UNIVERSITA DEGLI STUDI DI SASSARI
DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA, DESIGN E URBANISTICA

XXVIII CICLO

SPACES OF SOLITUDE

people and places in deadened cities

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SPACES OF SOLITUDE

people and places
in deadened cities

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INTRODUCTION

Races condemned to one hundred years of solitude
will not have a second opportunity on earth.

Gabriel García Márquez
One hundred years of solitude

Once upon a time, architecture was the primary
instrument through which we related to space and time,
and which gave these dimensions a human measure. Or
so it claimed, to be precise. Suddenly, a rapid change
occurred in the modern era. While a minority was making
new discoveries, such as comfort, free-time, and leisure,
the majority was sharing beds in once crowded and now
overpopulated cities, or heading overseas in hope of
a better (if any) future.

A new generation of architects then rose to these
challenges. The solutions to the ills of modernity,
they claimed, could find expression in an appropriate
architectural style. One of the greatest among them once
said that all a modern man would ever need was but
a monk's cell, bright and warm, with a corner from which
he could watch the stars. As far as human needs are
concerned, this Pope of modern architecture couldn't have
been more misguided.

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It seems that humanity is not prepared to accept the host of recent changes and the demand for constant progress. Le Corbusier's presumption that the modern man would have different needs than his ancestors appears clearly erroneous. Our generation is hardly any different from the previous ones. We have created tools and launched processes that have weakened the ties which bind us to reality. Instead of setting us free, these have made us lonely. Solitude is the new disease of the affluent. AGE UK, a programme launched in the United Kingdom, revealed that solitude increases the risk of early death twice as much as obesity. It ranks second only to poverty. Everything around us is pointing to the fact that as satiated and glamorous as a Western man may be - living a comfortable lifestyle seemingly full of possibilities which were hardly even imaginable a hundred years ago – human beings of the 21st century are surprisingly lonely and incomplete. And so is architecture: abandoned by styles, plans, rules, and goals; and so are the cites of Western countries, which should aim to provide pleasure and possibilities rather than simply protection and production. This is why many declare solitude an essential feature of contemporaneity. The question is: do all these solitudes have anything in common?

This critical reflection on the quality of public spaces and modern solitude started at the Roma-Fiumicino International Airport. It was a hot and sunny day, and my flight, scheduled very late in the evening, wasn't even displayed yet. The air conditioning was only succeeding in making the air dry and unpleasant, giving the impression that it had passed through too many respiratory systems. A wheel of my hand luggage had just broken and the upper floor, where all the coffee shops with regular travellers

settled down, appeared as distant as the city: seemingly near, but actually so far it might not even exist. I had either forgotten my headphones or my iPhone's batteries were discharged, hence I could not withdraw into a private sonic bubble. It also proved impossible to read, as the sharp light, heat, and announcements for the constantly changing gates (typical for FCO airport) were keeping me between feeling sleepy, stupid, and irritated. In short: I was feeling miserable and had nothing else to do but ask myself why.

As I looked around I saw people who seemed at least as miserable as myself, suspended in their relation with space and even with the people sitting next to them, whether strangers or beloved ones. They were letting the time pass through their fingers, mostly pretending: pretending to work, to readi, to sleep, or to enjoy the taste of their coffee. Then it occurred to me how destructive for architectural design theory the brilliant essay by Marc Augé (Augé 1995) was: that we call "non-places" all the spaces we don't know how to deal with and bother no longer.

While I was drifting into easy clichés of liquid (post) modernity, the very same FCO Airport surprised me. A dozen lounge chairs were standing in front of a large window next to gate B4, facing the concrete greyness of a secondary runway. Despite the evident lack of balance between demand and supply, from time to time a chair or two became available as people either didn't notice them or suspected that using them entailed some extra charges.

It was a huge relief to finally be able to lie down, after having sat on typically uncomfortable airports chairs for hours. White noise immediately became an entity composed of words and sounds; grey mist made of floor tiles, joints, pillars, beams, ceiling, seats, and faces all turned into 256 shades of different colours and textures.

I was as alone as I had been ten minutes previously, but I wasn't feeling lonely and isolated anymore: the space was on my side. It was causing no pain.

And I had to ask myself: if a simple, ugly, old, but nonetheless comfortable chair possessed this power, what would the world look like if architecture were generally interested in easing our solitude, giving it back its ontological, existential, formative value?

Aims and objectives

According to the systematic approach applied here, solitude corresponds to a lack of communication between a singular system (a human being) and its surroundings (be they another human being, society, or space).

Taking this definition axiomatically (while treating it cautiously, and not drawing radical conclusions from small examples), the following hypotheses and the main thesis may be formed:

- solitude can be studied through our relation with space and built environment;

- solitude is a condition capable of disconnecting us with our surroundings;

- solitude can either depreciate or give value to the way we experience and interact with our surroundings;

- solitude can either be enforced and depreciated, or mitigated by our interaction with space, and therefore appreciated.

The aim of this paper is to investigate if, why, and how this ontological and existential concern may become part of architectural design. My goal is neither to preordain nor to decide whether solitude is a primary or a secondary

ontological phenomenon (i.e. whether the feeling of being alone precedes and generates our relations with others, or whether it is the lack of such relations which makes us feel lonely). Both the input and output vectors are valid for understanding the nature of our (individual and/or social) relation with(in) a space.

The discourse on solitude-oriented architectural dimensions, as well as present modalities of perception, consumption, and use of public space allows to discern the existence of a third landscape (Clément 2004). If we use Clément's logic to look at the evolution of our relationship with space, we notice how modalities of that relationship pass from primordial: natural / individual (hearing); to social: artificial / collective (listening); to finally reach its current third state where natural / individual gains an advantage over artificial / collective (overhearing). This interpretation key is used as both a method and a metaphor in order to describe spaces of solitude in the deadened cities of the present - cities where the space is temporarily suspended by the ongoing, reciprocal impact of how they are designed and how modern solitude weakens our relation with our surroundings.

As a result, I aim to put forward a different point of view on the relationship between the individual and space applicable for public space design, risk mitigation strategies, and strategies for urban development. It can be considered a tool for minimising the vulnerability and improving the resilience of built environments, and empowering people who live between buildings in order to become the real users and owners of their urban territory.

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Thesis structure

My thesis structure echoes major research phases. The first phase was dedicated to understanding the nature of solitude in both the historical and present context, and defining a method to be applied for further investigation. I added to the canonic categories of isolation (isolatio), loneliness (solitas), and solitude (solitudo), a complementary category of privacy (intimitas) - the most appreciated and required type of solitude. Past studies on the history of architecture and urban planning presented in the scale of forms, processes, and landscapes revealed an architectural typology of solitude. Together with the categories of the deadened cities mentioned above, it allowed to define solitude as a relation between human being and space. This relation is often defined with barriers that are not only of a physical nature, and must not be identify simply as walls and enclosures, but rather, as all elements and dynamics that disconnect us from our surroundings, force us to take the space for granted, and allow us to let the space pass through our fingers.

Examples chosen among case studies present some properties and conditions that have a significant impact on how we perceive and experience architecture in the context of being/feeling lonely. It marks qualities that may distinguish privacy from isolation, or alternatively, turn one into the other. Among solitude-oriented design strategies and good practices, some relate to places and spaces of everyday solitude (in the positive and negative sense of the word) as well as more difficult and complex aspects of ultimate solitude accompanying crisis, disasters, and transformation processes.

In phase one, I aimed to:
- define types of solitude;
- define the architectural typology of solitude;
- define categories of the deadened cities;
In phase two, I could therefore define:
- general solitude-oriented strategies;
- specific solitude-oriented strategies;
- site-specific solitude-oriented design strategies;
to be applied in order to contribute to the discourse on resilient and friendly urban transformation. It is worth reminding that UN Habitat, together with The World Bank, unanimously consider public spaces a key instrument in that process. It may be also emphasised that case study analysis recalls examples where solitude mitigation bears direct interest and profits. These constitute further arguments validating the objectives of this research.

Examples of both good and bad practices provided a frame for the applied research. Given solitude's impact on the vulnerability of both people and places, it seemed obvious from the very beginning that this research should contribute to Diver s City Lab's scientific and educational programmes dedicated to vulnerability and resilience. Guided by Prof. Paola Rizzi, the Lab was at the time involved in designing strategies for the city of Kochi, Japan, including guidelines for Evacuation Centre in the Kochi University Campus. Gradually, it became obvious that it would be impossible to acquire in a a mere couple of weeks the necessary understanding of spaces and people to propose bottom-up processes or designs able to modify people's habits with re-designing their space. A pilot participatory programme was therefore launched in my neighbourhood, an area which has changed dramatically in the last 25 years before my own eyes. Despite a huge amount

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of good will, decent tools, and positive energy, however, the programme proved misguided. It was used for purely political purposes and for the sake of various developers' high-density projects. Instead of saving what could still be saved - residual and secondary as it may have been - the project authorised burring subsequent if not the last chance of giving central axis of the Grzegórzki district a human scale. A scale suitable for modern solitude.

State of knowledge

Solitude has been a universal concern for mankind from time immemorial. It plays part in ancient Greek myths and tragedies, and appears in the dialogues of Plato, the treatises of Aristotle, the writings of Cicero, and the thoughts of Saint Augustine, Pascal, Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Sartre, Augé, Debord, Baudrillard, Lyotard, Bauman, and many others. Every author trying to describe the inexpressible phenomenon of solitude becomes an existentialist, whose novels and poems were considered references of the same scientifical value as regular academic writings.

This thesis is informed by the classic literature on solitude, among which Augé, Bierdiajev, Debord, Lefebvre, Lyotard, Riesman, and Toffler, together with contemporary writings by Bauman, Cacioppo, Dunn, Harvey, and Mc Cullough. The results of an interdisciplinary study on solitude, published in one volume entitled *Zrozumiec samotnosc*, were particularly helpful in understanding the phenomenon of contemporary solitude.

Readings in all solitude-related fields of science, among which psychology, sociology, anthropology, and so on,

reveal a significant gap between the different disciplines which deal with the issue of solitude: their different aims, reference points, and (meta)languages. There is only one thing they seem to have in common: despite the complexity of various contexts in which they treat the phenomenon, they hardly ever notice the presence of a built one, the very stage on which the act of solitude is played.

There are few voices which explicitly focus on the spatial aspects of solitude. Agnieszka Gawron, for example, emphasises that the consequences of an objective approach to solitude should be followed by a structural analysis i.e. it should present the textual dimension of solitude in its narrative, spatial/temporal, or symbolic form: "A search for spatial frames of solitude seems to be particularly important because it provides basic determinants of the term which often is replaced with alienation, isolation, void, separation. Provided space is an "embodied expression of human experience' inclined by consciousness that perceives it, it has got a spiritual value. At the same time, a space captured by imagination is never indifferent as it keeps some part of the observer" (Gawron 2006).

Researchers who deal with the issue more explicitly can be divided into two categories, representing two complementary approaches. Fran Tonkiss (Tonkiss 2003, 2009), for instance, situates her discourse on architecture and solitude in the context of social theories since „modern social theory has frequently represented city life as isolating, as degrading of social ties and as inimical to community. In another register, however, urban contexts have also been primary sites for imagining and re-imagining forms of community, especially on the basis of shared social spaces or elective identities." She explores the relation between solitude and community

in the city. "While a language of community has been important for articulating various politics of difference, an ethics of indifference also opens up certain rights to the city. The point, however, is not simply to set a conception of indifference or anonymity against one of community or visibility, but rather to think about dissociation as a certain kind of social relation, to consider the solitude of cities as a common, if ambivalent, property. The discussion begins by addressing the nature of indifference and anonymity in urban contexts before turning to New York as the site for recent narratives of a private urban life, and a more public death, in order to explore the complex interplay of difference and indifference, community and solitude, in the city" (Tonkiss 2003).

Tonkiss also explores the relation of the social and the spatial in the context of essential urban themes: community and anonymity, social difference and spatial divisions, politics and public space, gentrification and urban renewal, gender and sexuality, subjectivity and space, experience and everyday practice in the city (Tonkiss 2009). This feature makes her research a strong point of reference.

The second type of approach is more form-oriented. It is built on images of deserted as well as overcrowded cities, post-spaces and post-landscapes, etc. Apart from picturesque beauty and symbolic content of such images, the strongest point in this discourse is the sacrum of solitude, which can be considered both metaphorically and literally. As far as the latter is concerned, two publications - both of them entitled *Architecture of solitude* (Fergusson 1984, Dixon 2009), are studies on medieval monastic architecture. While Peter Fergusson (Fergusson 1984) studied Cistercian abbeys in 12th century England, Mark H. Dixon (Dixon 2009) tried to compare three christian

monastic orders: the Camaldolese Order, the Carthusian Order, and the Cistercian Order, emphasising how solitude's essential spiritual value can be embodied in architectural forms.

This research endeavoured to combine both approaches. This is also the reason why the word 'space' was chosen for the title, as many people still confuse architecture with buildings and buildings with walls. And to all those who consider solitude as ephemeral, individual, and inexpressible, as having nothing to do with architectural and urban design, I would like to dedicate these words by Kenneth Frampton quoted by Denise Scott Brown (1999): "we architects have a holistic responsibility to satisfy multiple variables. Some are less measurable than others. To ignore what cannot be measured is, I would have thought, the least scientific approach".

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SOLITUDE
/ *UOMO* /

The greatest thing in the world is to know
how to belong to oneself.

Michel de Montaigne

Solitude is a condition as old as humanity. It has been our constant companion ever since we became aware of our own subjectivity. And before that — whenever that dramatic moment had happened — the Nature kept humans on the social-oriented tracks for it gave better chance for survival.

We used to consider solitude the profoundest and most human condition. Octavio Paz stated that „Man is the only being who knows he is alone, and the only one who seeks out another. His nature - if that word can be used in reference to man, who has ʼinventedʼ himself by saying ʼnoʼ to nature - consists in his longing to realise himself in another. Man is nostalgia and a search for communion. Therefore, when he is aware of himself he is aware of his lack of another, that is, of his solitude" (Paz 1950). Recent researches revealed that solitude and awareness of being alone is not as exclusively human as Paz defined it in *The Labyrinth of Solitude*. Many groups of mammals living in large, stable groups, such as higher primates, equine, camelids, elephants and whales, also suffer from loneliness, because this community guarantees their

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survival (Dunbar 2014). What distinguishes a social group from the herd of antelope, is that synergistic mechanism basing on the fear of loneliness.

It is but an accident that the observation on having no real friendships being the worst solitude is assigned to Francis Bacon. It was known ever since and now is scientifically proved that having friends has such a positive impact on our health, wealth and mental well-being while social isolation creates feelings akin to physical pain and leaves us stressed and susceptible to illness. 'In fact, our bodies react to lack of friends as if a crucial biological need is going unfulfilled. This is not surprising. For humans, friends are not an optional extra - we have evolved to rely on them' (Brent 2014). According to Proust, as Samuel Beckett observed in his book on the great French archivist of solitude in time, „friendship is the negation of that irremediable solitude to which every human being is condemned" (Beckett 1970).

Sometimes in the search for a remedy we act like addicted to other people. „What's agitating about solitude is the inner voice telling you that you should be mated to somebody, that solitude is a mistake. The inner voice doesn't care about who you find. It just keeps pestering you, tormenting you (…). You look up from reading the newspaper and realise that no one loves you, and no one burns for you" (Charles Baxter, *El festín del amor*). And yet it is not the interpersonal relationship of an intimate kind that is the chief source of human happiness. It is the dynamic, fragile, and unstable balance between being alone, being together, and being part of a community.

In the context of our relationships with others loneliness can be defined a primary or a secondary ontological phenomenon: something that precedes and generates

interpersonal relationships as well as something that appears as a consequence of breaking or loosing social or interpersonal bonds. Furthermore, it can be all together considered ontologically uncertain as a separate entity for its being nearly inexpressible.

Apart from scholastic debate on eggs and chickens, solitude seems a condition similar to the one of time described by S. Augustine: when you don't ask me, I know what it is, but when you ask me, I don't know. And for humans the whole problem with life is breaking out of one's solitude, of trying to communicate with others (Pavese 1952). That struggle is our safety valve capable of reducing the pressure of that evolutionary mechanisms which forces individuals to conduct to the survival of the species. The side-effect of that struggle is culture: the culture of architecture and the culture of language.

Isolatio / solitas / solitudo / intimitas

Language, says Tillich, has created the word 'loneliness' to express the pain of being alone and it has created the word 'solitude' to express the glory of being alone (Tillich 1963). May Sarton is more explicit saying in her *Journal of a Solitude* that loneliness is the poverty of the soul and solitude is the richness of the soul (Sarton 1973).

In ancient Greek that distinction was described with two words: *μόνος, η, ον* - an adjective to describe the fact of being alone and *μοναξιά* - a noun for solitude in terms of loneliness, solitariness, and seclusion. There was also *ἐρημία* solitude of wilderness, desolations, and of empty land opposed to *πόλις*. Latin was more precise and distinguished between *solitudo* (solitude), *solitas / solitaria*

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(loneliness, solitude of living alone, of distancing from the society) and *isolatio* (isolation and alienation). Most European languages maintained this triad in etymology or meaning. Linguistic taxonomies distinguish states of being alone constituted by introverted self-reflection, state (or sensation) of rejection and abandonment (and in case of places, being unfrequented, remote and marginalised), state of retirement and remaining consciously and willingly alone, state corresponding with alienation and isolation. McGraw proposed more specific, non-linguistic taxonomy of solitude divided according its physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects (McGraw 1995). In order to cope with — especially modern — architecture those three major categories of being alone between people and buildings: solitude, loneliness, and isolation would never provide a complete picture without the most recent of all types and ways of being alone: the one of privacy.

Privacy is a state of not being observed or disturbed by other people, a state when one is not subjected to the opinion and attention of others. In both psychological and spatial terms, what distinguishes privacy from all the other types of solitude (and isolation in particular) is the open possibility of more social life. It is a state (and a place) for turning occasionally away from the world in order to understand it, as Albert Camus once said.

„Each of us needs periods in which our minds can focus inwardly. Solitude is an essential experience for the mind to organise its own processes and create an internal state of resonance. In such a state, the self is able to alter its constraints by directly reducing the input from interactions with others" (Siegel 1999). We must take a rest and - either consciously or unconsciously - isolate ourselves sometimes in a good meaning of the term.

„There is no doubt that solitude is a challenge and to maintain balance within it a precarious business. — May Sarton wrote — But I must not forget that, for me, being with people or even with one beloved person for any length of time without solitude is even worse. I lose my centre. I feel dispersed, scattered, in pieces. I must have time alone in which to mull over my encounter, and to extract its juice, its essence, to understand what has really happened to me as a consequence of it" (Sarton 1973).

„I loved taking off — admits Alice Munro univocally. — In my own house, I seemed to be often looking for a place to hide - sometimes from the children but more often from the jobs to be done and the phone ringing and the sociability of the neighbourhood. I wanted to hide so that I could get busy at my real work, which was a sort of wooing of distant parts of myself" (Munro 1996).

In architecture privacy has a lot to do with comfort. While the first of the two words is not very old — it is worth to emphasise that the slavic languages for instance lack their own lexemes related to the concept and use Latin instead — the latter is basically new: in English language the sense of comfort (deriving from Latin *confortare* - to strengthen) as something that produced physical ease arose in the mid 17th century.

Throughout the ages, life within architecture was usually quite short and miserable with days passing by in modestly decorated, poorly lit and unheated interiors. Humanity made constantly headway, sleeping together in crowded chambers, on tables, benches and piles of hay on the floor. Only the more affluent could afford beds - often intentionally made too narrow and short, so that the body would have it harder at achieving a supine position, which was, according to folklore, aiding Death in its dirty work. At

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times, the contrary was the rule, with beds large enough for entire families to sleep together. For the lower it wasn't an optional extra which allowed to save on heating. For nearly a century — between mid 19th century and the end of the World War II — different families and subtenants sharing one room were so common that a special term: Bettgeher was introduced to describe two people working on night and day shift and sharing one bed. The term was particularly popular in 1930's Vienna now considered one of the best European cities to live in. It doesn't sound very far from conditions that can be found nowadays in slums of the biggest metropolis, particularly in developing countries or in the reports on Kowloon district in Hong Kong.

Problems and nature of contemporary cities of the so-called western culture are now but different. A couple of generations experiencing constant progress and relative peace were enough to create a new paradigm of a city that has never been seen before: a city the main goal of which is to provide profit to some and happiness to the others, a city of leisure and free time, of privacy and comfort of lonely self-centred individuals no longer satisfied by the simple fact of living in the best of all possible worlds.

To be left alone is the most precious thing
one can ask of the modern world.

Anthony Burgess
Homage to Qwert Yuiop: Essays

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Towards modern solitude

> *All men's miseries derive from not being able*
> *to sit quiet in a room alone*
>
> *Blaise Pascal*

As said above, solitude is everything but a modern invention. The history of culture in all its manifestations, whether its art, architecture, literature or religion, is the history of solitude.

Roles and meanings of solitude changed over time. Quattrocento, which accepted three different paths: the one of vita activa, the one of vita contemplativa and the one of vita mixta, believed strongly in the power of social relations. Renaissance vision of vita activa has grown on the basis of Aristotle's thesis on the social nature of man for the society was considered the ultimate field for self-realisation (c.f. AA.VV. *Zrozumiec samotnosc: stadium interdyscyplinarne*).

