RETURN TO A COHERENT CITY - ON THE EXAMPLE OF LUBLIN

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Abstract
This article discusses a very important and current problem of the loss of integrity in Lublin. It also contains suggestions for the improvement of present situation and preventing the problem in the future. The paper is a continuation of research conducted by J. Wrana as part of habilitation thesis entitled “The role and importance of architecture in the process of integrating the spatial structure of the city – on the example of Lublin”.

One of the methods of integrating urban spatial structure is conscious creation of architectural forms, and their increasing significance in the formation of “synergy” relations. The binder of “re-integration” city could be the “integration architecture” - buildings of high quality, socially attractive features, located in the important nodal points, which improve the consistency of the environment. Supplementing the city with such facilities greatly increases its aesthetics, also associated with consistency. Their functions are not only the classic ones (services, education, etc.) as in various ways, they also influence city landscapes. They complete street frontages, integrate campuses and housing estates, create composition axes, integrate surroundings, and enrich the services.

The authors focus on the example of Lublin – a centuries-old city with rich and fascinating history, nowadays dealing with its post-industrial heritage and facing spatial problems. The city is regaining its lost integrity through architecture: it has become a place where a number of noteworthy integrating projects have been realised. The examples of integration architecture in
Lublin are, among others: Centre for the Meeting of Cultures “Theatre in Construction” and Eastern Innovation Centre of Architecture (Lublin University of Technology).

Introduction

Today the city is the natural environment of a human life – offering “various places of contacts and meetings”, allowing implementation of social behaviours\(^1\). The attractiveness of the city is also due to the anonymity giving the freedom of existence and multitude of social groups to which one can belong. Not without significance is also the role of architecture: charm of urban buildings and public spaces. The cities, however, also have their disadvantages: with anonymity decreases the sense of safety, with the number of residents increases the number of buildings, and, what follows, the distances grow between the borders of the city and its centre, the tissue grows, and also the spatial chaos appears.

Most Polish cities struggle with the problem of loss of integrity of the spatial structure. This phenomenon appeared in the second half of the 20\(^{th}\) century, intensified in 1990s, and continues today. It affects both bigger centres and smaller towns.

Its main causes are many years of neglect and unfavourable spatial policy of the period of the Polish People’s Republic. In that time extensive housing estates were built, among others, erected using the technology of the so-called “panel building”, often located on the outskirts of the cities and badly communicated with their central part. In the area of the city centres also heavy industry appeared then, having an adverse effect for the spatial structure. 1990s and 21\(^{st}\) century, in turn, brought “building boom” and numerous new investments, which contributed to the phenomenon of loss of cohesion. Due to the insufficient number of the Local Spatial Development Plans, regulating the issue of building density and its form, new projects are created rather chaotically and without broader planning. The example here could be suburbs with the units of single-family houses.

At the end of the 20\(^{th}\) and at the beginning of the 21\(^{st}\) century also a phenomenon of the “hunger for diversity” can be seen, the reason for which is many years of monotony and lack of choice in the years of the Polish People’s Republic. As a result, a significant number of the newly constructed houses must stand out and distinguish themselves from the neighbouring ones, instead of adjusting to them – in order to create a coherent whole.

It is necessary to undertake the actions aiming to halt this phenomenon and restore the lost integrity. One of the methods of integrating the urban spatial structure is conscious shaping of architectural forms and their growing importance in creating the relationships of “synergy”.

The phenomenon of synergy – outline

The word “synergy” is derived from the Greek word συνέργεια – “cooperation”\(^2\); the words of Aristotle can be cited as the definition of this phenomenon: “The whole is more than just the

\(^1\) J. Gyurkovich. Miejskość miasta, Technical Transactions of the Cracow University of Technology, issue 2-A/2007, pp. 112.

\(^2\) The dictionary of foreign words and phrases by Władysław Kopaliński, www.slownik-online.pl/kopalinski [accessed: 10.01.2016]
sum of its components. In Poland this term was popularised by A. Böhm in a monograph On construction and synergy of the urban interiors (1981); he is also the creator of the concept of synergy in architecture.

Synergy is a term describing the phenomenon of over-summativity; the whole (the synergic sum) is worth more than arithmetic sum of components – this can be described by the mathematical operation $2+2=5$. This phenomenon occurs if and only if the operators, if they cooperate, achieve more than when they act individually.

Synergy occurs in many areas of science – we encounter it, among others, in pharmacology – it manifests itself in that two (or more) medications, weakly affecting the patient separately, after administering them together bring strong effects – due to the synergic response of the body to the treatment or the interaction of active substances of individual medicines.

