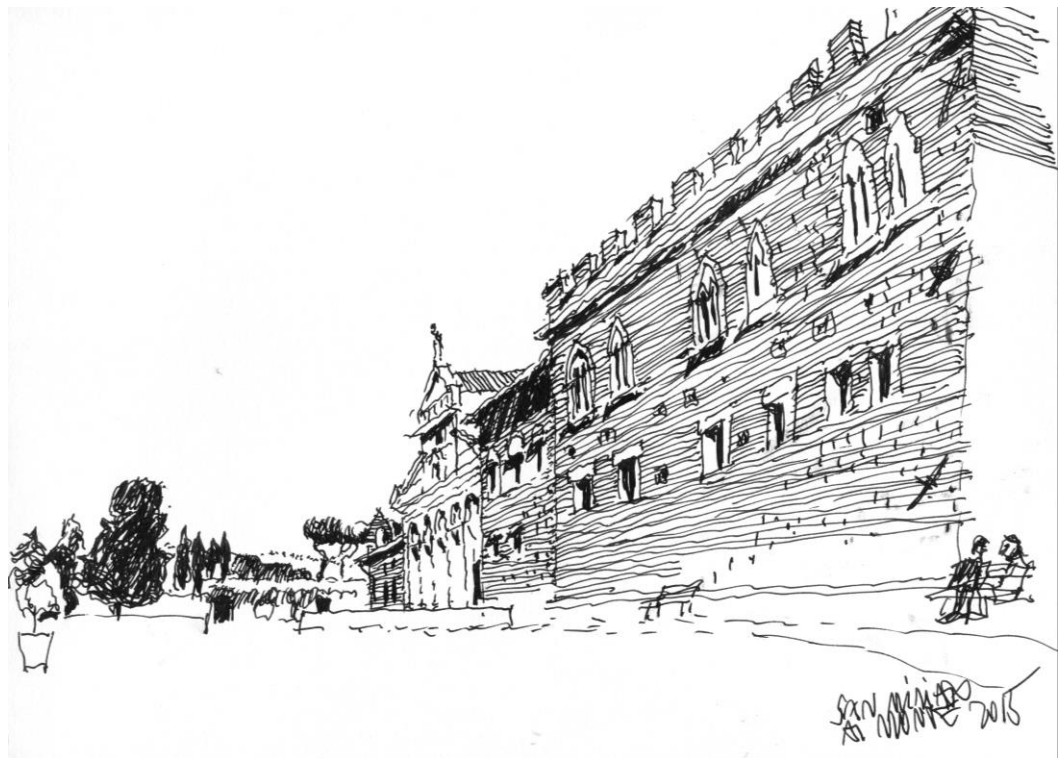


Fig. 2. Florence, Italy, San Miniato. Source: by S. Gzell, 2015.

2. NEED OF NEW PLANNING (NP)

Today new blueprints for organizing urban space are tried and tested in Europe. It is believed they will guarantee EC successful part in global competition. New blueprints mean New Planning, but New Planning is not a name to signify revolutionary changes in urban

development. It is a term which should rather bring together and summarize budding and observed new phenomena of different kind (sociology, economy, demography, etc.).

The novelty of our NP comes not from a rejection of mentioned new phenomena but from a simultaneous promotion of that which may become tomorrow's blueprint, from preparation today for the changes of tomorrow. For instance: global trends point to an agreement to (or 'quiet acceptance for') activities which unify space (we see this in the suburbanization of city environs or the homogenization of architectural aesthetics). In NP, instead of submitting to these processes we begin to think what we could need when we tire of a landscape brimming up to the horizon with subsequent waves of refugees from cities guided by the conviction that this is what the others are doing. We think of what we might want, instead of another high-rise building for Company X, and the final central arrangement which will not be 'downtown' in the true sense of the word but a collection of constructions-logos, pretty and manicured but boringly alike.



Fig. 3. Florence, Italy, Santa Croce square. Source: by S. Gzell, 2015

Now this type of spatial order which has accompanied the spreading of the idea of 'architectural and town-planning correctness' ceases to be convergent with the needs of modern-day city dwellers. Enough to say that in spite of the pro-globalization slogans uncritically repeated by the media, communities nowadays tend to be separating instead of unifying – instead of a World we more and more have a World of Worlds. Let us look at the Internet. It links us, obviously, but those individuals behind the computer screen are working towards their own separate goals, with the sense of having slipped out of the control of the social groups which once governed on a given territory. On the Internet the territorial category does not exist.