The concept of contemplative philosophy of solitude, referring to the Pythagoreans' legacy and raised on the orphic roots as well as aristotelian mainstream, assumed and postulated the need for voluntary pacts with loneliness in order to study virtues and wisdom, and to contribute subsequently to the constant progress of mankind. Somewhat radical approach to the matter.

Baroque broke definitely with the concept of the power authorised exclusively on theological premises and enthrones sovereign's absolute immunity. In spite of appearances (and contrary to sumptuousness of church interiors), Baroque pushed people endlessly far from the transcendence.

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The reason why Baroque people had lost their sense of domesticated world was caused by many socio-historical factors: the Thirty Years' War, the crisis in the catholic Church, disintegration of once coherent symbolic universe, etc. In the light of this interpretation, Baroque was an era under the sign of Saturn - the god of contradictions and melancholic genius chosen by Susan Sontag to be the patron of the collection of her essays devoted to the culture of 20th century. But the most fascinating of all Baroque contradictions is the one of vanitas - a strong belief in fleetingness of all terrestrial happiness - and an obsession of salvation never to be appeased.

The time after a crisis is usually the moment for development, improvements, and a bit of social concern's. The Enlightenment - a movement which struggle with so much an effort to push Europe towards its current path - is often underestimated by architectural historians for its inclination to seemingly classicising forms. As if architraves and columns concealed that this is the time when the shape of most of the Western cities as well as scale of new public spaces and buildings were decided.

This is also the time when the term of solitude in the crown is born. Today it is used to describe a whole range of different phenomena from l'anomisation de la société (Gill 2001), through animalisation and anonymisation of social relations, to their atomisation. Jean-Jacques Rousseau often considered the first philosopher of solitude emphasised that the so-called civilised life (albeit undeniable but insignificant and modest profits) offers a real risk of marginalisation and exclusion. It rises from the very nature of social life and its deepest mechanisms and side-effects: certain alienation from nature, possible alienation from society, depersonalisation (i.e. depravation

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from authenticity of existence) and alienation related to cultural and social uniformity.

Phenomenon of loneliness in a crowd described widely starting from Riesman (Riesman, Glazer, Denney, 1950) is quite an old one. Some of the ancient metropolis with their densities extremely high even according to our contemporary standards would probably make their inhabitants suffer from it as much as from other urban calamities. However, at that time loneliness in a crowd was an exception. Today it has become a rule.

The present debate on various symptoms of a process that can be considered a decay of social and interpersonal relationships is rooted in Adorno's reflections on the „authentic" experience of solitude. This perspective refers to the conservative critique of culture where reasons for increasing solitude are to be found within social and economic phenomena, within mass-production, standardisation, commercialisation, bureaucracy, economisation and instrumentalisation of relationships, etc. to reach as far as decay of real experience and regression of language competence .

If Baroque solitude was omnipresent but mostly ignored, modern solitude is omnipresent and broadly discussed. The problem is that the capacity of experiencing and appreciating is is decreasing. And perhaps now more than ever all men's miseries may soon derive from not being able to sit quiet in a room alone, as Blaise Pascal once forewarned.

It is bad to be unable to stand solitude

Lew Tolstoy
Family Happiness

In 2012 Katerina Murashova, a psychologist based in St. Petersburg, run an experiment that in a way echoes or moves forwards the famous Stanford marshmallow experiment dated half century ago. She proposed 68 voluntary participants aged 12 to 18 to spend eight hours without computers, cell-phones and other means of communication. They could play and listen to music, read, write, draw, handcraft, cook, eat, walk, sleep, etc. as long as they were doing it alone. Only three resist to the very end, other seven survived five hours. All 68 at certain point tried to rest or fall asleep and no-one succeeded. „27 teenagers developed dizziness, fever, chills, sickness, tremors, dryness of mouth, as well as abdominal or chest pains. Virtually all participants of the experiment felt anxiety and fear, while five had "panic attacks" and three more had suicidal thoughts. All the symptoms went away as soon as they returned to their TVs and computers. 51 out of 68 admitted that they almost felt like computer and gadget addicts" (Murashova 2012).

Why it is no surprise that, unfortunately, eight hours of reading a book must seem a nightmare to a gadget addict, it is particularly interesting how few of the participants was interested in going out and passing at least part of those eight hours outdoors.

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Imagine someone sitting alone in a room without television, radio, computer or phone and with the door closed and the blinds down. This person must be a dangerous lunatic or a prisoner sentenced to solitary confinement. If a free agent, then a panty-sniffing loser shunned by society, or a psycho planning to return to college with an automatic weapon and a backpack full of ammo.

Michael Foley
The Age of Absurdity: Why Modern Life Makes It Hard to Be Happy

Being but instruments, machines have changed our lives causing the obvious fear of that change. Already in 1940's stated that communication media cause isolation not only in intellectual sphere. „Not only does the mendacious idim of the radio announcer fix itself in the brain as an image of language itself, preventing people from speaking to one another; not only does the voice advertising Pepsi-Cola drown out the levelling of continents; not only does the ghostly image of the cinema hero model the embraces of adolescents, and later adultery. Progress keeps people literally apart. The little counter at the railroad station or the bank allowed the clerks to whisper to their colleagues and share their meagre secrets; the glass partitions of modern offices, the huge rooms in which countless employees sitting together can be easily supervised both by the public and by their managers, no longer countenance private conversations and idylls. Even in offices, the taxpayer in now protected from wasting of time by wage earners, who are isolated in their collective. But the means of communication also isolate people physically.

The railroad has been supplanted by cars. The making of travel acquaintances is reduced by the private automobile to half-threatening encounters with hitchhikers. People travel on rubber tires in strict isolation form one another; in the nuclear family, conversation is regulated by practical interests. Just as every family with a certain income spends the same percentage on housing, cinema, cigarettes, exactly as statistics prescribe, the subject matter of conversations is schematised according to the class of automobile. When they meet on Sunday outings or in restaurants, the menus and décor of which are identical to others in the same price category, the guests find that with increasing isolation they have become more and more alike. Communication makes people conform by isolating them".

Digitalisation hadn't started yet when Eugenio Mortale was expressing his doubts regarding impact of digitalisation of the modern word saying that mass communication, radio, and especially television, have attempted not without success, to annihilate every possibility of solitude and reflection. Today many aspects that have impact on our lives are no longer spatial or architectural. We have digitalised our habits: we sub-live our lives but we register and share them instead. We use smartphones not only to wake us up but to remind us that we should drink water, or to eat every 2-3 hours or to go outside. The problem is that there is no-where to go whether we are in the area of freshly built surveilled enclosed real estates, exclusive apartments squeezed in down towns, or the post-rural landscape of urban sprawl. Modern solitude becomes that great misfortune described by Jean de la Bruyere: the incapability of solitude.

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This great misfortune — to be incapable of solitude

Jean de La Bruyère
Caractères

The reason why this condition should be the particular interest of architects and urban planners is that the future generations by which buildings and cities are about to be dwelled and for which they are now being designed and built, are not necessarily going to learn how to explore, experience, and enjoy space according to old standards. Looking on last 25 years of city development in Poland one can have doubts if there is only technology to put the blame on for children staying indoors. There is nothing outside except for parking lots. What can tempt them to put an electronic device aside and eventually go outdoors (provided air quality allows that).

At dawn of the modern era a poet, a philosopher, a flaneur, a prostitute, an opium addict… all these tragicomic characters contemplate in their own way a forgotten reliefs and labyrinths of urban spaces: dark alleys and courtyards of tenement houses as well as all the variety of underestimated everyday artefacts: abandoned places, objects, toys, books and trinkets.

Solitude in the era of capitalism became something pathetic and archaic. A picture of a derelict reveals that in a rationalised reality all human relations and solidarity are but a fiction. In this picture there is another character: the one of Radfahrengeist. It is a metaphor of a man submitted to social pressure: a bike rider who leans forward and peddles frantically. Before der Radfahrengeist started to peddle in the current race, it was Kierkegaard who

moved the dialectics from the level of the whole (world) to individual (human being). And no human being has ever been anything more than an individual: the smallest unit of space.

It is a very popular task to propose new taxonomies for modern / contemporary solitude: solitude of the rat race, solitude in reaching the top and solitude of staying at the top already reached, solitude of endless carnival and solitude of segregation, solitude of emigration (both real and internal), etc. Following Riesman we can search for the roots of this varieties of modern solitude in the „outer containment" (Reckless 2010) or „other-direction" (Riesman & others 1950) of modern society. Permanent demand for adaptation to constantly changing situation, playing specific and pre-defined social roles is achieved at the price of weakening sense of identity and deepening state of alienation and loneliness (among others c.f. AA.VV. Zrozumiec samotnosc: stadium interdyscyplinarne).

The vision of the society of liquid modernity has its roots in Nietzsche's reflection on human condition as well as Leibnitz's theory of monads. The crisis of subjectivity and the crisis of community are the integral aspects of the 20th century discourse on human condition. The subsequent critics of Cartesian „me" (linguistic, social, semiotic, etc.) try to establish definition of the existence as something relational rather than substantial: a result of our contact and relation with the outside world.

The world that at certain point offered a common experience of crisis that defined the modernity (Bauman 2009). Loneliness is also a post-modern category that defines the way an individual acts in linguistic, ideological, social, sexual, cultural, etc. means apart from its standard role of critical component of the strategy for survival.

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Speaking of survival, there is another aspect of modern solitude having impact on society as well as cities and their infrastructure: it is loneliness of the elderly. The western world is experiencing a 'silver tsunami' as baby boomers reach retirement age (Cacioppo 2009) and 43% of older adults in developed countries experience social isolation which is closely correlated with loneliness and depression as well as mental and physical decline (Briggs 2015). According to the Age UK findings, loneliness has twice the impact on an early death as obesity. It is second only to poverty and increases the risk of an early death by 19%. 'We need to do more to support older people to stay socially connected. Being lonely not only makes their lives miserable, but also makes them more vulnerable to illness and disease' is a comment by Caroline Abrams being part of Age UK 2012 research programme. In this case 'doing more' must not limited to making retirement homes more exclusive also because the number of adults aged 65 years and older is expected to double within the next 25 years. In terms of city planning and urban strategies, that day is tomorrow.

An interesting experiment took place in Seattle. A preschool called the Intergenerational Learning Center - an award winning children care programme - was opened in Providence Mount St. Vincent - a nursing home of over 400 elderly residents. Five days a week, the children and residents were spending time together in a variety of planned activities. The experiment has - and is having - extremely positive impact on both groups: the preschoolers and the elderly, so similar and so poles apart in their having so much and so little future, who have such a small amount of time to overlap in their lives and share their experience.

'Present Perfect', a documentary on 2012/2013 school year registered by Evan Biggs, a filmmaker and a professor of Stanford University reveals how easily the gap of a forgotten truth that we are not going to be young, fit, and tuned forever, that we will eventually get old, that we will look, and move, and speak, and smell, and react in a different way we do today, can be filled and restored.

„There is only one time to be happy and that time is NOW" is a fragment of a manifesto read by one of the pre-school teachers for the film is about being in the present moment - something that, according to Briggs, so many adults struggle with. „Stepping into most any nursing home, it's hard to ignore the sense of isolation one feels on behalf of the residents living there, and even harder to reconcile that with the fact that old age will inevitably come for us all", says Biggs. „In our fast-paced, youth-obsessed culture, we don't want to be reminded of our own mortality. It's easier to look away. Shooting this film and embedding myself in the nursing home environment also allowed me to see with new eyes just how generationally segregated we've become as a society" (Briggs 2015).

The dramatic consequences of this segregation are revealed in most dramatic and explicit manner in case of disasters and emergencies. When the 2003 European heat wave combined with drought to create a crop shortfall in parts of Southern Europe had led to the hottest summer in the history of records (i.e. since 1540) and caused health crises in several countries, France was hit especially hard. According to the National Institute of Health, during that period 14,802 heat-related deaths occurred (20% of the total number of victims in the entire Europe).

Summers in France are normally moderate ones in terms of temperatures and precipitation. Neither houses

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nor people are used to react to very hight temperatures lasting during the night and preventing the usual cooling cycle (most nights in France are cool, even in summer, and houses usually made of stone, concrete, or brick do not warm too much during the daytime and radiate minimal heat at night which makes air conditioning unnecessary). Furthermore, the wave hit in August, a month in which the entire country - including civil servants and physicians - was on holiday.

People did not know how to react and elderly people living by themselves had no-one who could eventually help them make some adjustments easing the heat lasting both day and night. The deaths weren't caused simply by the health condition, for the weakest group — of ill people with constant support or those residing in nursing homes — had fewer deaths. They were caused by solitariness and isolation, and happened in the worst of possible solitudes.

According to the official data reported by journalists (among them www.weatherscientific.co.uk, The Guardian), many bodies were not claimed for many weeks because relatives were on holiday. A refrigerated warehouse outside Paris was used by undertakers as they did not have enough space in their own facilities. A month later, on September 3, over 50 bodies were still left unclaimed in the Paris area, and the authorities decided to burry them at state expense.

The French episode of heat wave in 2003 as well as dramatic events related to the Cleopatra cyclone in Sardinia ten years later revealed the association of natural and social factors explaining the high number of unnecessary victims. The French family structure is more dislocated than elsewhere in Europe, and prevailing social attitudes hold that once older people are closed behind their apartment doors or in nursing homes, they are someone

else's problem" said Stéphane Mantion, an official with the French Red Cross. „These thousands of elderly victims didn't die from a heat wave as such, but from the isolation and insufficient assistance they lived with day in and out, and which almost any crisis situation could render fatal."

On the other hand, how one can notice the absence of a neighbour if one knows nothing about people living next door? Where neighbours can become acquaintances if common spaces are to expensive to be considered by developers and services are anonymous and neither local nor spatial since even food can be bought online and delivered door-to-door?

Terrorised by the socialised and shared image of our everyday activities me underestimate the bright side of being alone: the one that allows to appreciate certain experiences. „It is a frightful satire and an epigram on the modern age that the only use it knows for solitude is to make it a punishment, a jail sentence. How different from the time when — however worldly-minded temporality has always been — people believed in the solitude of the cloister, when they honoured solitude as the highest, as a qualification of the eternal — and nowadays it is detested as a curse and is used only as a punishment for criminals" (Kierkegaard 1847).

„I confront the city with my body, my legs measure the length of the arcade and the width of the square; my gaze unconsciously projects my body onto the facade of the cathedral. Where it roams over the mouldings and contours, sensing the size of recesses and projections; my body weight meets the mass of the cathedral door, and my hand grasps the door pull as I enter the dark void behind. I experience myself in the city, and the city exists through my embodied experience. The city and my body

supplement and define each other. I dwell in the city and the city dwells in me. Our bodies and movements are in constant interaction with the environment; the world and the self inform and redefine each other constantly. The percept of the body and the image of the world turn into one single continuous existential experience" (Pallasmaa 2005). For quite a long time architectural contribution to human happiness was based on that paradigm. It may be true that, as Merlau-Ponty pointed out, in everyday life that knowledge gives us nothing (Merleau-Ponty 1945). On the other hand, for the first time in history we are so constantly reminded about our presence in space by our image reflected in countless mirror like surfaces. Never before we were so often reminded of our image seen again and again out of the corner of our eyes. How we can hold a grudge against people for not being interested in space and society when they always have their mostly preferred companions in front of their very eyes: themselves.

The real solitude is not just a simple consequence of a frustration caused by the inability to participate in social or cultural circuit (Adorno 1944). Authentic, deep experience of solitude is open only for independent, autonomous entity rejecting reality in its current form. Adorno warned of the risk of ennoblement of loneliness as wall as of falling into aestheticised *noblesse Weltschmerz*. Unfortunately, there is no escape from this fatal circle of self-identification: reaching intellectual and moral maturity is possible only through experiencing all levels of solitude. Unfortunately, in societies focused on consumption, „Men are estranged from one another as each secretly tries to make an instrument of the other, and in time a full circle is made: one makes an instrument of himself and is estranged from it also" (Mills 1951).

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Modern self-reflection

In his famous book Why More is Less (a coincidentally architectural title), the anthropologist Barry Schwartz proves that in the face of practically limitless possibility, the achievement of any form of lasting satisfaction by members of our species is practically impossible. It is the things that we have done to ourselves, in terms of civilisation that stands in our way.

The mechanism described by Schwartz forces us to yearn for all the places in which we do not happen to be in and seek contact with the people that are located in another place and that are remotely accessible. Should Schwartz be proven right, down the line there is nothing for us but an everlasting lack of satisfaction and a feeling of solitude each time we happen to be alone with mundane reality. It is in this state of mind that we remind ourselves of the architecture that surrounds us: architecture of new solitude.

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True happiness is impossible without solitude.
The fallen angel probably betrayed God because
he longed for solitude, which angels do not know.

Anton Chekhov

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We live, in fact, in a world starved for solitude,
silence, and private: and therefore starved for meditation
and true friendship.

C.S. Lewis
The Weight of Glory

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Solitude is not a modern invention.

Alvin Toffler
The Third Wave

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There is only one solitude, and it is vast, heavy, difficult to bear, and almost everyone has hours when he would gladly exchange it for any kind of sociability, however trivial or cheap, for the tiniest outward agreement with the first person who comes along….

Rainer Maria Rilke
Letters to a Young Poet

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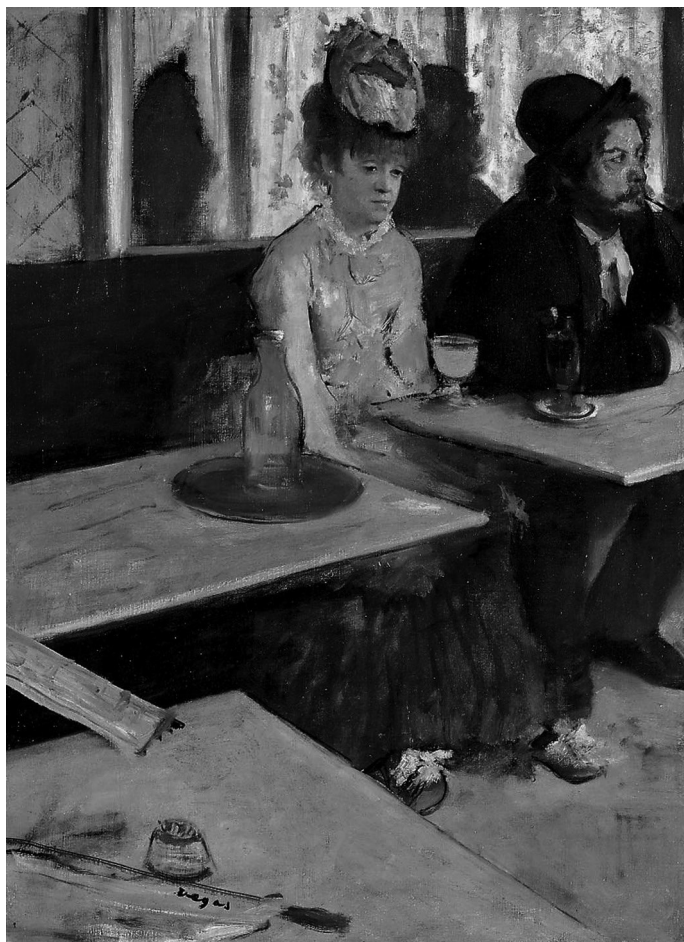
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*There are days when solitude is a heady wine
that intoxicates you with freedom, others when it is a bitter
tonic, and still others when it is a poison that makes you beat
your head against the wall.*

*Colette
Oeuvres complètes en seize volumes*

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*The more time we spend interconnected via a myriad of devices,
the less time we have left to develop true friendships in the real
world*

*Alex Morritt
Impromptu Scribe*

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Only now, when no one hears,
(don't worry - you are home alone)
you pour warm water into the tub
and proclaim in front of a mirror
you want to change the world.

I know but to well you're trying a bit
but tell me, please,
how many days
you've spent like this:
in front of a mirror?

Yes! Yes, the one in the mirror, sadly, it's me
Yes! Yes, the same old me.

Grzegorz Ciechowski
Tak! Tak! (Yes! Yes!)

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ARCHITECTURAL TYPOLOGY OF SOLITUDE
/ LUOGO /

So, now I shall talk every night. To myself. To the moon. I shall walk, as I did tonight, jealous of my loneliness, in the blue-silver of the cold moon, shining brilliantly on the drifts of fresh-fallen snow, with the myriad sparkles. I talk to myself and look at the dark trees, blessedly neutral. So much easier than facing people, than having to look happy, invulnerable, clever. With masks down, I walk, talking to the moon, to the neutral impersonal force that does not hear, but merely accepts my being. And does not smite me down.

Sylvia Plath
The Journals of Sylvia Plath

It is easy to say that one can acquire everything in solitude except character (Stendhal) and that one can be instructed in society and inspired only in solitude (Goethe). The difficult part is to find for solitude a proper architectural form and space.

What distinguishes human solitude and solitude of other ʼsocialisedʼ mammals is the amount of energy that we use to express what is inexpressible, to give solitude a shape. „The ecstatic state of wholeness is bound to be transient because it has no part in the total pattern of ʼadaptation through maladaptationʼ which is characteristic of our species… the hunger of imagination, the desire and pursuit of the whole,

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take origin from the realisation that something is missing, from awareness of incompleteness" (Storr 2005).

Forms

Architectural forms have, over the centuries, enabled, deepened, determined, soothed and encouraged human solitude in all of its forms: that of privacy, solitude, loneliness, and isolation. It started with the awareness of our own mortality and the infinity of space to lead us towards who we are today and how our cities look like.

