

## THE CITY IN-BETWEEN

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**Key words:** small city, identity, individuality, culture of the place, city in-between

### **Abstract**

The city in-between is the city which gains from the past to create the history of today while looking to the future. It blurs the boundaries between yesterday, today and tomorrow. It is difficult not to look at the past while striving for perfection, as history teaches about what once was considered as success and failure in the process of urban development. The image of the ideal city is shaped by the care of the needs of current users and future generations. Ideal city is one that boldly puts the steps towards the future, opening up for new opportunities created by the development of science and technology. It opposes the often negative phenomena, which in the future can worsen, leading among other things to the loss of relationships within the society. In view of these risks, questions arise about tomorrow, about the fate of social spaces and public areas. Will the man of the future benefit from them? Will he replace them with virtual world? It seems that without the knowledge of the past and that is the experience of the builders of the cities of foregone eras and the directions of development of former trends it is impossible to shape the present, guided by one primary purpose - to serve the modern man, realizing his basic needs important for living and those which can be defined as more than basic, associated with personal preferences and ambitions.

The future we want to know focuses on the experience of the past while trying to create local conditions today. Today is suspended between what has already happened and what will happen. Today is also a time to reflect on what is good and worthy of follow-up, and what constitutes a threat. Today triggers the need to seek remedies to all of the negative phenomena leading to uncontrolled urban sprawl, deepening of the spatial chaos, increasing suburbanization and mental anonymity of both the residents and space. The city in-between is the city standing at the threshold of modernity, creating a vision of the future on the canvas of not always positive experience that have taken place in the past.

## Introduction

The philosophy of the city is an extremely complex problem. Touching spheres of human life and his needs it becomes a reason for deeper reflection that build the desire to create a vision of improved cities, often referred to as ideal cities or cities of the future. The desire for better living conditions makes us follow the vision of a healthy, comfortable *polis* drawing from the experience and achievements of the past, and recognizing the needs and opportunities created not only by architects and urban planners, but also by the residents themselves.

The city understood as a place in which we live, important for our plans and ongoing reality may be compared to the scene where actors have a chance to play their parts. It may also be perceived as a fully rehearsed mechanism, with no mistakes and spontaneity. It seems, however, that although the city has been carefully planned in the past, presently it is filled with phenomena that surprise, and speeding time creates new trends, new challenges, as well as new needs and expectations. With so many transformations, the city wanting to be fully planned should be redesigned almost every day. Meanwhile, only its fragments undergo modernization. Therefore we are witnessing and participating in what is suspended in-between.

"In-between" also refers to the way of perception of the city that stands between what is unknown and anonymous, and what we treat as our own home and shelter. The image of the city, so well-known that we could easily recreate it in our memory is juxtaposed with the life of the city which is unfamiliar.

Often, these fragments, which has not yet been explored, dormant, and which are still waiting to be discovered, are defined by Marc Auge as places, non-places, thus places suspended between the existence and total collapse.

It's finally the vision of the city existing here and now, which with the quiver of the heart reaches the higher ideology - desire to experience the vision of an ideal city of the future, which sometimes takes an abstract, almost impossible form.

This city in-between, although it sounds complicated and unclear, seems to be the most real one. Real though hesitant, unsecure, since it is suspended between what was, what can be found at the moment, what the city is seeking, and what it would like to be transformed into.

On the other hand, it seems to be a statement related to what is safe, standing between a number of options. Therefore it is not a notion associated with something that might be considered as extreme, given that extreme can be also dangerous. Ahead of the rest, although its splendor can be destructive. The city in-between stands amid brilliance and annihilation. It is safe because it does not fall, but it also struggles to attain perfection. It would take a lot of effort to achieve these extremes. On the other hand it is difficult to expect that safe position "in-between" could fulfill the ambitions, express the progress, and the willingness to follow the ideal. Taking initiatives on the basis of past experience aimed at improvement, and the pursuit of a better existence is important and seems to be correct. The possibility of making a choice means to opt for what seems to be better and more convenient at a given moment.