The example of synergy in architecture is genius loci. The phenomenon of synergy can also occur when the interaction of object and its location takes place, and the final effect will be stronger and more important than in the case of locating a given building in a different place. The example of such effect can be revitalisation of the area, the revival of a district, or merging a part of the city. G. Schneider-Skalska believes that "the signs in the form of outstanding architectural works are necessary for the proper functioning of the city, (...) promote a positive stimulation" (Schneider-Skalska, 2010, p.155) – which also can be an example of the phenomenon of synergy.

**Integration architecture – attempt of definition**

Integration architecture is objects of public use, representing high quality of project and construction, which in addition to the basic role fulfil the unifying function: both visually and immaterially.

The object representing this trend often constitutes a missing “puzzle” in the city’s structure. They merge and complement the frontage, quarter, estate, activate the area, are the base of the revitalisation changes. They fulfil the gaps created in the city as a result of many years of neglect or poor spatial policy, emphasise the axles, unify and organise the chaotic environment. Thanks to the high quality of both the project and environment, these objects raise the quality of the area, become recognisable and distinctive. They can also become symbols of the city – such as Kunsthaus in Graz and Eye Film Institute in Amsterdam.

Integration architecture helps regain lost consistency and once again integrate urban spatial structure through situating it in places of node significance, at the same time affecting the image and aesthetics of the city.

Integration architecture can also variously affect the spiritual and immaterial zone. It gives the users the sense of connection with the region, country, world; it is also a determinant of the progress of knowledge and communication, especially in the case of university building, as they

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often belong to that trend. It is the place of meetings (planned and spontaneous ones), networking, overcoming barriers, and in the further stage of discussions, exchange of thoughts and views. It is the place to which one returns, because it quickly becomes familiar, and the user finds his way around the object easily. Every user feels relaxed here, “like at home”. This is a social space, which encourages people to stick together, to contact each other, and to prolong that contact. People feel comfortable and safe inside it, they integrate, shorten distances between each other.\(^6\)

It is the architecture associated with the context of a place, that fits into tradition, thanks to which for the user it is neutral, easily acceptable, taken as “something of one’s own” \(^7\).

Locating objects of integration architecture in the places especially important on the map of the city – urban nodes, may contribute to forming of a phenomenon of the above-mentioned synergy, of an incredibly positive effect on the city. Such situation occurred, among others, in Oslo – thanks to the building of National Opera and Ballet the entire waterfront of the city was revived, called the Fjord City.

**Integration architecture may be associated with notion of Powerful form** by J. Gyurkovich\(^8\). At this point it should also be remembered about outstanding personages: Kazimierz Wejchert\(^9\) and Kevin Lynch\(^10\) and their ideas of urban composition and perception. They were also the promoters of the dialogue with users and understanding the urban context.

### Integrating Lublin – current situation, chances and risks

Contemporary Lublin, currently the largest centre of Eastern Poland, struggles with the problem typical for many Polish cities – the loss of coherence of the spatial structure. This is the legacy of, among others, the period of the Polish People’s Republic – the result of introducing extensive housing estates located further away from the centre and placing industry in the inner city areas. The problem is also the railway line – dividing the city into two parts, and also insufficient number of service facilities within the above-mentioned housing estates.

The city has a large development potential. Its advantages are, among others, an excellent location – proximity of Warsaw, international, still growing airport, increasingly better network of roads – and a significant number of universities and higher education schools, providing both academic staff and young, educated workers. Also the rich history of Lublin, numerous precious historical monuments and traditions reflect its attractiveness.

Recent years show that Lublin gradually catches up with the Western Poland and strengthens its position. Among others, the GDP increases – from 27 807 PLN/annually per resident in the years 2010-2012 to 30 400 PLN in the year 2013\(^11\). The city gradually develops, attracting new inhabitants, tourists and investors, which results in new investments (both of public and private sector), including Świdnik airport, swimming pool and city stadium, as well as the renovation of

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\(^7\) Ibidem.


the Old Town and Lublin’s theatres. These completed works will increase attractiveness and competitiveness of Lublin in relation to the neighbouring centres, becoming the basis for more serious changes of the city's image – creating European metropolis, remembering its roots. Particularly significant here is the new airport, which “brought” Lublin closer to Europe and the world, allowing easy and quick air transport. Additional advantage of the port in Świdnik is a convenient and quick communication with the Lublin city centre. The city's spatial structure also improves, slowly regaining lost integrity through the thoughtful and beneficial investments. It is necessary to continue this trend through appropriate, long-term actions, both economic and planning.