Some architectural forms and elements carry strong symbolic message related to all forms of isolation or exclusion as well as security and privacy: wall being a division or a boarder, separating what is inside from the outside; enclosure providing protection and creating obstacles at the same time: a top of the tower, as separated from the ground and rest of the world as possible.

There are places where we are lonely and miserable because hardly ever travelling today is a living process: waiting rooms, stops, railway stations, airports, where time and space are wasted and suspended and all we can care about is how uncomfortable our sit is.

Some building types: a cloister, a prison, a hospital seems to have power to evoke solitude. Mark H. Dixon (2009) in his study on architecture of three Medieval Christian monastic orders - the Camaldolese Order, the Carthusian Order, and the Cistercian Order - emphasises the solitude's essential spiritual value embodied in architectural forms. Those were actually the expressions and embodiments of — at the time new and revolutionary — model of life: *κοινοσ βιοσ*, the common life, defined by the

Rule of S. Benedict of Nursia, opposite to the competitive idea promoted by the Simeon Stylites the Elder.

Finally, there are landscapes that have been condemned to their own solitude one cannon be resilient to: secondary landscapes, residual spaces, non-places, ex-places, etc.

It have all stated with the erection of a single wall.

a wall

There is no consensus on what was the origin of architecture: a primitive hut, a trilith, the act of joining any two pieces together, marking a place with a stone, choosing a cave, recognising a place during nomadic migrations of our distant cousins. Whatever the origin, the history of architecture accelerated significantly after the structural and symbolical revolution of an enclosure. If the war is as old as mankind, the defensive walls are only a bit younger.

The oldest of the great walls known are the Walls of Jericho dated 9,000-8,000 BC. They were built around a proto-city (a structure that had both rural and urban features) which proceeded the wall by approximately 500 years. But they could not have been the first if their scale and strength became a legend. Same for the walls of Eridu considered to be the oldest known city (dated ca. 5400 BC) were so tall and powerful to give birth to another architectural legend: the one of the Tower of Babel.

Since the very beginning the structural and functional power of the wall was followed if not precessed by the symbolical one. There is no other explanation for massive enclosures built of wood and earth by the people of the Lusatian culture in Biskupin in mid 8th century BC for the settlement itself was located in the middle of a lake.

A wall has a particularly strong semantic potential. Not only it defines place but it defines the identity of

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its constructor in the most atavistic way: by defining a stranger, an enemy, someone who is on the other side of the wall. It can also be — literally — a media, a background for messages whether it's the Ishtar Gate decorated in 575 BC by the unknown sculptors or the Western Bank barrier contested by Banksy.

1750 English Parliament Act gave birth to the concept of enclosures which now define the English landscape. 400,000 acres were turned into private property in 10 years, and 2,500,000 acres in the next 40 years. All plots were enclosed.

Contemporary cities in general, but Polish cities in particular, are suffering the plague of enclosures erected for the sake of privacy, safety, and surveillance, to keep the strangers away from one's property. Most of the large scale barriers of the modern world are anti-immigration fences of the length of nearly 10,000 km out of nearly 23,000 of the total (Carboni 2014). Some of them are illegal. The Israeli West Bank barrier - more than just a wall for it is an enclosure that keeps nomadic people in one place. Despite International Court if Justice legal advisory opinion issued in July 2004 which recognised the wall as a violation of international law, its construction continues. It consists mostly of multi-layered fences with stacks of barbed wire in the middle but its best known image are 8 meters high concrete slabs.

Today Europe stands at the crossroads leaning towards the path full of barriers. While some barriers tend to open: some of them deliberately, some of them unwillingly. Among the first the wall separating Turkish and Greek Cyprus in which a pedestrian passage opened in 2008 in the city of Nicosia (not to mention the Berlin Wall), among the latter the Mexico-United States border: sometimes a

fortress, sometimes scarcely a pen fencing. 350 million legal crossings are registered every year along this 3,145 km long border which make it the most frequently crossed of controlled boundaries in the world. However, if the European politics of open borders will come to an end, that leadership may be at risk.

Walls and barriers, the most primordial of the catalogue of architectural typology of solitude, are dual by nature: they give protection but also exclude and eliminate. And the problem with walls and barriers in times when the future is painted dark is that we never know when we will find ourselves on the wrong side of a wall.

Another revolution in solitude oriented forms came when the wall changed its proportion storm horizontal to vertical ones. A tower symbolises a shelter and a confinement, power and punishment, nobility and miserableness, purity and torment. The Tower of Babel, born of human pride and arrogance, was a concretisation of a dream that could never come true, a lighthouse was a promise of a safe way back home. One of the defensive towers of Cagliari, La Torre dell'Elefante, second only to the St. Pancracy Tower in nights and built in 1307 AD was turned into a jail during the Aragonese rule becoming a unique open-air prison with a panoramic view.

In the search of prestige and security as well as fresh air within rigid limits of the defensive walls of mediaeval cities wealthy citizens started the present race towards the sky interrupted only by the horizontal visions of Renessaince, Baroque and Neo-classical cities. When in mid 19th century the use os steel and reinforced concrete allowed to squeeze ten time as much plots out of one, it became an ill dream of privacy in the clouds.

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Le Corbusier, one of the key apologist of high-rise housing, saw a sky scraper — Eiffel Tower excluded — for the first time when he arrived to New York in 1935. He decided they were far to short and set to densely. When he died three decades later, the whole world was substituting cities with Villes Radieuses.

a city

If a house (or a primitive hut) were obliging the first human necessity, and a defensive walls were obliging the second, a city was a natural result of combining the two with a third, not less important factor: the one of not only staying together, but also interacting with others.

Unfortunately, our interacting with others has its intrinsic disadvantages: it causes as many problems as opportunities. For that the internal shape of a city and its urban issue were often manifestations of control and power. Those were expressed in different forms and scales: the strength of walls, the number of towers, the dimension of the sovereign's seat, etc. So was the plan, be that the orthogonal grid proposed by Hippodamos for the city of Milet in a plan which considered the city a political instrument, be that a labyrinth of Arabic and Sicilian cities, or Venetian channels and calles where very stranger gets lost and one's local identity is built on the basic of one's orientation in space. Sometimes in the history of urban planning those two powers: top-down of the seigneur and bottom-(hardly-ever)-up of the subjects met. Until recently, it was usually the first power to be the winner, like in the case of Hausmann's plans for Paris taking away from the rebellions the advantage of orientation in the narrow streets of Marais: perfect for a proto- urban guerilla warfare and a death sentence for horse cavalry.

Now the cities have no ends, they are cancer-like organisms in a constant growth. People who made the collective effort to live separately and moved outside cities' administrative limits often still consider themselves citizens of the metropolis nearby. According to official census, there are 761 873 people living the city of Cracow (recently more often referred to as Krakow). If all people who consider themselves Cracovians included, that number would be superior to a million.

At the very beginning, the proto-cities were offering both rural and urban features, and the border between rural and urban landscape was in a way fluid, the relation between the two landscapes more bilateral and equal on the contrary to the future serfdom. The latter was typical for feudal period, emphasised by the image of a Medieval city: an enclosed, fortified entity protected by the walls and relics. Even its image was limited to the perimeter of the enclosure like the external world wouldn't existed (c.f. Rizzi 2013).

At the end of the Middle Ages, the relation between the city and the surrounding landscape changed. If not yet physically open despite the dawn of a territorial concept of warfare, it is healthy and fashionable to posses a manor, a palazzo, a villa in the natural, more healthy and admirable location outside the city walls: not to far but far enough to escape from plagues if necessary (c.f. *Decameron*). The time for walls, towers and keeps was temporarily suspended. They were back, however, in the new, gargantuan scale, before the second millennium ended.

a city of walls and cells
In the 1830's Europe there are still less than two dozens of cities with population superior to 100,000 and only two of those — Paris and London — with more that half

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a million. At the threshold of the industrial revolution cities are still a compact, uniform, hierarchised entities. Only fifth part of the entire European population was living in the cities at that time and there were no signs of the rapid change of that proportion. And yet the change came.

As a consequence of many different factors — technological development of farming, changes in nutrition, expulsion of cemeteries and workshops outside city centres, and finally, the wide availability of soap and cotton underwear made it possible for the demographic curve of Europe to make a steep climb, despite years of war and waves of migration. If at the beginning of the there were 100 million people living in Europe and 170 million one hundred years later, there were nearly 400 million at the beginning of the 20th century (c.f. Weber 1899 and Sica 1991).

In the 1850's the proportions between the number of people living in rural and those living in urban areas are balanced in Europe to prevail soon in favour of the latter. It means that the present phenomenon of more people living in cities is not taking place for the first time but happened already in the mid 19th century. With most of the consequences that developing countries are facing today except for transport and media.

Average human life span extended, an ancient cycle of new generations replacing the old ones is disturbed. For the first time in history new generations had no place to stay for their ancestors were still alive. Millions of people needed a place to live and some activity on which they livelihood could depend on. People started moving from the rural areas to the cities, only to dwell in spaces cramped beyond belief. The cities soon became overpopulated and the poverty of dwellings incommensurate to the splendour of new public building and residences of the upper-middle

class. Substandard was the prevailing urban reality. In *The Condition of the Working Class in Englad* Engels argued that in large industrial cities mortality from disease was four times that in the countryside, and mortality from convulsion was ten times as high (Engels 1845).1948 Journal of the Royal British Architects a survey of one of such dwellings still existing at that time in Glasgow was published: a family of 9 living on proximately 7 square meters. This is probably why Le Corbusier claimed that the only thing that the modern man needed was a monk's cell, well lit and heated — a place from which to look at the stars.

Cells of the Sainte Marie de La Tourette in Eveux, his late oeuvre designed together with Iannis Xenakis, are not well lit, and not even remotely well heated. The narrow slits acting as windows make it barely possible to see any stars. The loneliness that can be experienced here is not of the final, unspeakable type. Due to the peculiar acoustics of the building, the presence of one's neighbours can be felt at the most unexpected of times: at the break of dawn or in the middle of the night, as if in a concrete fever, the sound of a turning key seems to burrow itself into our head, while there is nobody to be found as we traverse the labyrinthine corridors — someone's footsteps can still be heard — as banal as the sound of slippers clapping against the soles of wet feet.

The volume of the monastery is detached from the hillside much in the same way that a monk's life was separated from worldly troubles. The community of the monastery, by providing food, shelter and salvation, was giving its members a feeling of eternal sureness that has been almost forgotten in the world of today. It did so through stable, ethereal rhythms of daily prayers to be held day in and day out, through all the seasons of the year, as only the landscape in the window of the refectory changed.

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At the origins of monastic life dating back in the 5th century and the Rule of S. Benedict later renewed by S. Robert of Molesme, that was an initiating and tempting alternative to what Mediaeval life used to be. Today, with the constantly diminishing number of people taking orders and choosing monastic life, it seems it's no longer the case. The world has changed.

Already at the beginning of the 19th century it became obvious, that the historical model of the city is not meeting the demands of the new society of the industrial era. One of the most interesting in the context of solitude was Phalantern, an utopian concept by Charles Fourier who believed that the traditional house was a place of exile and oppression of women. He designed an utopia of a self-contained community living in a settlement providing both rural and urban features (including industry). The concept gain some popularity in the United States, but there are only few examples of its reception in Europe among which Familistère built in Guise, France by Jean-Baptiste Andre' Godin (1853-1866).

In 1967, when Henri Lefebvre published his essay „The Right to the City" (Lefebvre 1967), that right was at the same time a call and a demand. The call was corresponding to the existential pain caused by the impoverishing urban life while the demand was a result of a call for alternative: a life that would have been less alienated and more cheerful, a meaningful life open to conflicts, dialectics, interactions, and — unfortunately — also the constant pursuit of novelty.

The city, says Lefebvre, is the most coherent and successful of all human attempts to change the world. However, being a man-made world, it is a world man has to live in from now on. And so, through the creation of the city — indirectly and in unconsciously — man has changed himself.

Primitive man has brought his chariot to a stop, he decides that here shall be his native soil. He chooses a glade, he cuts down the trees which are to close, he levels the earth around; he opens up the road which carry him to the river or to those of his tribe whom he has just left; he drives in the stakes which are to steady his tent. He surrounds this tent with a palisade in which he arranges a doorway. The road is as straight as he can manage it with his implements, his arm and his time.

Le Corbusier
Toward a new architecture

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L'impossibilità di orientamento, per un estraneo, nel dedalo di canali e calli veneziani coinvolge anche il Canal Grande che, mutando più volte direzione fino al punto di scorrere verso punir cardinali opposti, crea un effetto labirintico di intensità insuperata, proprio grazie alla dimensione paesaggistica dell'insieme.

Enrico Guidoni
Storia dell'urbanistica

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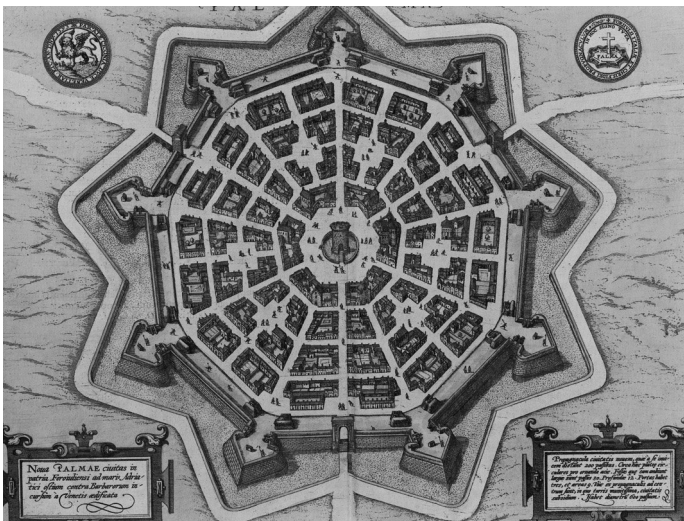
The city is lauded as one of the most important products of civilisation. However, cities differ from each other, and socialist cities are an altogether different phenomenon. (...)
All types of socialist cities share one characteristic — they have no social spaces. It is said that a city is its people, not its houses. In the case of the socialist city — it is the houses, not the people. The cities in themselves are not designed in a bad way: they have residential districts, there are elements which give them structure and elements that provide public functions. These elements are assigned a number and are shaped according to present parameters — each kindergarten has its designated area that it needs to serve. The same principle applies to schools, universities, cultural sites, hospitals, etc. The socialist city provides for all the needs of its citizens within walking distance from their home. The aim of the socialist city is to increase and sustain the productivity and efficiency of its inhabitants, but it doesn't provide them with public spaces in terms of their social role. The socialist city is not lacking in good architecture — although technologically inferior, it was often designed by skilled architects upholding traditions from before the World War II. Thus, we have well designed buildings — in accordance with the framework set by the system — but they turn out to be elements that form a city which is not for living in, because it was not designed with the people in mind.

Piotr Gajewski
Da capo city

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Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes made of ticky tacky,
Little boxes on the hillside,
Little boxes all the same.
There's a green one and a pink one
And a blue one and a yellow one,
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.
And the people in the houses
All went to the university,
Where they were put in boxes
And they came out all the same,
And there's doctors and lawyers,
And business executives,
And they're all made out of ticky tacky
And they all look just the same.
(…).

Malvina Reynolds
Little Boxes (1962)

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*These slums are pretty equally arranged in all the great towns
of England, the worst houses in the worst quarters of the towns;
usually one or two-storied cottages in long rows, perhaps with
cellars used as dwellings, almost always irregularly built. These
houses of three or four rooms and a kitchen form, throughout
England, some parts of London excepted, the general dwellings
of the working-class. The streets are generally unpaved, rough,
dirty, filled with vegetable and animal refuse, without sewers
or gutters, but supplied with foul, stagnant pools instead.
Moreover, ventilation is impeded by the bad, confused method of
building the whole quarter, and since many human being were
live crowded into a small space, the atmosphere that prevails in
these working-men's quarters may readily be imagined.*

Friedrich Engels
The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844
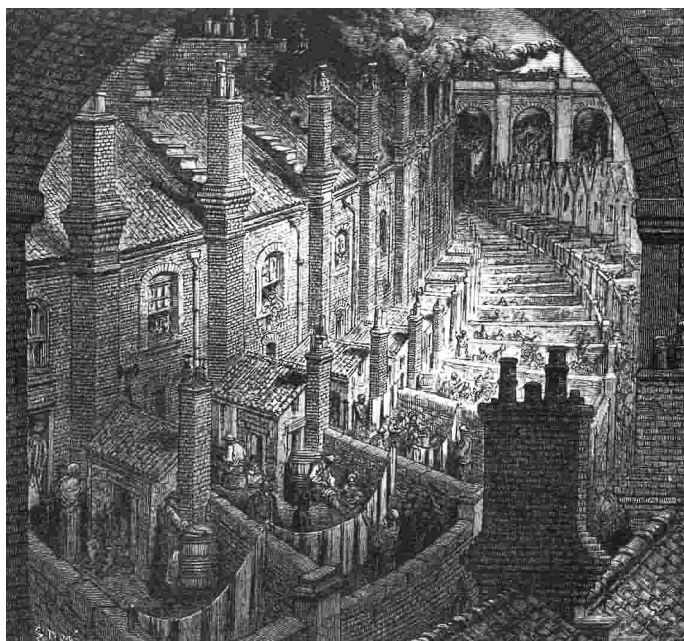
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1000 people per hectare are 980 too many.

Frank Lloyd Wright
Broadacre City: An Architect's Vision
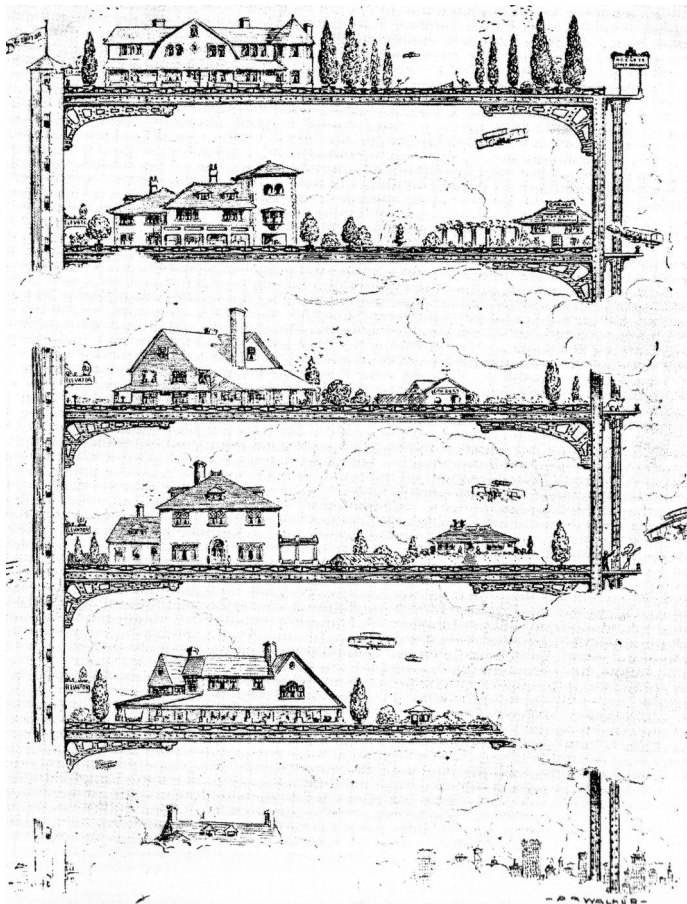
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We don not think, in the holy places; we think in bed,
afterwards, when the glare, and the the noise, and the confusion
are gone, and in fancy we revisit alone, the solemn monuments
of the past, and summon the phantom pageants of an age that
has passed away.

Mark Twain

SMALL SINK WITH
COLD TAP ONLY

GAS RING

WINDOW   SMALL RANGE
5'-7" x 3'-3"

GAS
BRACKET

CHEST OF DRAWERS   COAL BUNKER
WITH MIRROR   CUPBOARD
ON STAND
FOOD STORED   ROOF LEAKS
IN TOP DRAWER
                                        MATTRESS ON FLOOR
TABLE 3'-6" x 1'-11"   GIRL ON MATTRESS

CLOTHES PULLEY OVER   WARDROBE

                                        SINGLE BED
                                        (3 BOYS)
ROOF LEAK

GAS METER   BUILT IN BED
OVER DOOR   (MAN, WIFE,
                                        CHILD & 2 GIRLS)

                    VERY   DARK   CORRIDOR

1 O   2   4   6
SCALE OF FEET

The ambiance of solitude, the absence of any disturbing noise and of worldly desires and images, the quiet and calm attention of the mind to God, helped by prayer and leisurely reading, flow into that quies or rest of the soul in God. A simple and joyful rest, full of God, that leads the monk to feel, in some way, the beauty of eternal life.