Thus the word which needs to be remembered is 'variety' and those changes in urban development which aim at diversifying space in accordance with the growing demand for

NP. It does not seem much but those who have tried to realize the aims of New Planning know it is not easy.

3. NEW PLANNING FOR THE CITY OF HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT (CHD)

The main objective of New Planning is to build the City of Harmonious Development (CHD), which may be any existing city or any city newly constructed. To describe the final objectives of the CHD it should first be said that the CHD is not and neither should be simply:

- a 'green and healthy city': a friendly environment is not the only guarantee of a balanced city environment, as well as it does not give a rational efficiency of the structure and city systems,
- a 'beautiful city': a most well designed city landscape will never be true as to where the interior city process are concerned,
- a 'conflict less city': 'harmony' does not mean that there will be no conflicts at all, what should exist is the ability to solve them,
- a 'place of meeting and exchange': (e.g. East with West, people and information): such a remark is much more fitting to a market place or a train station - not to a city.

Simultaneously CHD should combine all of the points which have been mentioned above. It should be a city undergoing natural development processes and dynamic interactions between the three main city subsystems: economy, social pattern and built environment. The main CHD aim is not to be an optimal city, but rather to control mentioned subsystems, to cope with any negative outcomes of foreseen procedures and to use the positive effects.



Fig. 4. Florence, Italy, Pazzi Chapel within the complex of Santa Croce. Source: by S. Gzell, 2015.

In long periods of time, the condition of constantly developing CHD will depend upon physical dimensions (short distance travels instead of long ones), population density (economy in the energy sector), mass transport within / between the city center and suburban areas. It give us a form of the urban area - compact (in opposition to suburban open areas) but polycentric in large cities (once again in opposition to an over scale single centre). Each of the polycentric city complexes should be characterized by following parameters: diversification of function inside the complex so that most of the urban trips would belong to a 'short distance' category, ring road transport between each of the complexes, organization of the central area, drawing the investors as a magnet because of its good location and unique urban composition, and comp activity, so that it really would be possible to define the limits of the complex.



Fig. 5. Florence, Italy, Dante Alighieri monument on the Santa Croce square. Source: by S. Gzell, 2015.

Evolution of such a model will be possible in the case when the methods and tools used for the management of the cities will undergo following changes:

- creation of multifunctional, competent new structures (e.g. agencies for city development), which would help other institutions, also those independent from the city management, to exchange ideas as to the future growth of the city,
- monitoring of the city management (special working groups),
- stimulation of the participation of the inhabitants and NGOs - this develops local democracy (referenda, councils, consultation and hearings systems, safety and rehabilitation programs),
- engagement of the private sector into the city management structures.

All stated tasks should be completed according to the following rules:

- the rule of joint responsibility for all participants playing their parts upon the city's scene,

- the rule of subsidiarity, most important while dealing with the social problems,
- the rule of independent local (territorial) self-government - creation and protection of a system enabling a self development policy realized by the managements,
- the rule of segment management tasks as the elements of the overall strategy,
- the rule of acceptance of principles that the profit criteria are only one of those to be take into consideration when undertaking decisions or choosing different possibilities of development (profit should not be identified with the maximum return value derived from the action, otherwise the market rules will not support the development of a harmonious city),
- the rule of standard adjustment, program aims and legal regulations corresponding with the international codes.