The city in-between is a city, which, despite the efforts in the pursuit of the ideal and deriving from the success of the past, never reaches the perfection, but it ensures a stable lifestyle, and living conditions at the appropriate level. If this level is satisfactory and meets expectations of

the users, the surrounding environment can be considered as friendly. The city in-between is therefore a place that we often inhabit willingly, being aware of its advantages and disadvantages, strengths and weaknesses.

It is also the mirror of thoughts wishing to rise high above the gate of the real life. It is reminiscent of the work drawing from the highest values and feelings, which cannot find their place in the world of reality. Hence an association with the life of Camille Claudel, torn, unable to overcome the difficulties of the surrounding world, locked in an institution for mentally ill. She would give anything to go back to Villeneuve, from where as a child fascinated by the great Paris she wanted to escape. "I would love to immediately return to Villeneuve and never leave, I'd prefer a barn in Villeneuve than being here as the most significant patient... Not without regret can I see how you spend the money on the asylum. The money that I could use to create beautiful works and lead a pleasant life! What a pity! I want to cry. How happy I would be if I could again find myself in Villeneuve. This lovely Villeneuve, which cannot be compared to anything on this Earth! ..."<sup>1</sup>

Such in-between situation does not seem to be neither stable nor satisfactory, because it can be accepted in no way.

Is it possible for the city in-between to be accepted? Can it be appreciated Although it seems impossible, a place in-between, revealing all of its advantages, is wanted by many of us- the dream of the city in-between, and if it is a small town, it is possibly the dream of a small town.

## **Can a small urban centre be perceived as a city in-between?**

### **Analysis of the example**

A small town, beside its history and spaces that blurs the traces between the past and the present (ie. Market) contains an endless set of extremes, given that, on the one hand it may be the ideal environment of residence, while on the other hand, it can also be perceived as a place steeped in stagnation, even backwardness.

Small urban centers are often rooted in our consciousness as an oasis of tranquility, where the desire of co-existing with greenery or other elements of the natural environment is not an issue. It is a place where anonymity is limited, giving the impression of safety but also to a certain extent, can cause a sense of embarrassment. It's an intimate place, with almost idyllic atmosphere, saturated with harmony and peace. This picture associated with the concept of the small town it is not always true. It is particularly impossible to assign it to popular tourist destinations, vibrant but also full of noise and bustle of the street, that fills the small town almost to bursting. This applies especially to the central areas, which in the case of the small cities occupy a significant part of them. Those are special places, mainly due to the architectural value which, although related to the past, are relevant to the modern image of the city and even its future. The resort distinguished by architecturally attractive center with historic buildings offering usually services and objects of historical value on the ground floor are frequently visited by the tourists. Thus, its economic situation will be far more favorable than in the case of the city

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<sup>1</sup> C. Claudel, *List z zakładu*, [in:]A. Delbee, *Camille Claudel- a woman*, Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 1991

lacking interesting examples of "good architecture" which makes its promotion much more difficult.

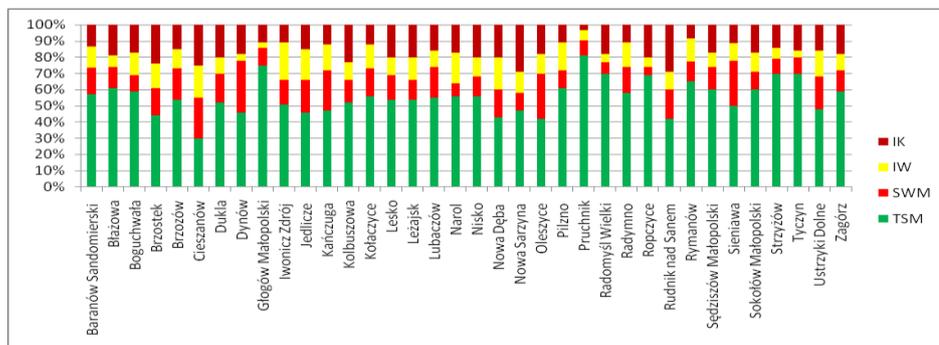
A quiet town seems to be compromise between extreme dreams of most of us. They follow the desire for home ownership, own garden, silence and intimacy, while on the other hand, we does not want limited access to jobs and services, particularly those specialized.