Carthusian Monks

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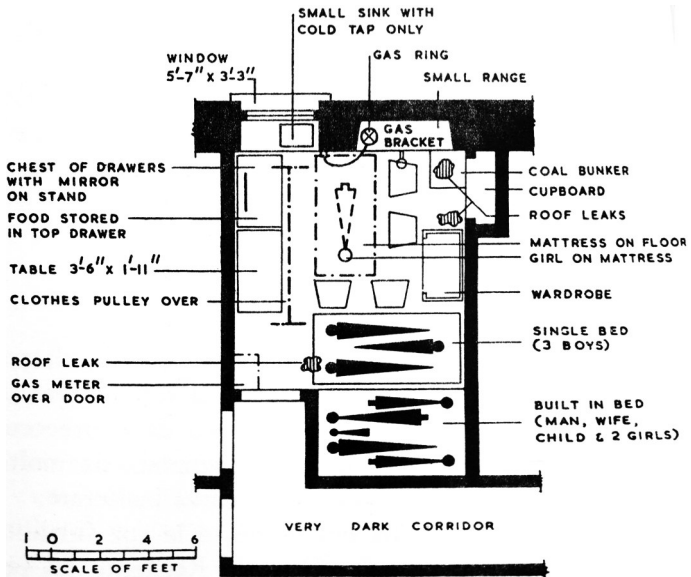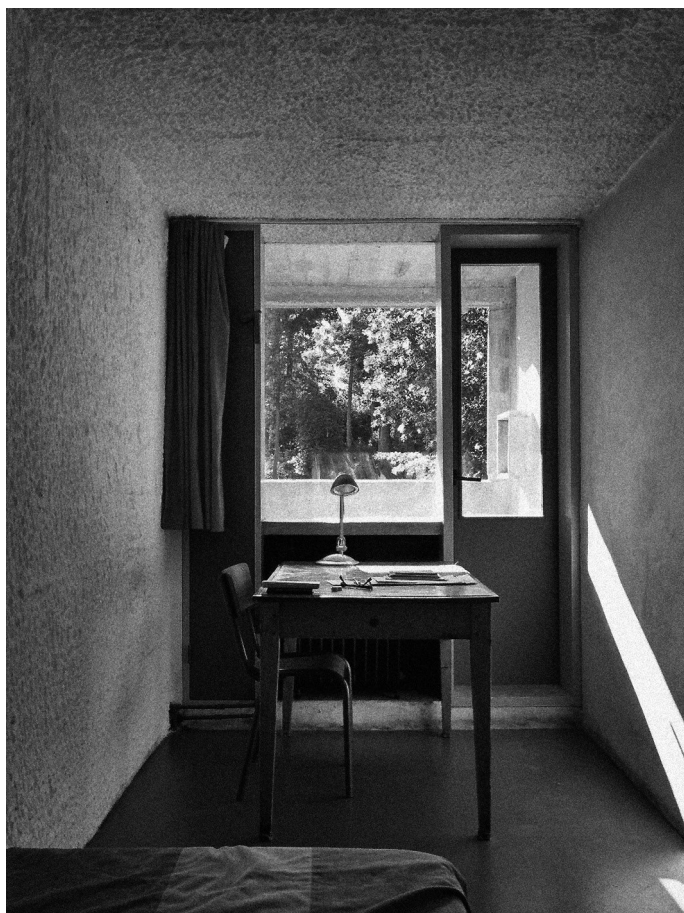Tesi di dottorato in architettura, Università degli Studi di Sassari

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Processes

Every process of transformation has its solitude-related cost. The very beginnings of the modern Europe are written by the experience of solitude associated with the Migration Period when, all of the sudden, a limited, already domesticated and efficiently connected space turn back into endless one, full of fear, danger, and foreignness. Some people took their beloved ones and belongings — including things as fragile as green glasses exposed in the Museum of Origins of the Polish State in Gniezno — and headed into the dark forests of the Central Europe (dwelled by poorly socialised and unfriendly Lechites).

We have to remember that traveling at that time — actually as close as a century ago, too — travelling was equal to disappearing from the world for a while. Until a traveler had reached his destination and send a message back home (a message which in turn might never reach its destination), nothing was known about his (rarely: her) fate. Today we are permanently on a digital leash localising every second on our presence in space.

Looking at the number of the often strongly personalised messages with which we are being attacked each day, we can come under the impression that our modernity is the least lonely of them all. Sadly - just like oversight systems do not guarantee security, personalised marketing and the number of friends on a social network site are not cures for loneliness. At the neurological level, anticipating the reaction of the Internet stirs in us a truly primal form of anxiety. The areas of the brain, which become active in such a scenario are one of the oldest and have evolved for the purposes of hunting, in which we were the prey. In addition, as Robin Dunbar claims, the human being

is capable of maintaining no more than around 150 meaningful social relations (Dunbar 2010). Even if the so-called electronic networks of friendship had promised to deal away with these stubborn they did not and they never will deliver on that promise (Bauman 2009) because of those hardwired limits to our social ability that have been encoded into our genes. Not only every person we know that exceeds the Dunbar number will remain at most the bystander to our everyday lives - a spearhead of the Internet crowd. And loneliness is never stronger than in the middle of a crowd, as Goethe and Riesman conclude univocally.

A crowded market square is an essence of a city. A crowded internet market is not. Today, shopping is no longer a social act. It doesn't refer exclusively to shopping online, but to the culture of shopping. Long time ago, when the cities where young, exchanging and purchasing goods was the key of cities' existence. The origins of public spaces are those of commerce for spaces of *sacrum* were often located outside the settlements.

At the beginning of the 19th century, shopping was still a form of social entertainment. Visiting the pedigrees of the shopping corridors: Langlois Passage Feydeau in Paris (1791-1824), Royal Opera Arcade in London (1816-18), Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan (1865-77) was an aesthetic adventure. However, already in that period a first department store using price tags was opened (inquire a salesman or a sale assistant on the prize was no longer necessary). In 1916 in Memphis, US, the first self-service store with check-desk at the exit was opened. An invention of a shopping trolley (1936, Sylvan N. Goldman, Oklahoma) the road towards a shopping mall and an anonymous space of a depot store was opened.

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Today it is much easier to buy organic carrots, apples, parsley, eggs, etc. on a fancy slow-food hipster market in the middle of a metropolis than in a village and nearly impossible in the areas of dense housing estate and/or urban sprawl. A local grocery, local pub, local coffee shop is no longer so commonly the beating heart of a neighbourhood.

> *Where solitude endeth, there beginneth the market-place; and where the market-place beginneth, there beginneth also the noise of the great actors, and the buzzing of the poison-flies.*
>
> *Friedrich Nietzsche*
> *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Every process of transformation opens the door for solitude. It is the intrinsic nature of the process to abandon one state in favour of the other. In case of construction, it means to put one quality on hold, enclose a site for safety reason, and wait till the new quality will come to life. Sometimes that process is lasting longer than it should and causes more loneliness and isolation than necessary.

Heygate Estate, lying between Walworth Road and New Kent Road in the Elephant & Castle district, on the right bank of the Thames, is a residential development designed by Tim Tinker, finished in 1974 quickly became an infamous place. Its architecture and spatial layout - the varied height of the structures, the system of walkways and corridors that organised pedestrian and vehicular traffic in a manner that allowed the space between the buildings to be entirely taken up by greenery, was not acknowledged until 2004 when a revitalisation plan providing demolition of the

estate was approved. In the air of accusations of corruption, law breaking in broad daylight and of acting against the interest of the public, in 2014 the plan entered its final phase.

Despite numerous analyses (c.f. Edwards 2012), the results of which cast doubt over the need to demolish the existing buildings and suggesting instead their revitalisation, the estate was demolished. One of the premises of the plan was that 1,000 of the 2,535 new apartments would have cheap rents, so that the old inhabitants would have a chance to continue living in their old neighbourhood. In the end, only 79 will be provided. These and other breaches of the specified requirements - from the one stating that at least 20% of the area of the existing buildings and infrastructure to be reused to the facilities for renewable energy sources — cost the real estate developer but tickets to the Summer Olympic Games and a trip to Cannes. Such was the gift received by the head of the district council.

Gentrification is one of the facets of the deepening, global phenomenon of the polarisation that takes place between the strata of society, as well as the rising antagonism between them. Wherever there is a demand for a certain area, it is gradually being taken away from its current users and handed over to those better off. Obviously, gentrification image is not limited to the face of the callous, greedy real estate developer, as demagogues would have us believe. Its mechanisms are much harder to personify. One only needs to take look at High Line Park in New York, an initiative praised by the entire world of architecture along with the various urban movements. Today, most of the founders of the initiative can no longer afford their own apartments, as the cost of rent per square

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meter in the vicinity of the Line has skyrocketed far beyond their reach (Harvey, 2012).

Most of the processes that define and shape contemporaneity — broadly discussed and minutely describe elsewhere by more qualified authors — are not only solitude-oriented but also make us more vulnerable to solitude (and, in consequences, more vulnerable in general). Rapid and intense urbanisation; the subsequent waves of industrialisation blamed for intensification, haste, competitiveness, alienation, and uprooting; globalisation offering illusion of endless possibilities and accessibility to all resources on one hand, and resulting in uniformity and discontinuity of places and spaces; digitalisation giving the illusion of being connected only due to the fact of being online; macdonaldisation which turns our subjectivity into objectivity; gentrification and disneylandisation which segregate users of certain area according to their wealth, areas that as a result are often abandoned after hours and out of season, etc. It would have been much easier to deal with those phenomena on the levels of either design or governance, if they hadn't come in sets and combinations and become nearly unstoppable.

In 2000, the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) listed the Main Square in Krakow as the best public space in Europe due to its lively social life. At that time it was entirely true: the largest medieval town square (roughly 44,000 square meters) delimited in 1257 AD under the Magdeburghian law, was an urban instrument for social life. Since late 1990's Poland can be still considered a pre-cellphone place, the square was commonly used to spend time with people with our without previously made appointments. It was simply a perfect place for its beauty, central localisation, accessibility (most bus and tram lines passes

nearby and every peripheral district has at least some form of direct connection by public transport with the historical centre) and quantity of different services and facilities in the area. Message revealed and budget airlines arrived, the city was soon invaded by the mass tourists. Global brands replaced the local ones, grand frappuccinos replaced „black" and „white" coffees, a beer or a shot of vodka started to cost a fortune. The square was full of people, but those were but strangers taking photos and watching other strangers passing by.

For life abhors a vacuum, people of Krakow decided to find another place, a substitute for their social instrument. The Main Square was second to none, but among all the squares in the city they chose the ugliest and dismissed square in the Kazimierz District: Plac Nowy. They thought or hoped for tourist not being interested in this residual space hidden in a labyrinth of degraded street. They couldn't have been more wrong.

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*Society is commonly too cheap. We meet at very short intervals,
not having had time to acquire any new value for each other.
We meet at meals three times a day, and give each other a new
taste of that musty old cheese that we are. We have had to agree
on a certain set of rules, called etiquette and politeness, to make
this frequent meeting tolerable and that we need not come to
open war. We meet at the post office, and at the sociable, and
at the fireside every night; we live thick and are in each other's
way, and stumble over one another, and I think that we thus
lose some respect for one another.*

Henry David Thoreau
Walden

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Falling like a silent paper
Holding on to what may be

Beth Gibbons&Rustin Man
Funny Time of Year / Out of Season

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Vendesi, ma nessuno compra / For sale, no buyers

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He walked on in silence, the solitary sound of his footsteps echoing in his head, as in a deserted street, at dawn. His solitude was so complete, beneath a lovely sky as mellow and serene as a good conscience, amid that busy throng, that he was amazed at his own existence; he must be somebody else's nightmare, and whoever it was would certainly awaken soon.

Jean-Paul Sartre
The Age of Reason

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In thinking about religion and society in 21st century, we should broaden the conversation about faith from doctrinal debates to the larger question of how it might inspire us to strengthen the bonds of belonging that redeem us from our solitude, helping us to construct together a gracious and generous social order.

Jonathan Sacks

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Landscapes

If our nomadic ancestors felt lonely in the middle of an endless landscape, that solitude was rather the one of God, for they were creating the landscape along their paths (c.f. Carreri 2000).

Landscapes of solitude — together with their distant cousins of solitary landscapes — are heartbreaking and picturesque. Forms and processes responsible for their creation are often hidden behind that easy aestheticisation. Some of them, however, offer a lesson.

Sardinia is an archipelago of solitude. An island of an area of 24,090 square kilometres is dwelled by slightly more than one and a half million people, according to 2014 census. Even without considering the fact that most of this population is concentrated in but a couple of larger cities (the capital in particular), with the medium density of 69 pp/sq km, Sardinia is the least dense area in Italy.

The built environment in Sardinia is composed of dismissed houses and factories, of second houses empty for most of the time, of profaned churches, of entirely abandoned cities or the cities having only one, literally one, citizen (Rebeccu, Bonovra SS). The example of Rebeccu reveals the weakness of the statistics: statistically the density of the town is of 50 pp/sq km. And in between those pictures a history of an alternative relation between man and territory is told. A very ancient one.

The earliest traces of human activity on Sardinia discovered so far are dated to the Upper Palaeolithic period. At that time the island was connected with Corsica and distant but a couple of miles from the Tuscan shores Due to its windy and rainy winters and sultry, hot summers, Sardinia has never been the ultimate among

Mediterranean destinations in terms of life easiness, but at least it was positioned outside of the seismicity zone of the African Plate driving into the Eurasian continent, which now happens to be the area of the highest seismic risk in Europe. Traces of this ancient and tumultuous geological history can only be found in the unearthed cross-sections of the Precambrian rocks that jut out of the sea and are often tilted to an angle of merely 90 degrees. These easily workable sediment rocks had made it easier for the Neolithic builders of the fourth and third millennium B.C.E. to erect the first megalithic structures: the dolmens and the so called Giants' tomb (*tombe dei giganti*), as well as the construction of Sardinia's famous underground necropolises, called *domus de janas*. This very same material was used to built the nuraghes of the Bronze Age. The simplest of the *nuraghi* had the form of a single tower, while the largest - like the Su Nuraxi di Barumini, which is placed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site List - were erected and laid out in a manner so complicated that experts on the matter claim impossible to be built without a plan (c.f. Boninu 2006). The models found in the chambers were made rather *a posteriori* than *a priori*, they were (votive?) representations rather than architectural models. And so all the archeologists and historians of architecture interested in the subject still dream of finding one day a vase or a gemstone with a project of a nuraghe engraved.

The level of advancement of the nuragic culture can be seen not only in the artefacts (mostly bronze items) and structures that they left behind. One of the earliest documented successful skull trepanation procedures is the case of Sisaia, a petite (1,5 m tall), slim, limp woman who suffered from migraines, bone cancer, arthritis and quite probably from epilepsy as well, whose skeleton is

put on display in the Archeological Museum of Nuoro. It is unknown whether the thirty year old woman that was buried around the year 1600 B.C.E. was a witch or a princess, however it is known that she managed to survived at least a couple years since the operation.

Nuragic people were unique even in the context of all peculiarities of the Bronze era. They used foreign languages, they were maintaining cultural, political, and economical relations with most of the Mediterranean powers of the time, but they rejected the concept of writing. It required great courage and self-esteem to do so without feeling inferior to first to Mykenian and Cretan Greek, and than to Fenicians who all peregrinated to Sardinian shores in order to purchase some copper, silver, or lead ores, one of the finest in the Mediterranean.

The quarrying and working of stone, as well as thousands of years worth of erosion have gradually revealed the presence of precious materials: first obsidian and than also ores of copper, tin, lead and silver. This wealth was the cornerstone of the Nuragic culture, as well as the cause of its decline. The skill of the builders of the *nuraghi* and the wealth of the island did not escape the eyes of powers rising on the shores of what would later be called *Mare Interum*. It is unknown whether the nuraghes people first sailed away from the shores of Sardinia, or was it their far-away neighbours who first appeared at their gates. Hypotheses raised by scientists on the topic claim that the Sardinians can be connected to the quasi-mythical Sherden tribe, one of the tribes of the so-called Sea-peoples, which caused mayhem and destruction in the region of the Mediterranean Sea halfway through the second millennium B.C.E. Some even identify them with the no less mythical people of Atlantis.

Even though it was possible to find some form of amicable consensus with the Phoenicians in the form of staying slightly away from the shores on which the ancient masters of trading built their ports and storehouses and only further down the road their own settlements, the expansion of the people of Carthage was much more violent. Bloody wars raged throughout the entire VI century B.C.E. It wasn't until the First Punic War that the Carthaginians were finally pushed back.

The wars with Carthage and the extremely quick spread of malaria due to a warm and humid climate sealed the fate of the inhabitants of Sardinia. During the subsequent epochs, with the exception of a period of relative autonomy towards the end of Byzantine patronage, the island, as well as its inhabitants, was constantly switching hands, so to speak. Romans, Vandals, Pisans, Genoans, Aragonians, Catalonians and then finally the House of Savoy, which was awarded Sardinia by the united kingdom of Spain by the treaty of Hague of 1720. And they all considered Sardinia but a source of precious metals and cheap labor. The ores mined on Sardinia filled the demand of most of the steel mills of Italy. Mining companies, founded by foreign investment, mainly that of the French, British and Belgians, did set up schools and hospitals, but in order to train and treat miners rather than for common good. They built railroads, in order to ship ores rather than people. The railroad did not connect cities, but mines and ports, leaving slits in the countryside, in both its natural and cultural facets - taking the shortest possible route. The dolmens, nuraghes and *domus de janas* were left aside, only to fall into ruin ever so quickly.

Sardinia came back into the spotlight during the First World War. The Sassari brigade, composed of the stout,

vengeful Sardinians bred under the harsh traditions of the vendetta proved to be one of the most valiant formations that took part in the frontline battles of the Great War. This period of friendly interest coincided with the period during which great artists plied their trade. Thanks to the poetry of Sebastiano Satta, the paintings of Giuseppe Biasi, the sculptures of Francesco Ciusa and the Noble Literature Prize winning works of Grazia Deledda Sardinia began emerging into the limelight.

During the inter- and post-war periods Sardinia, just like the continental Italy, entered into a period of rapid industrialisation. The historicising buildings of XIX century mines became neighbours to then modern, but now often deserted steel mills and refineries. The most widely mined ores were those of tin (85% of national annual demand) and lead (98% of national annual demand). At the same time, the island saw itself become the site of the largest military bases and testing sites of NATO and the United States Army of the Mediterranean. At the onset of the XXI century, despite the ongoing degradation of the natural environment, Sardinia is still a very popular destination for tourists. The wide, half-wild beaches, the open waters of the Mediterranean Sea that are slightly less polluted than those of the Adriatic, and, perhaps first and foremost - the ever cheaper airline fares - attract millions of tourists.

Ever since Sardinia became popular, the areas near the abandoned storehouses and factories have become the site of empty second houses, only used in the summer months. The island, overly urbanised in light of its declining population, estimated at around 1,66 million people began disappearing under intense profit-oriented housing developments. In the city of Alghero 75% residential buildings remain empty for most of the ear except for the

peak season when the population rises threefold from usual 40,000 to over 120,000. The problem is evident not only in the seaside resorts and the most important urban centres of Cagliari, Sassari, Quartu, Sant ,Elena, Alghero and Olbia, with their negative influence going far beyond the field of aesthetics in the form of the degradation of the countryside or that of function, such as the inability to use the buildings year round as they have no heating, instead being equipped only with air conditioning systems. The areas affected by these developments can be described as having a very low sustainability, which in turn causes an even lower resilience, translating into the vulnerability of its inhabitants.

There are thousands of nuraghes spread on the island — some of them are better preserved then the others, some of them were literally cut of the surrounding landscape during the subsequent fazes of modern industrialisation. Today solitary and isolated, they were once nods in a network of an alternative, non-urban strategy of settlement (c.f. Perra 2015). A culture of sailors, warriors, miners, and artists, nuragic culture turned at certain point into the culture of elite (ibidem). For centuries, they were safe and their future seemed secured; they were consuming their resources only within certain limits (today we would call that a sustainable approach) and appeared to be nearly eternal (today we would call that resilience).

It significant that the annual maintenance cost of all nuragic sites in Sardinia is lower that the one of a single dismissed mine. The first were designed and built in order to consume the site and are now being consumed in revenge. The latter was rooted in sites and built for eternity.

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I have always hated crowds. I like deserts, prisons, and monasteries. I have discovered, too, that there are fewer idiots at 3000 meters above sea level than down below.

Jean Giono
An Italian Journey

*Beyond the town, the only transition between the Strip and the
Mojave Desert is a zone of rusting beer cans. Within the town, the
transition is as ruthlessly sudden. Casinos whose fronts relate
so sensitively to the highway turn they ill-kept backsides toward
the local environment, exposing the residual forms and spaces of
mechanical equipment and service areas.*

*Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour
Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of
Architectural Form*

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Three houses on one plot: the first one is unfinished, but settled;
the second one is partially finished and unsettled; the third
one is unfinished and unsettled. It is a typical Polish over/
under constructed landscape: over constructed (Gajewski, 2014)
because the quantity of structures is superior to needs; under
constructed (Urbanska 2015) for they are hardly ever finished.

Wolne pokoje / Zimmer frei / Free rooms

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In ogni epoca sono esistite miserie altrettanto e forse più gravi di quelle raccontate da Engels e dagli altri scrittoti del primo '800, ed è possibile contrapporre alle loro descrizioni altri scritti più antichi che ripetono quasi letteralmente le stesse cose (…). Difatti la differenza non sta nelle cose descritte, ma nel tono delle descrizioni: triste e rassegnato nell'epoca preindustriale, adesso carico di rivolta e illuminato, nonostante lo squallore del presente, dalla fiducia in un futuro migliore. La povertà - condizione sopportata da secoli senza speranza di ragionevoli alternative - viene ora riconosciuta come „miseria", cioè è vista nella prospettiva moderna di un male che può e deve essere eliminato coi mezzi a disposizione.