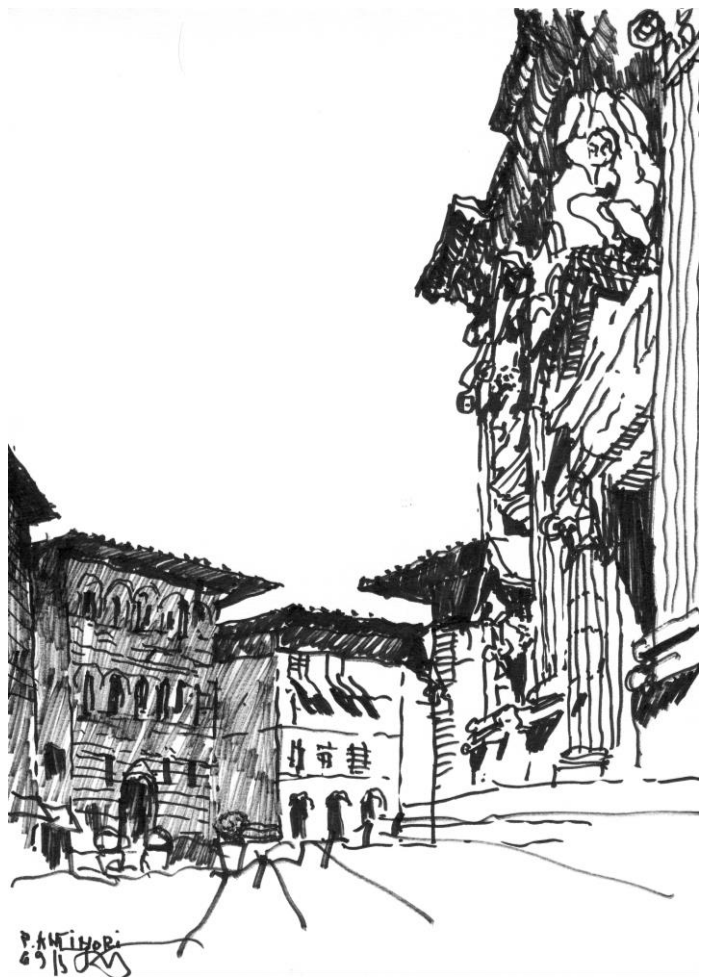


Fig. 6. Florence, Italy, Antinori square. Source: by S. Gzell, 2015

4. THE CHD AND NEW AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Particularly important in constructing a CHD is the creation of cityscape (spatial order) and thus, the composition of space. It is believed that a crisis within the area right now is fomented by planning procedures which favor small-scale design only. Nonetheless, it has been ascertained that spatial order in big urban areas is best developed by way of realizing sizable fragments of the city. They contain, at the earliest stage of the concept, a large degree of spatial and functional coordination between the elements coming together in the planned and realized whole. Large complexes which decide on the character and structure of a city also play a fundamental role in shaping its spatial order. One could call

such complexes 'elements which crystallize the layout of a city' and proved that they have a 'gravitation field', i.e. a zone where space becomes integrated around them.

Sadly, implementing these seemingly simple rules on urban order is not easy, and not only because of economic issues or property ownership issues, although these constitute considerable obstacles. It is worth looking for more obstacles, as they allow one to understand why there is no general consensus on large complexes and why there is no campaigning for the means to raise them.



Fig. 7. Florence, Italy, Via Ginori.
Source: by S. Gzell, 2015.

The reason (if one dares try find an answer to the question why we continue to lose the race against the City which is heading in an unknown direction), so, the reason is that instead of working to stimulate urban development we only make attempts to recompense the results of the city's self - (organic) development. Example: do we cut new streets through an area which is now overrun and which will become even more so because although the prices there are rocketing it's a fashionable spot and will only get more so... or do we design at least one new route through cheaper zones where the investment pressures are not so intense? It is clear that the first solution, though it seems right, will only multiply problems. The second, which urban authorities, who have the city's finances in hand, as well as the developer who is hoping to cash in quickly, will judge unprofitable, appears the only reasonable action in a longer perspective. It can be said to open new areas for investment and the ability to seek these out and use them is contained in the concept of 'stimulating urban development'.

The new areas described above can be situated variously. Generally, there are two options. One is to look for new areas outside of the perimeter of existing city structure. This is common nowadays. It deepens the rifts in the inner-city social and organizational structure and is far removed from the principle of stimulating the city's development, and subsequently fails to realize the CHD model. Which does not mean that territorial expansion of a city is an evil in itself.