The results of research conducted by the author<sup>2</sup> in small towns of Podkarpacie - difficult due to slow withdrawal of the stagnation processes yet where small towns are appreciated place of residence. Urban analysis and environmental studies were completed in all of the small towns of the region, which allowed to formulate proposals for small urban centers throughout the district. The objectivity of the study is provided by the research method which creates the possibility of making comparisons of the analysis results with the opinions of the residents, that is the users of the surveyed areas. The selection of the researched areas was also not accidental. The province can be perceived as a region where one can find a lot of advantages. However, it is an area suspended in-between - between stagnation and possible development. Rooted tradition of Podkarpacie, its native architecture and culture are still strongly felt; undeniable advantages also include the landscape and its abundancy, clean air, open green spaces, forests, etc. The drawbacks include serious but hidden unemployment, lack of infrastructure, the existence of areas slowly developing.

In spite of all these adversities, residents of the centers selected for the study recognize the strengths of Podkarpacie and small towns of the region.

When asked if they would re-elected their small town as a destination to live in, the vast majority recognize that yes (Fig.1). Also when asked if they were able to independently make choices on the place of residence almost one hundred percent agreed that yes (Figure 2).

**Fig 1. The results of the research considering the re-selection of the place of residence**



**Source:** (J. Kobylarczyk, *The assessment of the quality of urban environment in selected cities of Podkarpacie after the period of „transformation” during the first decade of the XXI century*

Cracow University of Technology, Kraków 2013, p.112)

<sup>2</sup> Results of the sociological research are presented in: J. Kobylarczyk, *The assessment of the quality of urban environment in selected cities of Podkarpacie after the period of „transformation” during the first decade of the XXI century*, Cracow University of Technology, Kraków 2013.

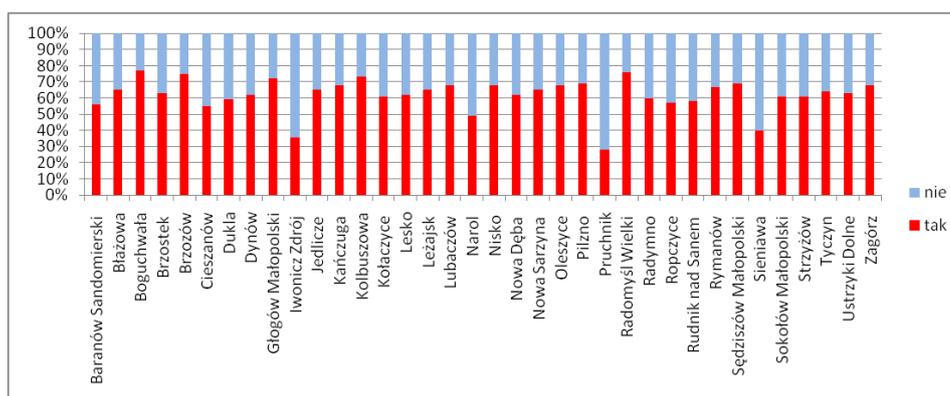
The graph uses the following designations: lk - other country, lw - other region, SWM - larger neighboring city, TSM - the same city

The results of the study are almost unanimous - the inhabitants of the small urban centers of Podkarpacie are satisfied with the place of their residence. If given a chance to re-make the choice as to where they would like to live, they would choose the same city. Different approach is shared by only a small group of respondents from:

- Brzostka (40% of them opted for the choice of the same city, about 20% of choosing another country, more than 20% of another province, also over 20% would choose the neighboring larger town)
- Cieszanowa (30% of respondents opted for the choice of the same city. More than 20% of a selection of nearby bigger cities. 20% of respondents from this city would choose other region, and about 30% of people would choose a different country)
- Dynowa - about 50% of the respondents said they would choose the same place of residence. Also, many of respondents would choose a neighboring province - 30% of people)
- Jedlicza and Kańczuga - in these cities about 50% of the respondents would like to live in the same city. In Jedlicza about 20% of questioned people would like to live in the bigger, neighboring town. Also, 20% of people would choose other region as a place of residence. In Kańczuga 30% of respondents would choose a larger neighboring city. Over 10% of people involved in the study would choose another province and another over 10% would choose a different country).

Another question which may be a confirmation of a positive opinion of residents about their living environment considered an opportunity to make their choice of place of residence independently (Figure 2).

**Fig 2. The results of the research considering the selection of the place of residence**



**Source:** (J. Kobylarczyk, *The assessment of the quality of urban environment in selected cities of Podkarpacie after the period of „transformation” during the first decade of the XXI century*

Cracow University of Technology, Kraków 2013, p.94)

The ability to choose one's place of residence is very important - for self-satisfaction with the inhabited space, its perception and desire to pursue one's own goals and plans. Unfortunately, sometimes we have no choice in deciding whether we want to live or stay in a particular place. Often, however, we are able to accept such place, like it and become attached. Our attitude towards the place of residence is very important for an objective assessment of the environmental conditions. When given the possibility of its selection, we can assume that it appears important and we are happy with it. By consciously selecting a place to live we can appreciate its individual strengths, and on the other hand, strive to improve the less favorable conditions. We are engaged to the status quo and improvement of the conditions.

The results showed that the vast majority of the inhabitants of the analyzed cities had the opportunity to choose their place of residence. In five cities more than 70% of the population and more than 60% in most urban centers was able to decide autonomously. Only in Pruchnik, Iwonicz Zdrój and Sieniawa the majority of the residents did not have that occasion, while in Narol it was almost half of the residents questioned.

The study covered three areas situated in the central zone of 38 small towns of Podkarpackie province, different due to the typology of building. Particularly noteworthy are Iwonicz Zdroj and Pruchnik, which for a long period of time were regarded as a rural areas in district of Jarosław; they regained city rights in 2011. Today Iwonicz Zdrój is perceived as a small urban center which, as shown by the results of sociological research, enjoy the highest appreciation of the inhabitants of small towns in Podkarpacie. Valued due to urban conditions shaping high quality residential environment. Pruchnik is a town, which today can be described as being in-between owing to the strong, current and deeply rooted traditions that were born here in the past and are partially cultivated today. The very heart of the city - its unusual market square, surprises with scale and character. Although appreciated and admired by many, it creates the impression of a space born in the nineteenth century, since it evokes the image of the Galician town from that period. The calm atmosphere spins a vision of trouble-free relax in a rustic surrounding full of wooden architecture with characteristic arcades. Wooden houses and their low scale, as well as hilly landscape maintain the impression of a place where time passes slowly, where you do not have to rush anywhere, and breathe deeply enjoying the countryside and architecture. The serenity of the place is also determined by its location.

Pruchnik is situated away from the main roads with heavy traffic. Historical nature is confirmed by suspension between what is here and now, and what was in the past. Past, however, so important, that shapes the contemporary image of the city. The state of being in-between is expressed not only by the historic wooden architecture, but also preserved naming of the streets and their arrangement with the spatial conditions of the relatively large market. It is also an informal division of the town- Pruchnik Dolny and Pruchnik Górny (these terms functioned as Pruchnik Wieś [village]). Unchanged traditions of this place include fairs, which are held here every Thursday. So we can safely say that Pruchnik is a town, for the functioning of which the past is just as important as the present. It can be assumed that also in the future traditions of the place will be heavily cultivated here, which is very important as it is shaping the individual character of the town, often reminiscent in other urban centers where the uniformity of space and architecture takes place –Everywhere the same!