Leonardo Benevolo
Le origini dell'urbanistica moderna

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The world moved ahead. Architecture was left behind.

Andrea Branzi
Modernità debole e diffusa

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Der Bürger, dessen Leben sich in Geschäft un Privatleben, dessen
Privatleben sich Repräsentation und Intimität, dessen Intimität
sich in die mürrische Gemeinschaft der Ehe und den bitteren
Trost spaltet, ganz allein ze sein, mit sich und allen zerfallen, ist
virtuell schon der Nazi, der zugleich begeistert ist und schimpft,
oder der heutige Großstädter, der sich Freundschaft nur noch
als social contact, als gesellschaftliche Berührung innerlich
Unberührter vorstellen kann.

Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer
Dialektik der Aufklärung

Al di fuori delle proposte e delle iniziative sperimentali, la periferia delle città cresce nel tardo '800 disciplinata dall'applicazione meccanica dei regolamenti edilizi. Case e strade si allineano senza fine, fin dove arriva la convenienza economica a costruire.

Leonardo Benevolo
Le origini dell'urbanistica moderna

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DEADENED CITY SOLITUDE
/ UOMO E LUOGO /

All the lonely people, where do they all come from,
all the lonely people, where do they all belong?.

John Lennon, Paul McCartney
Eleanor Rigby

Key part of the reasoning presented in this part of the thesis derives from the concept of third landscape by Gilles Clément. The third landscape neither natural nor anthropic is a third form that stands for its own and has its own features and values.

If we look at the evolution of our relationship with space using Clément's logic, we will notice how modalities in general (and in the context of sound in particular) of that relationship pass from primordial: natural / individual (hearing) through social: artificial / collective (listening), to its current third state where natural / individual is gaining an advantage over artificial / collective (overhearing). It is neither good nor bad, it is a third form arisen on the ruins of the old paradigm of the Observer.

Architecture, however, is losing its everyday spectator as people are passing by it indifferently. The ancient pact between individual and space, city, architecture is collapsing. Is it because the split between culture and civilisation took place or is it the individual who falls behind into listlessness?

A new, listless *flâneur* strolls around the spaces of the city, filled with a relentless white noise of audiovisual stimuli, which no longer elicit the extraordinary phenomenon of space (Petzold 1999). Despite the potential that lies in works of architecture, the city spaces that lack specificity, as well as the monofunctional areas of residential developments, only at times broken up by the blocky volume of a supermarket, appear to be impregnable to any sort of everyday catharsis. A hybrid of the modern Acropolis - an open space, which was supposed to be the arena of the interplay between each structure - is no longer a public space *sensu stricte*. The building is no longer the geometric volume from Alberti's treatises, it is also no longer the machine of the Modernists - it has become an immaterial body, a telemathic icon boiled down to the role of a pure message, a flat background for an extended reality; regardless of it all it still remains a vision of a certain existence, of something that is both present and recognisable, which means it is an entity that is a subject of perception (c.f. Purini 2000). What had been the cult and ritual of the Modern period became the everyday boredom and tired custom of the Postmodern one; the Modern spectacular became the Postmodern norm (Welsch 1990). Meanwhile, everyday architecture no longer longs for interaction on the formal, social or cultural plane, rearing a spectator that is incapable of experiencing its grand spectacle.

As Aldo Rossi once said, whether that which constitutes an urban artefact - a building, a street or a block - becomes a true *fatto urbano* or not is up to the experiences and awareness of their spectator (Rossi 1966). The city, according to Rossi, is a *par excellence* human creation, while the place is that which creates and defines a community.

The monadic unit of the information society of the early XXI century is difficult to keep in that place. Thus we arrive at the importance that is being attributed to the element of novelty and surprise, which, similarly to the sensitivity of the spectator, can be built not only with form or through visual stimuli, especially so that the potential spectator tends to more often than not separate themselves from the outside world.

What are the results of that perceiving architecture and the city only in the categories of the visual message rooted in modernist avant-garde? According to Wolfgang Welsch, the reality which becomes an image has in it the potential for anaesthetics. When filled with images, the individual, deprived of any sort of windows that are open to the truth about reality becomes the perfect monad, turning into a „televisionary monolith". He writes that the contact with the once true, concrete reality diminishes and it becomes something inauthentic, colourless, boring and fake (Welsch 1990).

The stigmatisation of entire swathes of a city, the attempts to negate the space reserved for transportation - these are issues that result in the separation from the polyphonic and polyrhythmic beat of a city, a game played with time and space, a certain masking of reality. Modern architecture is supposed to amaze us, or at the very least draw our attention to it. In order to do so, it uses formal emphasis. However, as far as the role of the main stimulator of architecture being its form, the blame for the spectator's flight from the theatre of architecture can be placed on all the senses that are responsible for perceiving it. The individual's attempts to escape the endless onslaught of audiovisual messages into a reality that is individually created (which constitutes a reaction to the virtualisation of

reality by playing by the very rules of the phenomenon) are perhaps the most telling signs of why the crowded scene of the modern city is devoid of a spectator who fully embraces the architectural spectacle.

Just as the XVIII century streets were filled with darkness, the modern light-flooded ones are filled with noise. The former dark alleys resonate with echoes and unforeseen dissonance. The „white noise" in the libraries and offices or the ever present muzak that aims to drown out our thoughts and words as we stroll the halls of shopping galleries - the modern meeting places, with the streets turning into corridors shaped by sound barriers - finally, the people who cut themselves off from the outside world using the headphones of their handheld devices of all shapes and sizes - all of this weakens the strength with which architecture influences us and turns off the lights on the stage on which human lives play themselves out. Certain statistics state that most of the inhabitants of cities possess the technology to separate and isolate themselves - to privatise their micro-space, reducing their contact with the outside of that space to a minimum.

The poverty of the society of consumers, composed of Welschian monads, manifests itself in the lack of a conscious perception and analysis of external stimuli, which means it is harder and harder to cause a feeling of novelty and surprise. Using terminology from the field of literature studies - the pact between the observer and the space is based on the elements of metatext and the incipit. This is why the aggressive ʻmedialityʼ of both spaces and modern architectural forms becomes a matter of great importance in the context of our participation in space.

In the darkness of the prenatal life the very first information on the surroundings that reaches and forms our mind is the aural one. Neurology keeps revealing informations on the multi-sensory mechanisms of perception and yet the mainstream of the theory of architecture doesn't seem to be interested in these findings.

Already in the 1960's in his famous essay *Las Vegas (What?) Las Vegas! (Can't hear you! Too noisy!) Las Vegas!!!* Tom Wolfe pointed out that: ‚Muzak pervades Las Vegas from the time you walk into the airport upon landing to the last time you leave the casinos. It is pipes out to the swimming pool. It is in the drugstores. It is as if there were a communal fear that someone, somewhere in Las Vegas, was going to be left with a totally vacant minute on his hands'. How many of those vacant minutes happen today in architecture?

Some voices, like the one by Adam Rogers for Wired, are optimistic: 'A century, plus or minus, after human beings started putting their minds toward designing cities as a whole, things are getting good. High tech materials, sensor networks, new science, and better data are all letting architects, designers, and planners work smarter and more precisely. Cities are getting more environmentally sound, more fun, and more beautiful. And just in time, because today more human beings live in cities than not.'

Some cities perhaps do. But if we analyse our relation with the space of contemporary cities through the aural / sonorous aspect of that relation - considered both literally and metaphorically - we will discover how weak and distant it is. People and places became merely acquaintances.

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Silence / absence

When people say „silence" they hardly ever refer to real silence. There are very few places on Earth that are perfectly silent: poles and deserts in a windless day, dry caves, see depths and tops of the highest mountains, the outer space. And as soon as a human being appears in one of those places, the silent is gone. We are a walking source of soft, rhythmical noise that proves we are alive.

It means that what they usually intend while referring to silence, is tranquility and quiet. Unless they take it too metaphorically. "Silence is the universal refuge, the sequel to all dull discourses and all foolish acts, a balm to our every chagrin, as welcome after satiety as after disappointment; that background which the painter may not daub, be he master or bungler, and which, however awkward a figure we may have made in the foreground, remains ever our inviolable asylum, where no indignity can assail, no personality can disturb us" wrote Henry David Thoreau in *A Week on the Concord* while living alone in his modest cabin near Walden Pond (Thoreau 1849).

People should have the right for your environment to remain silent — states McCullough (McCullough 2013) for without that silence, we may get fewer chances to speak our minds, to hear ourself think, to find empathy for others, and somehow just be. Mc Cullough recalls Ivan Illich who once cautioned that according to western and eastern traditions alike, silence is necessary for the emergence of persons.

Illich has forgotten to add: individuals.

When we combine together one's right to travel comfortably in a sound bubble of a car with one' right for one's environment to remain silent, the result may be the

one of corridors of acoustic panels. Poland, for instance, has a very restrictive norms regarding the quantity of decibels allowed in residential zones and became a world leader in production an erection of acoustic panels. City centres as well as peripheries, country roads as well as highways are now turned into blinded streams of cars in the middle and lateral sides that are no longer facing each other, that are no longer walls of one — urban or rural — landscape.

The comfort of tranquility and the dull silence of a — permanently or temporarily — abandoned city may have similar properties expressed in decibels, but evoke different types of solitude and cause different levels of vulnerability. Ghost towns and ruins; holiday destinations out of season; peripheries and suburbias deserted during the day and offices deserted during the night / over the weekend are melancholic manifestations of absence. They are waiting for people that still may come back, open the doors and windows and bring some of that rhythmical noise inside.

Mental silence, or mental absence to be exact, has much more in common with isolation and solitariness than with comfort and solitude. It is not only the matter of absence in terms of being more focused on the screen of a smartphone than on the real world, or of isolating oneself with headphones. The worse silence is the one of a city where the citizens didn't left: they are all there, locked in their houses, for there is no reason to go out:

„The worst days are Sundays. I'm always a little bit scared, cities are empty on Sundays, some of them totally desolated. Only at the time of the holy mess they are filled with people. If you're not local and no-one has invited you for Sunday dinner, you don't actually know what to do" (Springer 2015).

Hush / rush: city on the run

„I think one travels more usefully when they travel alone, because they reflect more" wrote Thomas Jefferson in his letter to John Banister Jr. dated June 19, 1787. For one traveling with their eyes and minds open may be, for commuters certainly is not.

Londoners for instance don't really speak on public transport. Most people read while traveling for it is the best way to make the journey go faster and forget that you're trapped on the Tube as — apart from some stations providing wi-fi — there is no service on the Underground. Some of them are listening to music, or sleeping, or - hardly ever - minding their own business. The aim seems to be always the same: to kill time if space is already dead. Those vacant minutes in the non-continuous, intermittent space of the Tube are neither casual nor singular if on October 9, 2015 for instance 4 735 000 people used the network of London underground.

Julio Cortazar used to declare his disdain for reading on the tram or train. Reading on the Tube is rather far from this precious and unique bond that can be created between a reader and a book, if a book is read in a proper way.

To sit down with a book, however, seems less and less what life is like. „To be alone with your thoughts was perhaps never the usual human condition. Whether in a traditional tribal society or amid today's tastes for perpetual messaging, some people don't share so much as generate their thoughts, even their deepest feelings, through constant social connectivity. Solitary reflection may have always been the exception, a chosen path for a few, or for a few chosen hours in a busy life; introspection remains a difficult art. Fortunately, to sit with a book is to

enter a dialogue in any case: unlike feeding among so many short, separate messages at once, it is to take up a longer transaction between reader and writer. It is also enjoyable: books exist not only foe greater depth or nuance, but also for the sake of language itself" (McCullough 2013).

Commuting is a tax-deductible cost in time and space that are put on hold while traveling again and again on the same identical line at the same identical time. It creates new invisible barriers depending on time that is necessary to get from home to work or to school every morning. It's not easy to be productive, creative, open for socialisation, or to take a rest in the turmoil of a morning train. As Edison once said, The best thinking has been done in solitude, the worst has been done in turmoil.

Noise / crowd

Loneliness in a crowd is the widest and perhaps the most common types of solitude that have been created by civilisation, yet it has also accompanied our species for millennia. The ancient metropolises, with their very high population densities, would make their inhabitants suffer from it just as much as from other urban calamities.

In contemporary cities, and in high-density and overpopulated cities in particular, noise is the new silence, said John Cage, shortly before dying, in an interview registered on April 2, 1991. „The sound experience which I prefer to all others, is the experience of silence. And this silence, almost anywhere in the world today, is traffic. If you listen to Beethoven or Mozart, it's always the same, but if you listen to traffic, it's always different".

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Different it may be, but it is also ever louder. The intensity of sound background combined with the intensity of sound marks and signals forces us to isolate ourselves either consciously (headphones) or unconsciously (hearing disabilities). Soundscapes of contemporary cities are so confusing that not only signals, but communicates are now diffused in Poland saying: „Green light, cross the track" or warning: „Red light, red light" (only in Polish, obviously and using the same, moderate tone). Enough to say that once upon a time, when we were not in such a hurry, and the world was a bit quieter, no signals were necessary for it was a good and quite a common habit to help blind or elderly people to cross the street.

„An ambient commons, if there were such a thing, would be quiet enough but seldom silent. In this alone it could change what i means to be here now. Like a quiet evening on the square, it might help recall how the noisy clamour of the morning's market was a means, and not an end in itself" (McCullough).

White noise & muzak / camouflage

Muzak is a term used in the field of sound studies, soundscape and anthropology of sound. R. Murray Schafer, the god father of the acoustic ecology, was first to query on the aesthetic and perceptive autonomy of soundscape and its impact on how we act in space.

Homo sapiens is considered a primate strongly depending on the sense of sight, but the very first sense that starts to receive and interpret information coming form the outside in the darkness of prenatal life. Those noises and murmurs are first stimulus that shape our brain. Later

on we learn how to depend on what we see, but our ears, as opposite to our eyes, keep updating us on the surroundings in the full range of 360 degrees. Those aren't the best ears in the world of mammals, but they were adapted to how we move in space: slowly and horizontally.

Our ears have a safety valve: we cannot close them. At certain point in history, particularly related to invention of devices for sound reproduction (c.f. Sterne 2003), we started to learn how to deafen them, how to cover the natural sounds of life with something artificial. Something better. Something that makes you buy more in a shopping mall, something that makes you believe in magic.

The first thing to be noticed as soon as you enter the European off-set of the magic world imagined by the Walt Disney Company, is the Cinderella Castle. What one notices first, however, are stertorous speakers, diffusing the well known tunes. They are providing the camouflage of the time wasted in the queues, the cost of the ticket, the ticky-tacky construction of decorated sheds. And people, imprinted to feel happy and excited as soon as they hear When You Wish Upon a Star by Jimmy Cricket.

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Grab your coat and get your hat
Leave your worries on the doorstep
Life can be so sweet
On the sunny side of the street

Can't you hear the pitter-pat
And that happy tune is your step
Life can be complete
On the sunny side of the street

I used to walk in the shade with my blues on parade
But I'm not afraid…this rover's crossed over

If I never had a cent
I'd be rich as Rockefeller
Gold dust at my feet
On the sunny side of the street

Louis Armstrong
On the Sunny Side of the Street

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I can be by myself because I'm never lonely; I'm simply alone,
living in my heavily populated solitude, a harum-scarum of
infinity and eternity, and Infinity and Eternity seem to take a
liking to the likes of me.

Bohumil Hrabal
Too Loud a Solitude

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Four billion people on this earth
but my imagination is still the same.
It´s bad with large numbers.
It´s still taken by particularity.
It flits in the dark like a flashlight,
illuminating only random faces
while all the rest go by,
never coming to mind and never really missed.

Wislawa Szymborska
The Great Number

Your inner voice is the voice of divinity. To hear it, we need to be
in solitude, even in crowded places.

A. R. Rahman

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If you want inner peace, find it in solitude, not speed, and if you would find yourself, look to the land from which you came and to which you go.

Stewart L. Udall
The Quiet Crisis And The Next Generation

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The devil has made it his business to monopolise on three elements: noise, hurry, crowds. He will not allow quietness.

Elisabeth Elliot
Shadow of the Almighty: The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot

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I also had a dim idea that if I walked the streets of New York by myself all night something of the city's mystery and magnificence might rub off on me at last. But I gave it up.

Sylvia Plath
The Bell Jar

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When you wish upon a star
Makes no difference who you are
Anything your heart desires
Will come to you.
(…).

Jimmy Cricket
When You Wish Upon a Star

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Who hears music, feels his solitude
Peopled at once.

Robert Browning
The complete poetical works of Browning

I hate all electronic toys: cell phones, e-mail, PalmPilots, handheld Global Positioning System equipment, and the whole raft of gadgets that intrude on solitude.
When I was a kid I used to disappear into the woods all day. Now I can walk in the wilderness without wasting my valuable time. As I hike along I can call anyone in the world, schedule an appointment, take a picture of me standing next to a tree and then send the person a map so he or she can join me there. Solitude has been snuffed out.

David Skibbins
Eight of Swords

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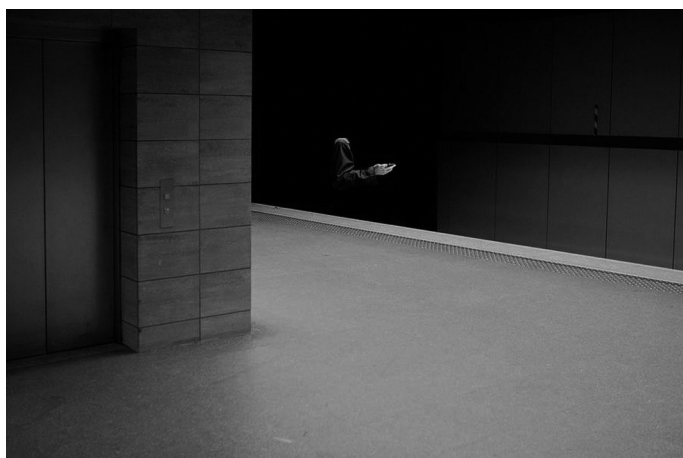
CONCLUSIONS PART I: SPACE TEMPORARILY SUSPENDED

People are strange when you're a stranger,
places look ugly when you're alone,
women seem wicked when you're unwanted,
streets are uneven when you're down.

Jim Morrison
People Are Strange (modified)

Solitude expressed in spatial and architectural terms is the lack, weakening, or malfunction of our relationship with the surroundings:

PRIVACY is a condition of being alone in relation(ship) with time, space, and place;

SOLITUDE is a condition of being alone in a limited relation(ship) with the surroundings; barriers that define those limits may be of secondary or primordial character: may appear or may be reinforced as a consequence of one's introvert reflection, or be an ignition initiating that reflection;

LONELINESS is a condition of very limited interaction with space; what often distinguish solitude and loneliness is the lack of possibility of bonding us with a place, of reconstructing our relationships with the surroundings;

ISOLATION is a condition of a total lack of interaction or a lack of possibility of reconstructing very limited relation with the surroundings.

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These conditions sets up and modifies our perception and understanding of the space that surrounds us.

This relation is escaping the old dichotomy of natural/artificial, social/individual, etc. for the current one has expired and there is no return to the initial one. Therefore, the landscape of our relation with space is a third landscape. For that third landscape being something new, we have to look for new instruments to solve the problem of modern solitude, of reconnecting us with time and space.

The world is changing faster than people evolve. Architecture is one of the most efficient if no the most efficient instrument we have been using to achieve that. It can also be a prosthesis, and artificial limb which will help us to adopt to the world we created.

Cities built for happiness and leisure — the most contemporary concept — reveal their weakness and vulnerability. And they are not delivering on that promise. Sunday morning or crisis, we can find ourselves in a situation that can be described only as: all dressed-up and no-where to go: solitary, frustrated and betrayed by the city we built ourselves.

Open cities of the present are actually full of barriers:

physical: enclosures, distances, inclinations, exposure to adverse social / atmospheric conditions, time that is necessary to get from one space to the other;

functional: no reason for going to / staying in a place, to many reasons for going to / staying in another

semantic: when we're forced to believe that some places are made for us and some aren't.

Barriers of non-physical nature are not necessarily weaker than those physical.

In the contemporary city, the most common solitude is the one of a suspended spaces - spaces we are aware off but have no access to, spaces we are not aware of, for we carry stronger stronger attractors in our pockets, space we waste in terms of quality as well sat terms of time. We should all take to hearts a suggestion by Ralph Waldo Emerson: „Guard well your sparse moments. They are like uncut diamonds. Discard them and their value will never be know. Improve them and they will become the brightest gems in a useful life".

Unfortunately, as Aldous Huxley once said, „In spite of language, in spite of intelligence and intuition and sympathy, one can never really communicate anything to anybody. The essential substance of every thought and feeling remains incommunicable, locked up in the impenetrable strong-room of the individual soul and body. Our life is a sentence of perpetual solitary confinement".

As the example of Mount St. Vincent reveals, it's more the matter of awareness, responsibility, and strategy.

We've accustomed to separate ourselves from the surroundings with headphones or car windows. It gives us illusion of a private, intimate space within a public and open one - without being here and now, and picking nose instead.

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I want to be able to be alone, to find it nourishing
- not just a waiting.

Susan Sontag
Reborn: Journals and Notebooks, 1947-1963

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SOLITUDE ORIENTED DESIGN STRATEGIES
/ CASE STUDIES /

The greatest thing in the world is to know how to live to yourself.