The second of the said situations can be headed 'internal expansion'. This means that the city is restored those areas which for various reasons lose their significance in connection with the functions which may exist or may have existed there. These terrains are named 'terrain vague' or 'waste land'. It denotes a terrain which is vacant, void, devoid of activity, unproductive, obsolete, and also undefined, without fixed limits, without clear future in sight. Cities are full of such zones, abandoned by industry, by the railways, by the ports; abandoned as a consequence of violence, the withdrawal of residential or commercial activity, the deterioration of the built fabric; banks of rivers, rubbish dumps, quarries, etc.



Fig. 8. Florence, Italy, Santa Maria Novella. Source: by S. Gzell, 2015.

5. CIVILIZATION OF SPRAWL

The first question to ask is if it is possible to stop or to reverse trend of massive suburbanization and / or urban sprawl? If not, there is necessary to look for tools to civilise it.

For sure one of answers to 'sprawl' is organization of polycentric net of human settlements. It is necessary to help each of settlement (city, town) and the net to have a chance to be dense enough within city borders, to have open, green (country?) spaces out of them, and morphologically defined public space. Experiences of traditional, historic 'polycentric concept' could help - in result new 'connected city' could appear. All these means that the first answer to fight sprawl is better regional planning.

The second answer to fight sprawl is urban design. Today city suburbs are some kind of landscape nightmare. Harmonious, regular forms could be found only as a trace in small old towns. The chaos and ugliness of suburbs derives from the lack of care for spatial, urban composition, the lack of thought given to aesthetics. The word 'beauty' is forgotten. The urban design can be one of the most attractive tools of creativity, exerting an important impact on all actors (inhabitants, authorities, developers, planners, architects) involved in city development. Its role should grow steadily. In character, it evolves over time, as it reflects all changes of civilisation and culture. It can even anticipate them. And if we treat human environment as a kind of three-dimensional work of art it will bring us peace, happiness and development of human intellect. Not to mention Economics of Amenity.



Fig. 9. Florence, Italy, Santo Spirito square. Source: by S. Gzell, 2015.

But historic downtowns of EC, places where city image is born and where it is transferred from the past to the future, places copied in California malls and Las Vegas hotels, are in danger, because life is moved from them to far suburbs. All is on move. First of all housing but traditional jobs as well. There appear new clusters of work places (or clusters of new work places), following flights of inhabitants, and those new clusters have forms more effective in functional and economical means, and as a such they have a chance to replace traditional public spaces. Suburbs are still bigger, so growth dynamics of peripheral centres (as volumes, number, diversity and distance from old downtown are involved) is still bigger. To stop the process of urban sprawl (suburbanization) or at least to control it some goals should be achieved.

Goal one: establishment / enforcement of independent local management, placed within morphologically unified units, within limits accepted by people who live that area, implemented mostly through creation of polycentric communities. This is possible under following conditions:

- creation of mass transport, enabling the existence of relatively small transport generators located mainly along the transport lines radially coming out from the city centre, as well as between transport lines and along local roads,
- urban solutions which enable the avoidance of unneeded spatial regrouping (e.g. polycentric city structure, diversification of the city functions),
- creation of an information system for construction of local infrastructure systems, mainly water, sewage and heating supply,
- creation of urban barriers, preventing the 'overflow' of urban areas into preserved zones.

It is a paradox, but this aim is supported by a demographic stagnation as well as (in this phase) social stratification. They cause the effect of 'a closed' community, but at the same time give birth to mutual interests.



Fig. 10. Florence, Italy, Signoria square. Source: by S. Gzell, 2004.

Goal two: cooperation with the nature, development in accordance with preservation and redevelopment of the natural environment including rational energy use, is implemented by:

- comparison of existing and demanded preserved natural environment areas, including preserved agricultural zones with urban areas planned within the cities,
- solution of the preserved environmental issues through division of the urban areas into categories: I - areas developed, low degree of natural environment; II - scattered urban areas, agricultural with a mixed rural-forest landscape, showing certain natural values and possibilities for future bio-redevelopment, restricted possibility of further development; III - areas with prevailing natural landscape, large forested areas with full ability for future bio-redevelopment, urban development not foreseen;
- creation of environment-development interaction zones, as planar (not linear) borders situated between invested and preserved areas. This belts (it is hoped that they will be upgraded in the meantime) will in future become barriers enabling the preservation of the life standard - reduced volume of fumes, lower noise impact, microclimate etc.,
- implementation into the rural areas of motivation elements (similar as within the cities) for development of larger farms and production of healthy food, lower use of chemicals and liquidation of animal production,
- actions leading to the preservation of natural areas - in the phase of infrastructure construction, pro-ecological transport techniques, more economic transport means, safety, wider use of the mass transport system, liquidation of the airport and air traffic noise, more pedestrian routes,
- stimulation of changes within the housing, so that the function of a dwelling might fulfill the needs of changing life pattern,
- better use of areas and other natural sources, preservation of valuable natural zones, preservation of natural elements e.g. subterranean water,
- better use of already invested areas. 'Compact City' idea could be used for a higher intensification within the city, investments upon free locations, changes in the badly solved transport system and production areas. Large open and important spaces should be preserved - this on one hand will give a feeling of a large capital on the other will preserve open space.

Goal three: use of existing resources (existing capital), so that each inhabitant will have equal chances where the life standard is concerned, may be realized by:

- development within the existing limits, in agreement with the balanced development concept,
- preservation of the soil, nature and elimination of construction upon undeveloped areas as there are other options, elimination of extensive forms of development (scattered development), counteraction for the degradation of soils, preservation of the soils belonging to the highest categories, preservation of exiting natural values (especially in areas of national interest),
- better transport with the growing traffic coefficient (including parking possibilities), use of railway lines better road system, good internal road connections between areas and complexes (individual from the main road system), better road maintenance, better organization and coordination of traffic,
- variety of areas as to where the function and development intensity is concerned, especially from the point of view of sources and aims of the traffic system on one side, and the area itself - on the other. Areas which may be used for the transport system help to distinguish zones with different transport systems. This means that certain types of transport are preferred and that some transport means will be eliminated or limited. This development will vary depending on the area and the time period,
- use of existing technical infrastructure system,
- revalorization of large housing complexes, to escape from high population segregation, and counteract against degradation of the block complexes,

- acceptance of the historic heritage. Preservation of existing characteristic values, including those which are not univocal accepted,
- investing into every type of infrastructure, especially those helping to acquire more information from other parts of the world, including non switched services,
- investing into the 'city landscape', including exhibition areas and congress complexes.

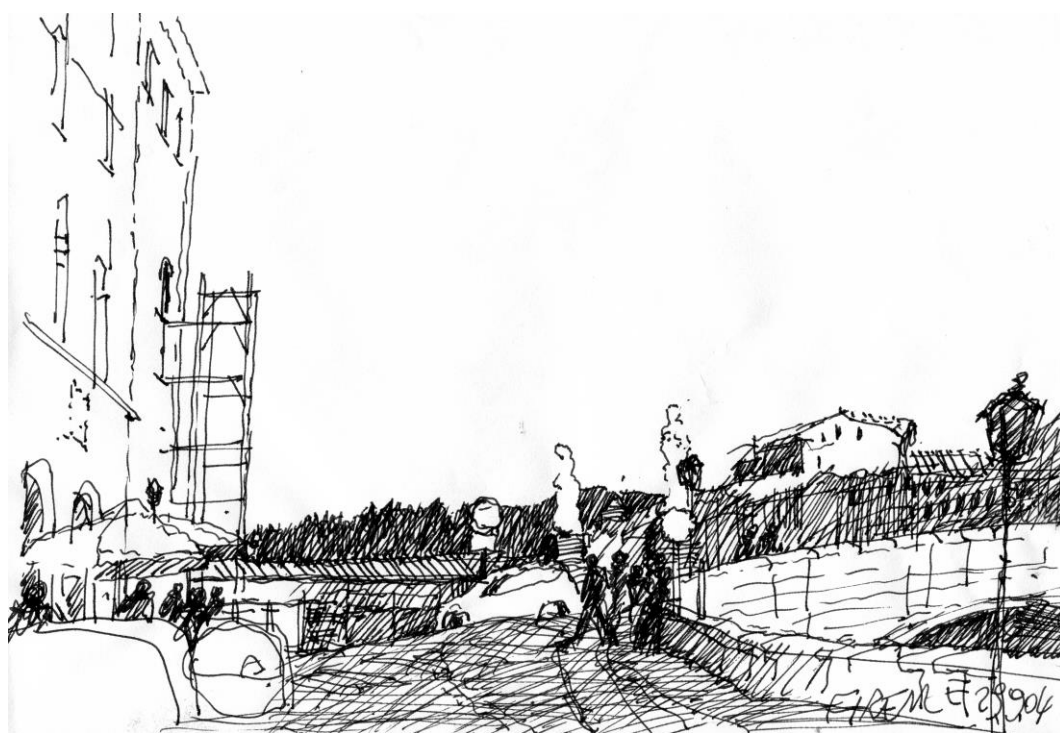


Fig. 11. Florence, Italy, street along Arno river. Source: by S. Gzell, 2004.