Thus, despite the difficult economic situation of Podkarpackie, Pruchnik can be seen as a friendly living environment due to its spatial conditions.

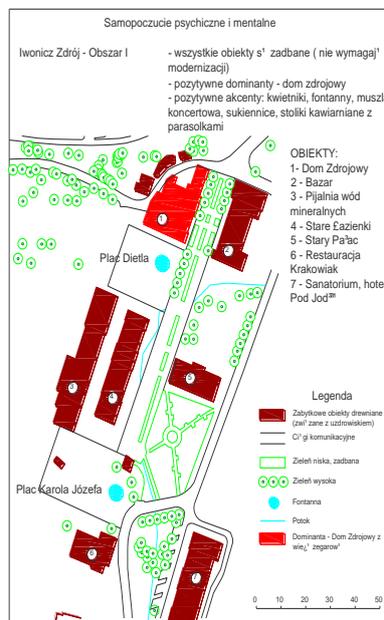
Iwonicz Zdrój is also an example of the town of Podkarpackie Province, showing a number of individual features that set it apart from other cities of the same size located in the region. The most important is the image of the city center. In most urban centers the heart of the city is characterized by historical market square with compact service and residential buildings. At the heart of Iwonicz – a spa city, instead of the typical market one can find a pedestrian street with two squares (Dietl Square and Charles Joseph Square)

**Figure 3. SPA buildings in the centre of Iwonicz Zdrój (J. Kobylarczyk)**



Source: (J. Kobylarczyk)

**Figure 4. Analysis of the Iwonicz Zdrój city centre**



Source: (J. Kobylarczyk, *The assessment of the quality of urban environment in selected cities of Podkarpackie after the period of „transformation” during the first decade of the XXI century*

Cracow University of Technology, Kraków 2013, p.117)

It is accompanied by a number of historic spa facilities with high scenic and architectural value that remain in a good condition. Despite the attractive center, many perceive the central zone of Iwonicz as not an easy place of the residence. Adjacent area, which is dominated by multi-family residential housing blocks, lacks common areas and green spaces; the technical condition of housing is in need of modernization; also the terrain in this area is not convenient due to high drops.

One of the advantage of the central zone is the building itself, its individual character shaping the city's identity, which nowadays should be sought and taken care of. Today we know that one should fight for individuality, the character of the place and its culture perceived as the most important element in building a vision of the future of European cities. In the New Athens Charter of 2003 "Vision of XXI Century City" The European Council of Town Planners notes that, especially at a time when integration appears to be necessary and inevitable, one of the most important elements that should be linked to the cities of the twenty-first century is the desire or even the need to preserve wealth and cultural diversity which has been shaped by extensive pages of the history. Cities of the future include those that will be able to skillfully combine their present and future with the past. For the purposes of this argument, the cities in-between, which may include small urban centers, create or will create in polycentric network systems due to the integration process that takes place.

Pruchnik is still even better example of this concept for the reason that it is a residential environment the conditions of which inhabitants appreciate very highly, and want to identify with, thus contributing to the formation of cultural and social identity of the place. Iwonicz Zdrój in turn is the place where the architecture of the city center is unusual, remembered or recognizable, and it also shapes the individual character of the place.