Michel de Montaigne
Essays

„The more we speak of solitude, the clearer it becomes that at the bottom it is not something one can choose to take or leave" — these are the words by Reiner Maria Rilke, an apologist of solitude (perhaps an involuntary one). „We are lonely. One can deceive oneself about it and act as if it were not so. That is all. But it is so much better to see that we are so, indeed even to presuppose it. It will make us dizzy, of course; because all the focal points on which our eyes were used to resting are taken away from us, there is nothing near us anymore, and everything distant is infinitely distant (…). And you should not let yourself be confused in your solitude by the fact that there is something in you that wants to move out of it" (from Letters to a Young Poet).

Modern, progressive architecture tried to address the issue of industrial and post-industrial solitude in a multitude of ways, from designing common and recreational spaces (the spaces to spend our free time in), to allotment gardens. In those times, participation within a space and the involvement in shaping reality

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(metaphorically - through improving the quality of a space or literally - in the case of allotment gardens) was the norm.

Modern architects believed in the possibility of fighting against the Zeitgeist defined by the premonition of an inevitable disaster, upcoming fall and ultimate apocalypse. It is a spirit of modernity that is a conscious, logical process of civilisation occurring in a fashion shaped in the times of the Enlightenment, a modernity in opposition to which our times are often defined. These two conditions: the modern and the contemporary, share one key experience: the one of a crisis. What distinguishes modernity is that it attempts to search for a remedy - in this case a remedy that is architectural in nature - to face problems of its time. Should we ever take on such a stance, we would have to face solitude and the feeling of incompleteness for „Solitude is such a potential thing. We hear voices in solitude, we never hear in the hurry and turmoil of life; we receive counsels and comforts, we get under no other condition" (Amelia E. Barr).

As presented above, solitude not only have different characters, natures, and typologies, it is also a dynamic, individual condition. Two basic categories, however, can be considered poles apart and leaving but fluid margins in between: ultimate and avery day solitude. The first one is devastating, but can turn into the source of power to overcome a trauma, the latter seems but a sister of boredom, but in the long term perspective can cause physical and psychical pain.

It is very difficult to provide a taxonomy for solitude oriented design strategies for many of them are not defined so. It seems that the key difference in case of spaces of everyday solitude lies in the quality of our relation with a place (post-spaces, non-spaces, pro-spaces), while in

the case of ultimate solitude the critical factor is the one of time (spaces embodying an experience that has already happened, is happening, or will happen in the future).

Usually, for solitude seems to be still an underestimated issue, a chance for spaces for everyday solitude lies in residual spaces, secondary landscapes, spaces in transition: all those temporarily suspended spaces of little interest for developers and stakeholders, where solitude is embodied.

When the French anthropologists Marc Augé defined the concept of the non-place, he thought of the shopping malls, the airports, hotels and infrastructure. The crowd that fills these spaces is a secondary matter. These buildings are also a sort of a scene on which we spend more and more time, but do they invite us to partake in their spectacle? A work of architecture in the space of the modern city is not only a relation between the whole and one of its parts, an idea, a form of context or a hierarchy of the direct relations and the establishment of compositional relations on the urban scale. It is also a pact between the individual and the space, the city and its architecture:

„Find meaning. Distinguish melancholy from sadness. Go out for a walk. It doesn't have to be a romantic walk in the park, spring at its most spectacular moment, flowers and smells and outstanding poetical imagery smoothly transferring you into another world. It doesn't have to be a walk during which you'll have multiple life epiphanies and discover meanings no other brain ever managed to encounter. Do not be afraid of spending quality time by yourself. Find meaning or don't find meaning but ‚steal' some time and give it freely and exclusively to your own self. Opt for privacy and solitude. That doesn't make you antisocial or cause you to reject the rest of the world. But you need to breathe. And you need to be" (Camus, Notebooks 1951-1959).

EVERYDAY SOLITUDE

Solitude appeared to me as the only fit state of man.

Walter Benjamin

True happiness is impossible without solitude. The fallen angel probably betrayed God because he longed for solitude, which angels do not know.

Anton Chekhov

Every moment of life wants to tell us something, but we do not want to hear what it has to say: when we are alone and quiet we are afraid that something will be whispered into our ear and hence we despise quiet and drug ourselves with sociability.

Friedrich Nietzsche
Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations

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There is only one solitude, and it is vast, heavy, difficult to bear, and almost everyone has hours when he would gladly exchange it for any kind of sociability, however trivial or cheap, for the tiniest outward agreement with the first person who comes along....

Rainer Maria Rilke
Letters to a Young Poet

Post-spaces

The New York High Line, recently known as the High Line Park, is a 2,33 km long disused New York Central Railroad spur in Chelsea, Manhattan. In 1999, the Friends of the High Lined, a nonprofit organisation founded residents of the neighbourhoods the line passed through, was formed in order to preserve it as an open urban space. Repurposing of the railway into an urban park began in 2006 and the final, third phase was completed in 2014.

You are never alone on the High Line for the park gets nearly 5 million visitors annually. The reception was more than enthusiastic, however some critical voices arisen. Ariel Levy from New Yorker complained that „new Chelsea that is emerging on on weekends as visitors flood the elevated park… [as] touristy, overpriced, and shiny" (August 3, 2011). Some consider High Line to be the catalyst for gentrifying neighbourhoods (Rahm Emanuel, Mayor of Chicago), some see it in opposite light, as impact for rapid and irreversible gentrification (David Harvey).

The success of the the High Line has encourages the leaders of other cities to renovate some railroad infrastructure into park lands. Regardless their qualities

and localisation, railroads have the intrinsic advantage of being a part of a network (in case of late 19th century and early 20th century rail lines: a central part of a network): they are continuous, they lead from one point to the other passing by the countless number of different points of interest. To give them new quality, or even simply not to spoil the third landscape already grown, is a recipe for success. It is not exactly the case of post-soviet cities.

Soviet cities lack public spaces that could accommodate social life for social life was of no concern of their constructors. In the city of Nowa Huta built nearby Krakow in 1950 (c.f. chapter Applied research) there were no shops or markets, for that city was a city for workers of one steelworks. They would have lunch at the canteen and so would their children. The main square — for there is a square in Nowa Huta — has never had a really public nature. The central square within a socialist city was named either Defilade Square, Victory Square, but never Everyday Life Square, says Piotr Gajewski: „The city centre [of Nowa Huta] has a beautiful baroque layout, but its ground floors are dead. The centre of the Central Square was supposed to be filled with flowers, but there was no one to care for them. It turned out to be far easier and cheaper to pour concrete over its surface and place a monument of the Leader in its centre. This is a tradition typical of this part of Europe – the statue of a leader stands in the middle of a bulging square as if on a hilltop, and people just scuttle along its walls. The socialist square, just like the socialist city, isn't meant for people. It is a square intended for marches and ceremonies dedicated to the monument of the Leader" (Gajewski 2014).

Gajewski proposes a taxonomy of socialist cities dividing them into three categories: a city of socialist realism — a city that is national in form and socialist in concern, where

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local forms and models are turned into servants of ideology and utopia; a degraded city — an existing (usually historical) city, taken over by socialist rule and then shaped according to its needs; and the city of blocks — a city designed and constructed under the socialist regime, which perverts both idealistic concepts of the Modern Movement and very idea on which cities are based (ibidem). He tried to intervene in all of there three types in order to bring social life back to its open spaces — open, but not public.

While redesigning the main square of Nowa Huta, Gajewski found necessary that what was elevated to emphasise the statue of Lenin, should now be concave, a bowl for human activity. Once succeeded, he discovered that the inhabitants of the adjacent buildings began complaining that the square – once a quiet place, it became noisy. The square, once mute like the figure in its centre, became full of people, who turned out to be… noisy. „The goal of bringing this square back to social life was achieved, but we have done so too late. The local inhabitants had already gotten used to the socialist model".

In the case of Karmelicka and Zwierzyniecka streets representing the degraded historical city, the only instrument available was the reconstruction of the horizontal surface: soon after 1990 the only part of the street that wasn't private was the street itself, to make it meaningful and continuous instead of sloppy and discontinuous. The fragment of Karmelicka street near the Planty has proven to be a successful experiment in the removal of curbs, the fears regarding the resultant chaos and car crashes were proven to be unfounded. But the rents rose by 20% over the course of 3-4 months after the work had been finished. At the moment, there are nearly 15 banks on Zwierzyniecka street. But the banks will eventually

move to the internet or go out of business, while the lever effect came into nation in the area: a public investment in sidewalks and lights was followed by private ones and the standard of private estates is constantly rising.

The third type, the city of blocks, seems to be the most difficult one to improve. Firstly, it has been first domesticated, than smoothed with trees which grew high over the decades, and finally taken over by cars, now occupying every bit of flat and accessible horizontal surface. Secondly, as mentioned above, there is a lot of open space in a city of blocks, but that space cannot be considered public. It is just unoccupied by buildings, it is faced by their fronts and backs at the same time for they stand in rows an columns. A lawn, especially the one occupied by cars, is not a public space. In a city of blocks designed by Tomasz Mankowski as a students' town in the 1960's, Gajewski was trying to return to the original concept the author termed agora: a walkway which would bind the entire town together. Time will show if he succeeds.

Non-spaces

Architecture — the game between convergent lines, rhythm, mimicry and optical illusions, colours, textures, smells and sounds, planes and volumes, light and shadow - plays incessantly on our emotions. It is architecture's task to render vivid to us who we might ideally be — admits gloomily Alain de Botton in his essay Architecture of Happiness. — Taking architecture seriously therefore makes some singular and strenuous demands upon us... It means conceding that we are inconveniently vulnerable to the colour of our wallpaper and that an unfortunate bedspread

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may derail our sense of purpose (de Botton 2006). This vulnerability, described by the silver tongued author of bestsellers on all topics, is a state quite new and typical of the citizen of our modern world, so used to the comfort zone.

As mentioned before, life in and between buildings was short and miserable and taking into consideration the general comfort and happiness of people was the least of architectural concerns. Actually, the contrary was the case.

The ill comforts of church stalls and refectory benches had their practical implications: it was not appropriate for someone to fall asleep in church, while the dining hall was not a place for wasting the precious time of day more than necessary. At the same time, these areas had carefully calculated proportions and opulent decorations, so that the eyes could be soothed while the bottom ached.

The tradition of uncomfortable seats that are to keep us awake has survived in the form of seats at schools or on train stations. However, the quality of the surroundings has shed gradually over time. It is no wonder, then, that having sat in non-places for years (a classroom fulfils all of the criteria to be labeled as such), we have become immune to the beauty of architecture. We are now trying to reverse this process with the means of architectural education for children, public participation programs, etc.. While these ventures are valuable in and of themselves, the true solution to the problem is, so to speak, bottom-up oriented. A good example of this is the case of the Roma-Fiumicino Airport.

FCO, with its nearly 39 million passengers in the year 2014, is the largest Italian airport, the sixth largest in Europe. It is also crowded, oppressive and just generally seems like a result of first class ineptitude, a polycentric one at that. The bars and restaurants equipped with normal

chairs are grouped on the top floor, which is connected with the main terminal by a stairwell acting like a bottleneck, while the bars and restaurants located on the lower floor mostly do not offer seats. The reason for this is perhaps the extremely quick pace at which the numbers of the entry gates are called, probably the quickest in all of Europe. The end result is that a couple of hours at the FCO can easily derail – at least temporarily – our sense of purpose and successfully strip anyone of any sympathy towards modern architecture.

The same interior and the same asphalt and concrete landscape of the airstrip become almost unrecognisable near gate B4 where old, decrepit couches akin to those of the classic LC4 type, designed by Le Corbusier are stocked. As soon as one manages to secure a place, the thankful body sends a signal to the brain - it's fine, rest now, look around, breath in, listen. The grey of the ceramic tiles, pillars and ceilings suddenly start to take on distinct shades, the traces of children's noses and fingers on the glazing become visible, the conversations of people nearby emerge from the white noise, as do shapes, colours, smells and sounds of architecture, that a moment ago, had, and made, no sense. Again we find ourselves embodied in time and place instead of giving into the oblivion of waiting.

A year later the lounge chairs were gone, but the B4 gate was offering another surprise: a black grand piano with a piano chair and some posh white pufs. There was a label on it saying „Play me". It wasn't written „Play me only if you can and you are not afraid of what all these people will think about you", but either people were recalling words by C.S. Lewis from Alices Adventures in Wonderland and saying to themselves: „Playing the piano marked 'Play me' may disagree with me sooner or later" or — which may be more

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probable — they were afraid of being subjected to some experiment or hidden camera, only few decided to play that day in 4 hours.

Webbing types enclosing the place wasn't very helpful.

And every performance was changing that space into something completely different, regardless the quality of the performances, though some were exceptional.

The key element in this strategy is the common nature of the experience: a piano concert in the airport, watching the Roland Garros finals in front of the Hôtel de Ville in Paris (the only case when the colour of the pavement actually does matter) like in the good old days when watching TV was an event uniting entire block.

Pro-spaces

The best example of pro-spaces in terms of both form and relationship, is an allotment garden. In 18th century green urban areas were still available only for aristocracy and nobility. It changes in the mid 19th century, but the new group of users is limited to the middle class, for workers haven't got time to enjoy newly founded urban gardens.

It changes in the period of the Modern Movement with the concept of allotments. The 1939 Polish publication Ogrody i osiedla dzialkowe stated that „The aim is to provide for each worker living in the block of flats, an allotment with an arbour, at a reasonable distance".

Some of those allotments are still existing in the central areas of rapidly developing cities: a privilege of few in front of the eyes of many.

There isn't enough space to provide allotments for everyone. In order to bond people with trees growing in public spaces and make them in a way responsible for them, Melbourne authorities assigned each tree… an e-mail. Isn't it sad, however, that instead of sitting under a tree we write it a letter waiting for a tree to reply…?

How to turn a non-place into a place? Sometimes it is enough to turn a parking lot into parking let; to let people change spaces into places according their own needs and built new urban landscape even temporarily for, according to Ingold, landscape must be known to people who dwell it in order to be called a landscape (Ingold 2011). Pro-spaces, however, doesn't have to be green spaces. When space is laking, the amount of space available must be utilised at 100%. It happened once in Venice where private gardens were placed on the terraces of palazzi (for soil is not a very common surface in Venice). It happened again in New York, but without bothering with plants.

Roof, or terrace, or balcony inspects are quite popular among organic-oriented New Yorkers. But even people not obsessed with cultivating their own tomatoes share the need of a pro-space where to socialise or where to appreciate solitude (for resisting the social pressure now put even on one's leisure time, requires a tougher upbringing and a more obstinate wilfulness about going one's own way, than ever before, as Robert Graves noticed). Now they are all divided into private cells „from which to watch the stars".
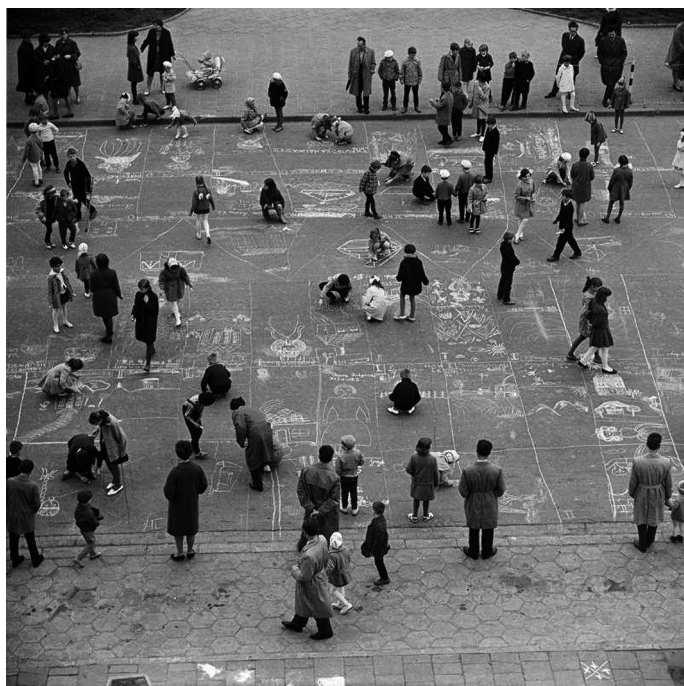
The solitary speaks. "One receives as a reward for much ennui, ill-humour and boredom, such as a solitude without friends, books, duties or passions must entail, one harvests those quarters of an hour of the deepest immersion in oneself and

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nature. He who completely entrenches himself against boredom also entrenches himself against himself: he will never get to drink the most potent refreshing draught from the deepest well of his own being.

Friedrich Nietzsche
Human, All Too Human

We need society, and we need solitude also, as we need summer and winter, day and night, exercise and rest.

Philip Gilbert Hamerton

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I must stay alone and know that I am alone to contemplate and feel nature in full; I have to surrender myself to what encircles me, I have to merge with my clouds and rocks in order to be what I am. Solitude is indispensable for my dialogue with nature.

Caspar David Friedrich

I went up on the hill and walked about until twilight had deepened into an autumn night with a benediction of starry quietude over it. I was alone but not lonely. I was a queen in halls of fancy.

Lucy Maud Montgomery
Emily's Quest

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Solitude is independence.

Hermann Hesse
Steppenwolf

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Solitude, though it may be silent as light, is like light, the mightiest of agencies; for solitude is essential to man. All men come into this world alone and leave it alone.

Thomas de Quincey

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What's a rainy day
without some delicious
coffee-flavoured loneliness?

Sanober Khan
Turquoise Silence

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ULTIMATE SOLITUDE

The problem is that we are and we are about not to.

Roman Opalka

She was waiting, but she didn't know for what. She was aware only of her solitude, and of the penetrating cold, and of a greater weight in the region of her heart.

Albert Camus

Solitude takes on a special meaning in the context of the „true" problems that we face. According to a UN report on the year 2014, over a billion people worldwide live in a state of absolute poverty, with two billion inhabiting slums or in conditions that offer no access to basic amenities. Around a half of all mankind is affected by so-called multidimensional poverty, while a section of the other half of the lucky ones who can spend more than five dollars a day are plagued by wars and natural disasters. They do not care about the colour of their wallpaper or that of the bedspread. Furthermore - more than half of the population of the Earth really does not care about architecture. The only thing they wish from it is a roof that doesn't fall.

Residents of temporary camps for victims of natural disasters, the numbers of which go into the thousands and tens of thousands due to the rise of population density; refugee camps, the slowly dawning overpopulation, etc. are too often often but a statistical point. How we can count of them feeling responsible for the place they reside in if the space has nearly nothing to offer to ease their suffering.

Post-reality

Urban processes, or more specific the way they are pursued, are often co-responsible for the dramatic results of natural disasters and share the responsibility for the scale of non-natural crisis.„Landscape, cultural, environmental, or seismic characteristics of a territory are often neglected in the name of current demands or short-term profits, which most often effects housing, and in the name of form and architectural and/or political vision, which is often the case with great investments. Sometimes nature is generous and kind to us - the ground stabilises, water finds a vent, and human deficiency has no consequence. However, at other times what is at first perceived as man's triumph over nature turns into spectacular defeat" (Rizzi, Porebska 2014).

Sometimes the life as we knew it comes to an and without strategies to be applied a posteriori. Sometimes it is the strategy — urban, architectural, economical, political — to be blamed for the need of abandoning a place.

Some post-places will remain abandoned for decades if not centuries, like Chernobyl, however presence of nature gaining it slowly back was noticed recently. Some of them, like New Orlean or Haiti, are still on the crossroads of recovery.

Non-reality

The solitude of non-reality it is the solitude of transition, uncertainty, constant change, and stagnation. It is the reality of homo sovieticus as described by Zinovyev (1982) and Aleksijewicz (2014), of migrants crossing the continent today, and those who reach places like Zaatari refugee camp: no longer a hell, not yet a city.

Opened in July, 2012 in Jordan, it was estimated for 83,000 refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war. At its maximum density reached in April, 2013 (193,462 people on approximately 5 square kilometres, which made Zaatari the third largest city in Jordan), the camp became a scene of acts of violence. Soon after it was labelled a prison or a detainment camp for the first reaction was the one of increasing control and surveillance. It lasted until a new executive, Kilian Kleinschmidt arrived and brought it slowly back to normal tracks simply by admitting that a human being is not just a factor to be included in a spreadsheet for units of water & food, blankets, soap, etc. to be provided and that saving people is something more than preventing them from dying

If Kleinschmidt managed to turn the Zaatari refugee camp often referred to as Hell into something that can soon become a city simply by assuming that people are more than factors in an excel calculation corresponding to certain amount of water, food, blankets, baskets, etc. to be provided - something as obvious as an old riddle once you know the answer - perhaps admitting that you need more than a mere shelter to allow people to survive a disaster will allow to minimise post-disaster casualties (see Diver s City survey on old women suffering in mid-term evacuation camps).

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In the history of urban planning there are examples of camps turned successfully into cities. The scale of Za'atari is different than the one of cast rum romanum, however, it is not the matter of a grid but of how you use it.

Pre-reality

Sometimes, and this is probably the most difficult way to confront it, the ultimate solitude is something that is about to happen. This is the case of Kochi prefecture, Japan, preparing for the upcoming Nankai earthquake that may strike any moment now.

Nankai, translated literally from Japanese means "Southern Sea", but to the people living on the Honsiu and Sikoku islands it translates to danger: the Nankai Trough is the surface expression of the subduction zone between the Philippine Sea and Amur plates. It causes great earthquakes called Nankai, Tonankai, or Tokai depending on the position of the epicentre along the fault.