6. SUMMARY

The main idea of this paper is that the protection and shaping of cityscape and the economic development of a city can be and should be synergic ally connected. This is an opinion grounded in the certainty that economic development should be a stimulant in shaping the cityscape. However, we are not fully aware that a reverse process should also be taking place, that is for the landscape to shape and stimulate economic development. The source of this lack of understanding is the fact that we are not always aware of the market value of landscape. If so, cityscape should be subject to the same laws which rule the market. Simultaneously yet, landscape is social property, a common good, because all of us perceive it and the order or lack of order which it presents impacts on us and on our property in a variety of ways. Common possession of the cityscape means in practice that the market mechanisms do not always guarantee convergence of individual and social targets. Hence the need for a compromise between private and public interest. This can only be done on legal grounds, with the support of spatial planning which in this case becomes a legal instrument. Here appears the problem of value, or more precisely the selection of those elements of the landscape which deserve to be protected and the attractiveness of which could stimulate profits also in the economic sense. However, methods of evaluating landscape in this respect (i.e. measuring value) are a separate issue. It must be said nonetheless, that most opinions on this matter are based on intuition and comparisons resulting from the observation of the property market. Sadly, this

knowledge is not enough in relation to the value of landscape. Working to disseminate knowledge in this area we should have the support (financial included) of those economic organizations which will gain most from its application.

These organizations should keep one thing in mind: if all the space-creating factors are reduced to maximalizing profits, then in the competitive world this profit will depend on the standard of goods offered. Standards are judged via the quality of living which we will be able to offer on the developed location. Quality of living is again determined by the comfort of habitation, work and travel between one and the other. These shall cause our negative or positive responses and as we know well enough, social life will put emotions before facts. That is why they are worth investing in. The outlay will bring in multiplied profits in the future. Profit will be biggest, where landscape values are increased. It happens in those places which are transformed from unattractive to attractive, on possibly large, contained areas now recognized as 'terrain vague'.

The existence of such areas should provoke municipal authorities to remove them. One could say more, that the administration of the abandoned areas leading to their removal should be the goal and duty of governments. It could lead to a prime result of the city's improved financial standing.

Today local government financial problems most probably apply to any city. These problems are most often caused not only by a system of budgetary allocations between central and local governments but also by lack of symmetry between expenditure obligations of the local government and their ability to raise revenues. Unfortunately understanding of the linkage between the well-being of the city and the role that the city may play in its development through regulatory policies and direct participation of land assets in market operations is still insufficient.

Land use of many our cities is economically inefficient. In many cities one could observe excessive dispersion of urban capital, excessive number of industrial areas situated in central locations, excessive number of agricultural areas within urban zones, increasing housing density on the city peripheries, insufficient number of residential areas, insufficient service/commercial areas.

In order to cope with above mentioned problems, following issues have to be solved first:

- development of various urban management indicators,
- improvement and a wider supply of market information,
- reduction of zoning and permission uncertainty
- upgrade of existing infrastructure in areas with a high demand factor,
- harmony between regulations for utilization of land and market preferences,
- facilitation and revitalization of dilapidated housing and industrial areas,
- facilitation and relocation of industrial areas.

The outlined tendencies in city management are certainly part of the New Planning.

O AUTORZE

Kierownik Katedry Projektowania Urbanistycznego i Krajobrazu Wiejskiego, Wydział Architektury, Politechnika Warszawska.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Prof. D.Sc., Chair of Urban Design and Rural Landscape, Faculty of Architecture, Warsaw University of Technology.

Kontakt | Contact: slawomir.s.gzell@wp.pl