European cities are marked out by the long history which significantly influenced their individual character manifested not only in the economic situation but also the accompanying architecture. It should be also noted that this story makes European cities different from other centers elsewhere in the world. Unfortunately, this individuality is nowadays increasingly erased due to the many negative phenomena that are present within urban centers. Among other things, they focus around urbanization and globalization. "Slowly, but inevitably, new network systems bring together small and large cities to create urban" Continuum" already visible in many parts of Europe, where the "classic" city is only a part of the network of urbanization bands. Any vision of future cities should counteract these negative trends. The future is shaped by our actions today. The past gives us an invaluable learning for the future. In many ways, the city of the future already exists today. Modern city possesses a lot of qualities that we value, nurture, and wish to pass on to future generations. What is then the most fundamental problem of existing cities? In our opinion, it is the lack of consistency, not only in the physical sense, but also in relation to the continuity of the time".<sup>3</sup>

This deficiency results in difficulties connected with maintaining the autonomy not only within the city landscape, but also in the culture that positively affects the identity, which is the sole value of the city that should be supported strengthened and taken care of.

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<sup>3</sup> Europejska Rada Urbanistów, *Nowa Karta Ateńska 2003, Wizja miast XXI wieku* Lizbona 2003, str.6

## Conclusion

The city in-between is the image of the center, which can aim in different directions. It may be associated with the place suspended between the real and the virtual world, which we increasingly use and visit. Unreal world is becoming a serious threat to the modern city, where common spaces may prove to be redundant in the future. There are many comfortable possibilities of using "virtual seats".

The city in-between may also be a safe alternative for someone who can be satisfied with what he has - existing conditions in this case. City between the extremes, which lead to a significant and rapid growth or collapse is safe, though not perfect.

The city in-between is also a city that once underestimated, today may be our dream, like Villeneuve of Camille Claudel. It becomes suspended between the old reluctance, and present, unattainable desire. Finally, the city in-between, most importantly from the perspective of this work, is the organism that is able to combine the experience of the past penetrating into the modern age by drawing the future. Therefore, it is a city where you do not find the sentinels guarding the gates of time - given era demanding its heyday.

It is a city free from time limits, where there is no barrier between yesterday, today and tomorrow. It seems impossible to build the future without knowing the history of the place, its values, culture, and the time in which it occurred. Ideal city, quoting after the ideology of sustainable development is the environment that not only satisfies its existing users, but also looks with concern for the needs of future generations. It always, however, draws from its history, which was particularly emphasized by the already mentioned document of the European Council of Town Planners, Vision of XXI Century City. With the widely prevailing globalization, as well as unification of architecture and space, it is difficult to find places different, individual, while only those can amaze.

So the future of the cities will depend on the skillful care for environment, culture, tradition and individual architecture. It is the identity of the place that to a large extent will depend on the fulfillment of specified conditions. A chance to build such attitude was given to European cities that because of their unlikeness stand out from other cities in the world. "During the process of historical development, European cities have established a distinctive language of forms that shape the spatial structure of the urban fabric. Markets, streets, squares and parks - public spaces clearly defined by the architecture, successively layered through the ages, coming from different, sometimes distant eras, created in the framework of different stylistic trends of art, form a coherent structure, included in the organizing framework of the municipal regulation."<sup>4</sup>

A small center is a great example of the city in-between, where the three spheres of time can coexist, where sometimes it seems as if time stood still is. It is frequently a place where inhabitants with great dedication cultivate culture and tradition of the place, which, although refers to the distant time, strongly occurs in the present and affects the importance of place in the future. Small town impresses with its otherness, but sometimes does not respond, or not sufficiently respond to the demands of the modern times, the needs of users based on

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<sup>4</sup> E. Węclawowicz- Gyurkovich, *Architektura najnowsza w historycznym środowisku miast europejskich*, Politechnika Krakowska, Kraków 2013, str.5.

advancement, and does not adapt to the new possibilities created by relentlessly progressive development of technology.

Without the past, neither the present nor the future seem to be possible, which is reminded by the cities in-between seeking for remedies against multiplying negative phenomena leading among other things to uncontrolled sprawl of urban centers, growing suburbanization and anonymity, which is exacerbating the phenomenon of uniformity not only of space and the architecture, but also the society. It is difficult in these conditions to talk about identity as there is none.

The city in-between is a real one, shaping the present, but also spreading the vision of the future, which can only be successful when appreciates the values cherished for many years, by many.

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