There were a dozen of great Nankai megathrust earthquakes (magnitude superior to 8 degrees in the Richter Scale) in the last 13 centuries. Each gave rise to a large tsunami that hit the coastal areas soon after the earthquake. The shortest interval lasted 90 years, the longest 200 years, the average time between earthquakes has been a100 to 150 years. The last 1854 Tokai (in the northern area of the fault) measuring 8,9 destroyed 10,000 buildings and killed 2,000 people. Tonankai (with the epicentre in the central part) occurred precisely 90 years later. It destroyed 30,000 buildings and killed over 1,000 people. Two years later, in 1946, the Nankai (in the southern part) followed. It destroyed almost 40,000

buildings and killed almost 1,000 people. These last two were measuring respectively 8,4 and 8 on the Richter Scale and yet were able to give rise to a tsunami that grew 6 meters in hight (c.f Rizzi, Porebska 2014).

The next Nankai earthquake can happen any moment now. Since the last two were relatively weak and there is a lot of energy in the trough to be released, it is expected to achieve the magnitude of up to 8,9 on the Richter Scale. Most land areas will experience strong tremors of up to 7 degrees that will continue for 100 seconds. This means that the next Nankai be comparable in magnitude to the 2011 Honsiu earthquake responsible for Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster and 40,000 deaths. When it hits Nankai will destroy 153,000 buildings, injure 36,000 and kill 42,000 people (ibidem).

The 2004 the second study for Kochi presumes that 15% of built environment of the prefecture will be destroyed and 2,5% of the population will be injured. In such a dense area that percentage is equal to 150,00 buildings and 20,000 injured including 10,000 dead [7]. How is it possible to act with such a perspective? The key element is education. Its goal is not only to introduce procedures, but to increase responsibility and awareness of the risk. Citizens and communities are not subject to imposed procedures, but become subjects and co-authors of those procedures. Positive examples such actions are maps of small units like villages and districts, created with the support of experts in various disciplines, where every space, every place, and every building is analysed in the context of various risks. Hazard points are marked on the map along with shelters, depressions, narrow streets, and wooden constructions, as well as concrete beams and safe public areas. Each new building, especially public buildings, has be designed and

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built with a dual purpose in minds. It has to play its role not only in everyday life, but also in the case of an emergency (ibidem).

In a situation like this the line between the subsequent categories is particularly thin. The reports are known (c.f. lectures by Satoshi Otsuki) of people refusing help and company for isolation seemed to the the only way to survive the trauma. On the other hand the lack of privacy and spaces providing a minimum of social life in mid-term evacuation centres after the last great Tohoku earthquake and tsunami caused death and casualties among older women. Deprived of comfort in using sanitary facilities, without any reason to move from they were seated, they soon got ill and some of them died. Compared with the total number of victims, those casualties did not merit yellow strips and red headlines. They had happened in silence and solitariness of every possible scale. And could have been avoided.

I can tell you that solitude
Is not all exaltation, inner space
Where the soul breaths and work can be done.
Solitude exposes the nerve,
Raises up ghosts.
The past, never at rest, flows through it.

May Sarton
Selected Poems

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Wherever you go in the next
catastrophé
Be it sickroom, or prison,
or cemet'ry
Do not fear that your stay will be
solit'ry
Countless souls share your fate,
you'll have company!

Roman Payne
The Basement Trains

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Sometimes isolation can be shared.

Ken Grimwood
Replay

But your solitude will be a support and a home for you, even in the midst of very unfamiliar circumstances, and from it you will find all your paths.

Reiner Maria Rilke
Letters to a Young Poet

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CONCLUSIONS PART II
TOWARDS APPLIED
RESEARCH

She had no resources for solitude.

Jane Austen
Persuasion

As shown above, a dynamic coexistence of different types of solitude is possible in public spaces. And those dynamic are of circular kind: privacy can turn into solitude, solitude into solitariness, solitariness into isolation, but again some soft forms of isolation are necessary to obtain privacy. What differs are the opportunities expressed by the direction of those dynamics and the quality of experience.

Some advantages of solitude oriented approach can be calculated in terms of costs of maintenance and surveillance, health care, protection of cultural heritage, etc. A problem of security on one of the crossroads where the presence of a police patrol was necessary 24/7 was resolved with a simple pavilion opened 24/7. Once turned back to people, the space started to bring profits instead of generating costs. And space is ever more precious resource, limited and irreplaceable. People but more often have to pay for access high quality spaces and at the same time millions of acres are wasted every day.

We are instinctively bonded with space. Our relation with the environment — whether natural or built — is a sort of

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spatial biofilia (c.f. Wilson 1984): we don't have to own a place, but we need to domesticate one, to know that there is a place for us. To meet this existential demand, we should put some effort in reconstructing that reciprocal relation that bonded people, space, and architecture. It may be the key not only to our happiness, comfort, and leisure but to be or not to be.

In an universum created by Dmitry Glukhovsky, many authors from all over the world try to re-invent their cities in a post-apocalyptic circumstances. Sometimes it is pure fantasy, but often it is proceeded by an attentive lecture of the city and its roots: this is a post-nuclear world and all what is left of the mankind is living underground without knowing anything about other isolated groups of survivors (an in the constant search of such). A scientific interest in the series expires with the very question of what contemporary cities can offer in the case of the ultimate trauma. If we look at the present cities of Krakow and Warsaw, with hectares of asphalt and concrete infrastructures, with surveilled enclosed surveilled condominiums and single family houses sprawled on thousands of acres — each with two parking lots but lacking a regular garden that can be turned into cultivated piece of land or an emergency water supply — it becomes evident that a Warsaw uprising, if had had to happen now, wouldn't have lasted a day. And one of the reason of this vulnerability is the solitariness of people and places.

The vulnerability of a given area is the effect of the state of its infrastructure, the type of threat and the population that is exposed to risk. One of the strategies used to increase the resilience of an area is to design dual public spaces. The duality of these spaces is based on their capacity to be fully operational both in everyday life and in times

of danger. And through duality and universality of places, resilience can rise.

When John Lubbock wrote a hundred years ago that „The whole value of solitude depends upon oneself; it may be a sanctuary or a prison, a haven of repose or a place of punishment, a heaven or a hell, as we ourselves make it" (Lubbock 1909), the cities were different. Today the value of solitude depends upon space, too.

People do not change because they are told to do so. People change because space change their habits. Soft and active facades, accessibility, and flexibility of spaces for happiness, boredom and leisure of the contemporary Western cities — anything that draws our attention, generates interactions, gestures, movement, directions and views, invites us to participate in space, to open up to experience architecture — can be turned into instruments for learning one's territory and increasing resilience.

In a culture in which interpersonal relationships are generally considered to provide the answer to every form of distress, it is sometimes difficult to persuade well-meaning helpers that solitude can be as therapeutic as emotional support.

Anthony Storr,
Solitude: A Return to the Self

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APPLIED RESEARCH: DISTRICT II, KRAKÓW

Zu sagen, dass Du mich verlassen hast, wäre sehr ungerecht,
aber dass ich verlassen war, und zeitweise schrecklich, ist wahr.

Franz Kafka: Die Tagebücher III | 25.01.1922

Grzegórzki (pronounced (IPA): g ʒ ɛ g ũ ʃ k i), which is currently the second district of Krakow, is located east of the original border of the Medieval historical city center. Directly to its northeast is the Rakowicki Cemetery, the curve of the Vistula river forms its border to the south, while to its east are the constantly shrinking green and undeveloped areas that stretch between Krakow proper and Nowa Huta. Grzegórzki is crisscrossed by three railway lines: line 91, the oldest of the three, was established in 1856. It connects the Main Train Station with the border crossing in Medyka (Ukraine). The second one was established and electrified slightly later in 1899, while the third - line 100 - is no longer active. There is also a fourth line – the so-called lesser bypass, built by the occupying Nazi Germans in 1940 so that the military trains leaving for the eastern front could go around the main train station.

The Second District is composed of many smaller and older administrative units: Wesola, the proper historical part of Grzegórzki, Dabie, Olsza and Rakowice. They are each very distinct in their urban layout and the morphology

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of their built environment. Furthermore, they are separated from each other by transport arteries, railway embankments and the lower section of the Pradnik and Bialucha rivers. [Footnote: Krakow's rivers play the role of barriers, with the city turning its back against them. This particular quality, which was widely remarked upon by experts, became the topic of an artistic work by Cecylia Malik called "6 Rzek"(6 Rivers – trans. note) – a voyage full of discovery along all of Krakow's rivers in a handcrafted boat, all the way to the city's limits on the Vistula. The fact that the river Vistula flows through Krakow is a well known fact. However, the other rivers are practically unknown to the larger population. They can be hardly seen from the city's perspective - not that anybody has any interest in them anyway – they do not aid in the milling of grain, they are not sources of drinking water or food. They are, however, important ecological pathways, small scale environmental preserves and habitats of the city's animals, in addition to being illegal waste disposal areas – as in: www.cecyliamalik.pl].

The district of Grzegórzki has a decidedly peripheral character despite its central location on the map of the city. Truth be told, it is a quality it shares with most of Krakow's districts. The city itself is the second largest in the country in terms of area and number of inhabitants, taking up 327 square kilometers of space within its city limits. However, only a tenth of that area (including the 1,5 square kilometers and a buffer zone that was introduced onto the UNESCO World Heritage Site List in 1978) meets the necessary requirements of the definition of a city. The rest is composed of a never ending sea of peripheries – balancing between structure and chaos, order and its decline, as well as areas that were developed in a manner

which shows their inferiority and incompleteness in relation to the main, overarching entity of the City. The term "to go to the City" is still commonly used in the language of Krakow's inhabitants, with the "City" itself being confined to its oldest part from among the three Medieval original locations. To the staunchest of the Krakusy (a Polish term describing persons from Krakow), a trip to Kazimierz or Kleparz is a trip "outside the City", the territory of which is demarcated by the green belt of the Planty.

The dense, multifunctional built environment of the historical city center of Krakow, composed of enclosed blocks of historical tenement houses with its interior courtyards, gardens and the spaces of its squares and streets has only managed to spill over into the western part of Grzegórzki – the rest of the district leaves an impression of being quite chaotic. The two sides of any of its streets are more often than not entirely different in terms of their urban morphology – the only difference being the interior streets of housing developments, which are in turn fundamentally homogenous. Beginning from the line of the Aleja Powstania Warszawskiego, which is the true border of the XIX century part of the city, one can observe a lack of navigation points that could be tied to particular streets or woonerfs, which makes it very difficult for non-inhabitants to find their way around the district. From Monday to Friday, the question "excuse me, how can I get to…" can be heard day in and day out, almost every five minutes. Giving a straight answer to such a question is often a very difficult task, bordering on the impossible: the other side of the street in Grzegórzki can be a couple of minutes or entire days of walking distance away, one needs to often go back in order to move forward, just like on Venturi and Brown's

highway from *Learning From Las Vegas* (Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour 1972).

When looking at Grzegórzki, one can get the impression that the district is devoid of anything worthy of preservation and has "nothing to lose", just like in the case of the district right across the river, which bears the mark of the first attempts at carving out a residential and administrative quarter from a postindustrial landscape – something which can be seen as a small justification of all the possible mistakes of XX century urban planning that the city authorities have made here despite the onset of the new millennium. Reality, as always, is a tad more complex than it seems.

The history of the area

We do not know the age of the traces of settlement that were erased by Medieval structures. We do know, however, that the area had been the site of one of the earliest traces of nomadic settlement dated to the period of the Wolstonian Stage (240-120 thousand years BCE).

Krakow lies aside the pedestrian amber trail that lead from Kotlina Klodzka to the Baltic through Silesia, Greater Poland and Kujawy. Over time, however, travellers from the west started to appreciate the benefits of a sailable Vistula river, the waters of which - wider and calmer downstream in relation to Krakow – which cut through the inhospitable and less civilised lands of the East. Krakow found itself at the intersection of a waterway and various trade routes connecting the Moravian Gate and the Krakow Gate with the Baltic Ports and the Black Sea with Leipzig, that go further into Germany. Due to its natural defensive qualities

it became the site of a permanent, fortified, proto-feudal settlement at Wawel Hill – a rocky hill on the bank of the Vistula river, towering over the forests and marshes crisscrossed by dozens of smaller rivers. The future city would first develop along the north-south axis in the form of a knightly settlement and an adjacent pre-founding settlement, finally going through the stages of its three major foundations: Cracovia (1257), Kazimierz (1335) and Clepardia, also called Florence (1366).

The earliest written mention of Krakow's eastern suburbs comes from the year 1388/89, when a note was made about the city purchasing a village with a mill and a church devoted to St. Michael located near the road to Lublin right outside the city walls. Further east, the somewhat swampy areas of the Pradnik river valley (this particular section of the Pradnik river is called the Bialucha) were covered by oak forests, sold by the city at the turn of the XVII century and subsequently cut down. In their stead, along the aforementioned road to Lublin, which connected the city with the abbey of the Cistercian Order in Mogila (established in 1222), as well as with Sandomierz, Lublin and Rus', a flour mill and a sawmill had been built, along with the villages of Grzegórzki and Dabie, which were later sold to wealthy burghers.

During the periods of the Baroque and Classicisim, when the most important European cities were rebuilding their centers and boldly establishing new compositional axes, Krakow was mired in a long-standing crisis. The beginning of the end of its greatness was the transferring of the seat of the royal court from the city to Warsaw (1596-1609) due to political reasons (the King Sigismund III of the House of Vasa saw the capital of Mazowsze as a place closer to his interests), but under an architectural pretext

(the fire that started at the Wawel Castle erupted due to an alchemical experiment gone awry). Perhaps the fate of the city, including that of its eastern suburbs, would have been different were it not for the fate of the Polish state as a whole.

When the Deluge came to the city gates, its silhouette was still adorned with the towers of nearly seventy churches and two city halls (the city hall of Clepardia was rather modest), while the treasury of the Wawel castle bristled with the golden shine of the crown jewels. The city was taken and sacked twice during the period and has not returned to its former glory ever since. It was raided in 1609 by the Polish levy preparing itself for the Polish-Muscovite War (Dabie) and once again in 1656-1657 during the Deluge (Wesola), only to endure centuries of stagnation.

When the year 1795 brought with it the third partition of Poland, which resulted in Poland disappearing from the world map for 123 years, Krakow came under the rule of the Habsburg Empire - 23 years earlier they gained enough territory through the second partition that their borders overlapped with a section of the Vistula river. One of the first urban planning decisions of the new regime had been the demolishing of the historical city walls, of which only a small part was saved along with the northern gate on the Royal Route and the barbican (by Imperial edict in 1804). This irreversible and, as later years were about to prove, needless decision, was turned into a positive quality in the era of Napoleon, when Krakow gained the status of a free city. The area of the former moat was turned into the green ring of the Planty - a three kilometre long belt of greenery which is now one of the symbols of Krakow. It was also the period which saw the beginning of the western part of the city's second ring.

Freedom and new large scale building projects ended along with the reign of Napoleon. Krakow was turned into Festung Krakau in 1848, with all buildings located in a ring located between 600 and 800 m away from its city limits ordered to be demolished by Imperial edict. These borders were the very ones outlined during the medieval foundation of the city with an area of 5,77 square kilometres and 70 thousand inhabitants. Grzegórzki has an area that can be compared with the *Plan Voisin* by Le Corbusier rather than with a provincial XIX century town, albeit with a much lower population density than the former.

The situation of Krakow and its suburbs began to improve towards the end of the XIX century thanks to a strong and independent city council lead by such stubborn and wise men as Józef Dietl (the president of Royal Imperial Krakow in the years 1866-1874). It was under his administration that the City Council issued the proclamation that allowed the so-called Old Vistula riverbed to be buried and a green and wide alley to be constructed where it used to flow, on the borders of the Stradom and Kazimierz districts (Dietla Street), in addition to its slightly more modest continuation towards Grzegórzki (Wislisko Street, the current Daszynskiego Street). The palatial Wesola, as well as the more rustic and production oriented Grzegórzki districts were introduced into the area of the città di pietra. Towards the end of the XIX century the district had had around 2100 inhabitants and 82 houses, while a decade later, near the turn of the century, it had 146 houses, a four-grade public school and 3400 inhabitants.

The former suburbs of St. Nicholas, which are located closer to the city proper, had a slightly different character, one that is partly preserved to this day. It sported palatial and monastery complexes along Kopernika Street, behind

a belt of tenement houses roughly two blocks wide, near the first ring. The Barefoot Carmelites' monastery and the church of St. Lazarus was built in Wesola in the years 1634-82, in addition to a hospital which started receiving the sick in 1788. Slightly later, during the years 1718-30, the Barefoot Carmelite nuns moved into the area on the other side of the modern Kopernika Street. In 1752 so did the Jesuits. After the dissolution of the order in 1773, the palace that formerly belonged to the Czartoryski family was donated to the Krakow Academy, the oldest Polish university, established in 1364, now known as the Jagiellonian University. In 1783 the park near the palace officially became the university botanical garden. The later developments in the area followed the trends of the past: the early modernist Jesuit church built in the years 1909-21 and the Gynaecology Clinic constructed between the year 1920 and 1932.

The historical north-south axis, further highlighted by the construction of the Austrian town of Josephstadt (1784) on the right bank of the Vistula and incorporated into the main body of Krakow as the Podgórze district in 1915, determined the peripheral character of Grzegórzki. Only the Great Krakow Plan (designed by professor J. Czajkowski, W. Ekielski, T. Stryjenski, L. Wojtyczko and K. Wyczynski in 1910), awarded the first prize in a competition organized during the presidency of Juliusz Leo in the years 1904-1918, another outstanding mayor, gave hope to the district's urban aspirations.

The plan proposed a new, green artery with densely packed buildings on either side in the location of the then purely farming village of Piaski, located behind Fort Lubicz. This new alley was to form a new axis that would complete the second ring of the city in the area between

the Rakowice cemetery and the Vistula, creating a sort of rounded out, strongly accented urban interior - a border between the packed, northern part of the district and its eastern part, which was to remain residential and industrial in character, spread over a more orderly, nearly rectangular grid. The composition was to be complemented by a residential district that was supposed to be located along Mogilska street, separated from the worker's district by a complex of gardens. Sadly, the implementation of the plan was halted by the eruption of the First World War. The idea was revived in the 1920's and 1930's with the construction of a residential district for military officers of the reinstated Polish Army. The axis of the complex was the northern section of the aforementioned artery between the Rakowice cemetery and Fort Lubicz. Meanwhile the worker's district developed a little less harmoniously than planned in 1910, although some traces of attempts made by the administration to intervene on behalf of the inhabitants here which did not solely boil down to constructing monumental public buildings. The building near Bobrowskiego Street has a compact, modernist facade, as well as apartments looking out both onto the street and onto the courtyard. Their entrances are located on an open gallery with a view of the large, interior garden. There is a small modernist church nearby, designed by F. Maczynski and built between 1934 and 1948 to meet the demands of the then rising population of the district.

The potential for connecting each of the disjointed fragments of today's Second District was severed by the construction of the so-called lesser railroad bypass in order to meet the needs of World War II's eastern front. Through the 75 years that have passed since that decision, the third landscape of the railroad line has not been revalorised,

causing the marginalisation of the Bialucha river, as well as the north-eastern and eastern fringes of Grzegórzki.

The political and environmentally irrational decision to construct a steel mill and an entire new city on some of the most fertile land in the entire country in 1945 has broken the historical north-south axis of Krakow. The city was afflicted with a sort of construction paralysis during that time. The entire nation was either rebuilding Warsaw or building Nowa Huta. Additionally, the atrocities at Katyn, the War and the Holocaust consumed most of Krakow's architectural circles. [footnote: Diana Reiter, one of Krakow's first independent female architects, was one of the victims of the Plaszów concentration camp. She was the author of one of Grzegórzki's most beautiful villas (her character was featured in an only slightly altered version in Steven Spielberg's Schindler's List)]. Those who survived either remained silent or participated in educating the younger generations at the newly opened Faculty of Architecture. Grzegórzki didn't budge, but the construction of Nowa Huta changed them in a very meaningful way.

The new context demanded a new approach. At the first sight of a loosening up of the construction budget in 1950, strained by the buildingof the first stage of Nowa Huta, there emerged an initiative to highlight the axis leading in the direction of the new, ideal city and the creation of a monumental gateway into Krakow along the once-planned spine of Grzegórzki. The first to be built was the Bipronaft office building on Lubicz Street, designed in a modernist, Perretian manner. The other buildings, namely the headquarters of the Polish State Railways and the building complex near Grzegórzecka and Rzeznicza Streets were of a purely socialist realist character, although not as flamboyant as the buildings of Nowa Huta. Neither of

the gateways were completed - 1951 saw the incorporation of Nowa Huta into Krakow, leaving the other sides of the streets devoid of their complementing buildings - the gateways were no longer needed.

The district of Grzegórzki had found itself between two distinctly defined urban layouts and was quickly proclaimed the future administrative district of the enlarged and oddly rotated city. Stalin died only a couple of years later in 1953 and a political thawing started to envelop the country. The plans of the new district are being developed in the spirit of the new functionalist style: the NOT skyscraper (1968-79, unfinished), the so-called razor-type buildings (1969-70), the House of the Press with the K1 skyscraper (1971-72, finished after a reconstruction during the years 1996-98).

This time also marks the construction of new housing developments: a housing estate on Daszynskiego Street (1945-48), the Nowe Grzegórzki (New Grzegórzki - Aleja Pokoju / Schafera Street / Francesco Nullo Street, 1958-70) and finally the Dabie housing estate, located behind the railroad bypass. The morphology of the built environment changed along with the ebb and flow of architectural fashion: ranging from open blocks surrounded by greenery (Daszynskiego), through the so-called barracks layouts (buildings surrounded by greenery, laid out in rows and columns without a hierarchy of space: the front of one building faces the back of another), attempts at reintroducing frontages (blocks standing in a line parallel to the street, with decorative frontal gardens different than the green areas behind the buildings, Francesco Nullo Street and the northern Frontage of Mogilska Street), all the way to tower blocks. However, contrary to the modern developments, the housing estates of the time were being built with kindergartens, schools, medical buildings,

commercial pavilions, and sports and recreational facilities. This is why Grzegórzki took the form of a white spot on Krakow's map in 1974 - the district was one giant construction site without any overarching plan.

Recent developments: towards the deserts of a deadened city

The economic crisis of the 1980's brought with it only one notable development - the residential complex located at Mogilska Street 19-23, which still remains a characteristic point on the city's skyline. Throughout this time, both the residual spaces and secondary landscapes between the residential blocks have overgrown with greenery, turning Grzegórzki into one of the most green and internally diverse districts of the city. This amalgam of villas and blocks, forts and factories, churches and hospitals, kindergartens, schools and universities, historicism, modernism, socialist realism, functionalism and other indescribable styles, this amalgam crisscrossed by two-lane streets, tram tracks and railroad lines has become the target of the invisible hand of Mr. Market.

The phenomenon of Grzegórzki and the tendency to divide the district into an archipelago of solitary isles stems from a „strict lack of a plan". This is a situation which does not entail the inappropriate implementation of an existing plan, neither is it the development of something unregulated in a fluid, self-organized way, even if it is aesthetically incompatible. It is a rather a situation where a new building or complex does not form a positive relation with its surroundings, in addition to eliminating the possibility of the emergence of a number of other types of relations: be they spatial, formal, functional, related to transport, etc.

The Spatial Planning Act of the 7th of July of 1994 abolished all urban master plans in effect before the 1st of January 1995. The slightly disoriented world of designers and the still shaky real estate market, along with the freshly instituted mechanism of reinstating the ownership of real estate lost during the war lead to a situation where large scale real estate development was slowly paced and risk-averse, as if investors were fearful of what tomorrow might bring. This is the time of the construction of the Ibis Hotel (currently Chopin Hotel), located near the Rondo Mogilskie, near the unimplemented administrative axis, looking more like the buildings of the nearby court of justice and the tenement houses near Mogilska Street rather than the razor-type blocks, which are even more horizontal, or the newly built extension of the city's administrative buildings and the newly built court building – which is much taller than the surroundings buildings and oriented perpendicularly to them. The K1 building, still the tallest in Kraków, was modernised, while the campus of the Krakow University of Economics was expanded.

The beginning of the new millennium has brought with it a breakthrough. The Spatial Planning Act of the 27th of March of 2003, while theoretically introducing the concept of sustainable design, practically spelled the end of spatial planning and urban design by dismantling all of the previously used implementation tools while not providing new ones. The long disputed spatial development conditions study turned out to have no legal force, while the city officials were no longer the caretakers of the quality of the city's space. The Act introduced the establishment of general plans (only about 10% of Krakow has a plan in effect as of the writing of this text) and has allowed building construction permits to be issued on the basis of

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an individual assessment of the local spatial development conditions of a given site by analysing its immediate surroundings, but without any overarching, strategic vision. The centre of the city momentarily became filled with shopping galleries: first in Grzegórzki (Galeria Kazimierz, 36 thousand square meters, 2004-2005), and then in the vicinity of the Main Railway Station, which was supposed to feature quarters designed by R. Loegler in his prize-winning concept (Galeria Krakowska, 130 thousand square meters, 2004-2006). The former has separated Grzegórzki from the river, the latter has separated the city from the railway station.

The period also saw the green lighting of a series of long planned infrastructural projects: the construction of a new bridge over the Vistula (2000-2001), the reconstruction of the Rondo Mogilskie (2006-2008), as well as the building of the nearby Krakow Opera after much heated discussion (2004-2008), and finally the reconstruction of the Rondo Kotlarskie (2008-2012) and Mogilska Street (2013-2014). At the very moment that the work on the projects first started, the planning guidelines and the designs based upon them had been out of date for decades. What type of free market guidelines would waste 6 ha of land on a single intersection 800 m away from the Planty only so that cars could reach a speed of 70 km/h on a road with exactly the same length?

Ever since the reconstruction of the Rondo Mogilskie, the number of Grzegórzki's inhabitants has been declining. In 2006 it had amounted to 33 053 residents, while in 2014 it was only 29 230. At the same time the number of apartments in the area is rapidly growing, but nearly nobody chooses them as a place of permanent residence.

The price per square meter in the new, „better"

residential blocks of Grzegórzki (Rakowicka, Masarska, Rzeznicza, Francesco Nullo) is around 2-2,5 thousand euro. This is twice as much as the average price for Krakow and around 30% higher than the average for Warsaw (the price per square meter in the Old Town starts at around 3 thousand euro depending on the technical condition of the building). In exchange we can get a higher standard of interior finishes, more expensive facade materials, aluminum window frames, a guarded parking space and everyone's favorite - a fence. Most of the apartments are bought while the buildings are still under construction as a form of real estate investment or for renting them to others. The number of Grzegórzki's permanent residents is steadily declining, while that of temporary ones is growing: students, office workers on temporary contracts who leave for their homes on the weekends. Some areas of Grzegórzki are practically lifeless on Saturdays.

This phenomenon is more of a symptom rather than the cause of the latest developments in the area in terms of the approaching construction projects. The Aleja Powstania Warszawskiego is going to be the site of a commercialized administrative district which used to be the dream of urban planners half a century ago when thinking of the state of Grzegórzki in 2005. Apart from the new headquarters of the Office of the Marshal and the Lesser Poland Regional Development Agency, the area is about to become the site of a complex of offices equal in size to two Galeria Krakowska shopping malls. It seems that the local authorities are not aware of the fact that nothing can make you feel so alone like walking through a conglomeration of empty skyscrapers, as Matthew Tysz stated.

The site where the construction cranes now stand was but a field of clovers just last summer, where one could go on a walk with one's dog. In order to appease their critics, the real estate developer established a program of public participation by allowing the local inhabitants to design the narrow belt of greenery around the buildings by themselves, pompously calling it the Superway. The initiative has been enthusiastically received by the municipal authorities as they could claim a political success without spending a single penny.

When looking at the statistics, Krakow appears to be a city which is positively filled with greenery: its biologically active areas comprise around 45,45 percent of its total area. Its population of around a million inhabitants (counting declared residents, undeclared permanent residents and tourists) needs to make do with around 4 395 ha of green areas. This is supposedly seven times as much as the total area of Grzegórzki, yet if somehow all of the city's users suddenly decided to make use of it, each of them would be provided with an area roughly the size of a towel.

In addition, especially when looking at the issue from the perspective of loneliness in public spaces, it is not the quantity that counts, but quality - the connection between the public spaces and the city itself. This does not only apply in the horizontal sense, but in the vertical as well - in order to live we require contact with the surface of the earth and with the space of the air. The issue of the latter in Krakow is particularly alarming.

The air in Krakow is unfit for breathing for around 100 days a year. Amid the heated debates that try to put the blame on cars or coal furnaces and the best ways of tackling the problem using preventive measures, the upper acceptable limit of the concentration of PM 10 and

PM 2,5 dust is constantly being raised(the alarm level is currently set at 300 micrograms per cubic meter; the medically neutral level is considered 50 micrograms / m3; in comparison, Paris declares a smog alert and initiates special preventative measures when the daily level exceeds 75 micrograms, with the acceptable norm being 50 micrograms), while the natural ventilation ducts of the city are being sealed up from every possible angle and the third landscape of the meadows and bushes that help the city breathe between April and October are drowned in concrete.

The municipal authorities claim that this is what needs to be done, that this is the price of development, that the inhabitants of the whole city would be up in arms if they could not drive 70 km/h on Aleja Powstania Warszawskiego (even though the area functioned a lot better during the reconstruction of the Rondo Mogilskie, when the tram stop was located in front of the entrance to the court of justice instead of being in the middle of a crater).

The central area of Grzegórzki may very well soon become a white spot on the map of the city, just like in 1974, pushing farther away each of the isles of the local archipelago of solitude. In order to slow down or even reverse the process altogether wherever possible, we need to once again start thinking about architecture as the determining factor of the quality of our current and overall being. We need to adopt a perspective which is wider than the span of our term in office, one that includes both everyone as a group and as the smallest unit of space that is an individual human being - solitary, at least in Grzegórzki - amidst lonesome spaces.

Archipelago of solitude

Efficiently connected even with the most distant parts of the city, Grzegórzki district is an atlas of disconnected places, spaces, and buildings, an atlas of urban solitude. All types of barriers seen in the previous examples can be found in the area, and some of them are omnipresent:

- time barrier: time necessary to get from one place to the other or that has to be wasted due to how certain space is organised;
- environmental barrier: exposition to weather conditions: windy passages and corners which make rainy autumn or winter day yet more unpleasing, large areas with no natural ventilation finished with stone and concrete that turn into stoves during hot summer days (in August 2015 temperature as high as 38 degrees Celsius lasted for nearly 3 weeks);
- level barrier: slopes, steps, level differences;
- physical barrier: solid, solid with openings, transparent;
- semantic barrier: ('keep out!')
- functional barrier: no reason to move from one place to the other;
- spatial barrier: too large distances (related to time and exposition);
- labyrinths;
- degradation.

The islands of solitude floating here are hiding behind walls and enclosures, or in deep holes similar to enormous bomb craters; some of them are singular, some of them are unique, and some of them melt into the non-identity; some of them are already taken away from their users, some

of them are about to be taken. Every new project is self-referential, the so-called SuperPath included: it refers to nothing except for itself.

Conclusions

Life goes on in Grzegórzki for human species can adapt to nearly anything. One may say that there are much worse places to live in. The least sustainable approach.

In the last 25 years, hundreds of hectares have been covered with new buildings and infrastructure in Kraków. And yet not even one of those hectares can be considered a part of a city. This is probably why all the advertisement for new settlements in Grzegórzki district refers to the Main Market Square of the historical city centre being „just two steps away" or „just five minutes away" or „at your fingertips" (which is obviously a lie for it takes much longer to get there) for there aren't any public spaces to refer to in the entire area.

There are still 30 thousand people living in the Grzegórzki district and there is still plenty of space to be saved there. A fight for saving green area in Dabie will be useless and its result irrelevant unless a network of connections between all those distant green islands will be provided on the basic of all the residual and underestimated spaces. For it is never the matter of quantity of hectares — whether they are green areas, services, culture centres, etc. but the distance between them and the quality of the passage. Otherwise the result will always be the same: atomised micro-spaces, seemingly private island floating on the concrete sea and 666 steps to cross the street.

Unfortunately, Grzegórzki district is an example of

what does a city abandoned by a plan together with life abandoned by architecture look like: solitary and isolated regardless transparency and materiality of some of the barriers.

Archipelagos of solitude are made of enclosed surveilled estates as well as streets turned into parallel corridors built with acoustic panels, streets having this way only one side which is never the sunny one, of residual spaces left on the margins of the large scale infrastructural investments, etc. of weakening bond between human being and space.
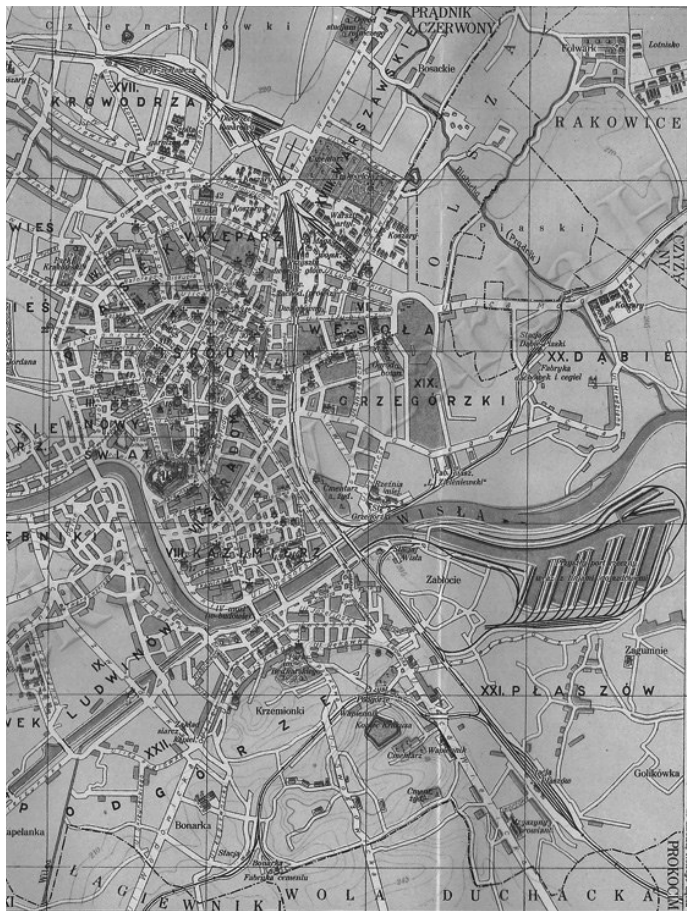
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HISTORICAL MAPS
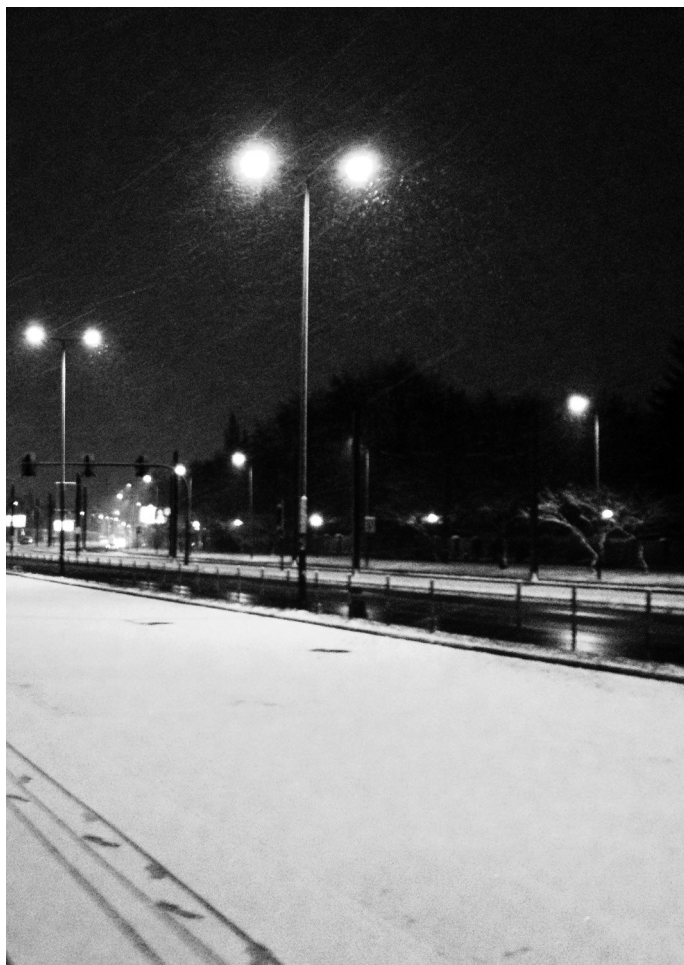
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DISTRICT II, CURRENT STATE

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CONCLUSIONS

I argue, in this thesis, that the very core of our survival, as well as the survival of those structures we have built and wish to keep for future generations, is rooted in our connection with our surroundings (whether human beings or spaces), as established through everyday habits. These bonds cannot be forged hastily, yet carry a crucial importance in times of crises, under traumatic conditions.

People do not change simply because they are told to do so. They change only when space and environment prompt them to change their habits. If we want people and buildings to survive — in other words, achieving the goal of architecture — we must restore our bond with spaces and places.

Architects of the Modern Movement did not succeed in rising to the challenges of the modern world. The roof of the Marseilles Unit did not function as an elevated square, and the lengthy time it took to catch an elevator did not lead to a greater degree of socialization between neighbors at Lake Shore Drive (designed by Mies van der Rohe) in Chicago, or in the SuperUnit (designed by Mieczyslaw Król) in Katowice. Neither those grand structures nor their more modest cousins managed to fulfill their creators' dreams of a classless utopia and an oasis of happiness, where an Air France pilot could live alongside a plumber and a university professor.

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Throughout the past decades, the entire Western world was striving for happiness and satisfaction while wasting its time and space in non-places. It is hard to find a more lonesome landscape than that of a roadside in an urban sprawl especially in the middle of the day when everybody has already left for the city - a post-place, where all sense has been replaced by the lack of profitability.

We have built our environment — 'built' in the most literal sense of the word — with a sense of certainty for a bright, uneventful future, and with apparent concern for vulnerability. In Poland, for instance, the most distant prospect is that of an individual mortgage as far as housing is concerned, and that of tenure as far as the environment and public spaces are concerned. The shortest and most common one is NOW. In searching to further our senses of comfort and privacy, we have forgotten the reason why cities were built in the first place. We have forgotten the reason why cities were built in the first place: to increase protection and build a sense of community

As a result of the increasing density of our built environment, of demographic growth, and of the constant degradation of our natural environment, the scale of natural or anthropic disasters is dramatically multiplying. Indeed, the scope of natural catastrophes is very often amplified by human activity. Van der Leeuw and Aschan-Leygonie suggest that the relation between the cause and scale of a threat on socio-natural systems is dynamic, and has been subject to fundamental changes in the last few decades (Leeuw, Aschan-Leygonie 2005). This is the reason why in the 1990's, already a decade after the term sustainability had emerged, a new term — resilience — came into force, for the key to survival is not permanence, but the ability of a system to absorb the shock and remain operational.

The very term, derived from physics, is used in psychology, psychiatry, and in research on social systems. Resilience, understood as the reciprocal influence between social and natural systems, is developed by harmonizing the relations between humans and their environment. Unfortunately, recent experiences have demonstrated that it is not an element commonly ingrained in the culture of settlement.

One of the elements that allow us to develop resilience and minimize the vulnerability of urban areas (especially those exposed to permanent and substantial threats) is to equip public spaces with a dual character, which combines its daily purpose on the one hand, and a specific function under a situation of threat on the other. The process of creating such spaces is difficult: it requires an understanding of the expected threats, as well as the reason why the threat is ignored - be it in everyday life, in design, or during legislative proceedings. The 2013 flood in Sardinia made it evident that to ignore a threat is to increase its destructive potential. Such an attitude stems from, among other factors, the increasing erosion of the relationship between humans and their habitats. Erosion that makes both people and places lonely.

Architecture that is truly resilient and universal does not need to be spectacular. Even though the costs of preventing natural disasters are far lower than the budgets that are assigned for their mitigation a posteriori, it is very difficult to convince all the parties involved in the decision making process as to the feasibility of this type of expenditure. This is why the ethos of scholars and designers plays such an important role in the face of the increasing vulnerability of urban areas. Such an ethos is based on an awareness and a sense of responsibility for all of the actions that can

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influence the public character of a space, in accordance with which we can make them better and more resilient in comparison to what they already were.

It is difficult to determine the duality or a resilience of such a space when it comes to designing one. However, every space we are bound to is dual and resilient.

Architects proudly claim that architecture is the most important thing in the world. The most important elements in architecture, however, are the place and its smallest spatial unit: the human being.

It is difficult to speculate on the future of the Western culture in general, or that of one of its greatest and most terrifying achievements, the city. As Dino Borri states in his lectures, contemporaneity has nothing in common with the cities we are used to, nor with the expiring European model of a historical city. Our faith in our ability to deal with the phenomena of the modern metropolis and in the instruments with which we aim to confront the issue is, according to Borri, fundamentally misguided. And modern solitude may be the key to finding new ones.

At the same time, it has never been easy to claim a right to the city in Western culture. For the past generation or two, we cultivated an illusion in which cities belonged to us; in which even our lives belonged to us; where everything, including social advancement, appeared possible. European cities, no longer defensive and no longer productive, have been beautificated in order to provide wealth and happiness. People expect cities to make them happy, and developers and stakeholders expect cities to make them wealthy. Unless they agree to co-operate, the result will remain the same: a deadened city made of solitary spaces and inhabited by lonely people – an extremely vulnerable system.

Building for solitude requires building with solitude in mind. Solitude-oriented design strategies should focus on providing open solutions and opportunities rather than falling into the easiness of beautification. Such opportunities are not about colors and textures. A narrow path painted red, green, or yellow remains a narrow path, unless one paints something else next to it in the same colors in order to to extend it.

Solitude is our constant, everyday companion. It is present every day in our lives. In effect, solitude is an architectural issue and should be treated as an architectural concern. Solitude carries a strong impact on how we define, produce, perceive, use, and consume architecture; it is correlated with the reason why we decide to abandon it. At the same it is architecture that defines the quality of our privacy and our solitude – what may ease or deepen loneliness; what constitutes the ultimate cause of isolation. This is why the costs of modern solitude in general, and that which concerns built environment in particular, should probably be considered in every local and national economy.

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APPENDIX

SOLITUDE

PRIVACY · LONELINESS

S O L I T U D E

SOLITUDE · ISOLATION

S I T E

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