Figure 1. Contemporary panorama of Lublin

Source: photo by Jan Wrana, 2013

The historic and cultural potential of the city should be used. Multicultural and colourful past increases the attractiveness of Lublin and distinguishes it from the other centres. At the same time, it can be an inspiration for new projects and works, e.g. cultural events (festivals, exhibitions, concerts) or new, multimedia objects associated with this topic. The increase in tourist attractiveness will bring measurable, financial effects, and these will in turn translate into more investments – including those related to integration. At the further stage it would be advantageous to create a brand of the city of Lublin – the modern centre, looking into the future, but not forgetting the past. The strong brand is an excellent advert for the city – both in the touristic and investment sectors.

A great opportunity for the city is an appropriate spatial policy and interest of the authorities in the subject of restoring the consistency. The “top-down” actions – the development of the Municipal Spatial Management Policy, obtaining grants, support from the EU programmes – can bring measurable advantages and facilitate the implementations of the residents’ initiatives. The Study of conditions and directions of spatial management of the city of Lublin, developed in 2011, may be helpful in these actions.

The risk can – but doesn’t have to – be the lack of reaction from the residents. The legacy of the period of the Polish People’s Republic, in addition to the issues connected to the spatial policy, is also lack of concern for the common good – “common, so no one’s”. The reflection of this trend is more often encountered in the larger centres, where there are many participants and it is easier to meet with the lack of sense of responsibility for the area and environment.
Therefore, increasing social awareness and undertaking crucial activation actions, e.g. public consultations, referendums and open lectures, is necessary.

**Lublin’s integration architecture**

During the last several years in Lublin we can observe positive steps in terms of architectural and urban transformations. In 2008 in the Crown Tribunal first workshops took place related to the Litewski Square, organised by the City Council of Lublin in cooperation with the Lublin University of Technology (the organisational team was managed by Jan Wrana). Soon afterwards the architectural competition was announced for modernising this important place, which arouse a lot of interests of residents. In 2012, on the other hand, a competition was held for revitalisation of Podzamcze, the former Jewish district, located in the direct neighbourhood of the Castle. Numerous new investments are being implemented: cultural, educational, sports and commercial objects. The Old Town has been included in the revitalisation program, under which many objects recovered their proper shine. Increasingly often the subject of the city’s structure appears in the media – including in relation to the above-mentioned competitions; this promotes the growth of awareness and interests of the inhabitants.

Some of the newly built objects in Lublin in the last decade can be classified as part of the integration architecture trend. These implementations can be divided into two groups: academic buildings and other public buildings, fulfilling the cultural function and one of integrating the city with the region and country.

**University buildings – CUL, MCSU, Lublin University of Technology**

Lublin, as a university centre and university town, can take pride in a significant number of university buildings, including several interesting projects completed in the last 5 years. These are: Institute of Biotechnology of the Catholic University of Lublin (CUL), Institute of Informatics of the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University (MCSU) and the Eastern Innovation Centre of Architecture of the Lublin University of Technology.

The building of the Institute of Biotechnology is an original, triangular block, situated within the area of the former Konstanynów farm, where today’s satellite CUL’s Campus is located. The objective is to create a whole with the Scientific Research Centre, designed as its mirror image, and organise the difficult context of the surroundings. The aggressive shape of the building is soothed by calm colours and simplicity of the façade, the texture of which is created by the window shutters – the shading of the laboratories’ windows. The façade is maintained in a calm, neutral, dark-grey colours; however, the contrasting combinations of various materials, light reflections and shadows cast by the trees make the block change depending on the times of day and seasons of the year. The central point of the object is the internal lobby-atrium – it is a place of meetings and integration. Here the student life happens, encouraged by the leisure zone located on the ceiling of the conference room, excellent lighting (skylight), and the fact that all functions open to the inside, which in a natural way turns the atrium into the “heart” of the building.
The triangular building of the Institute of Informatics of the MSCU is located on the campus of the university in central Lublin, in the neighbourhood of modern objects of the Faculty of Mathematics, Physics and Informatics. It completes the urban landscape from the side of the Akademicka Street and is a specific entrance to the university’s grounds. The campus itself is the concept mostly modernist; the designers respected the existing context and designed a block of peaceful expression, not dominating the surroundings. Because of the difficult plot of an unusual shape the building was designed as elongated triangle with a characteristic, sharply finished corner from the Northern side. The façade from the side of Akademicka Street is made entirely of glass – it blends into the surroundings, is light and transparent; the façade from the side facing the buildings of the Faculty of Mathematics, Physics and Informatics is neutrally grey, diversified by colourful bay windows. The division of the elevation refers to the vertical rhythms of the located in the neighbourhood library and the Rector’s Office. Multi-coloured “corners” – bay windows – broaden the corridors by the classrooms, creating informal places of meetings and integration of students, and also fulfil the aesthetic function, making the communication space more attractive thanks to the colourful light.

The building of the Eastern Innovation Centre of Architecture of the Lublin University of Technology is located by the main entrance to the University’s Campus on Nadbystrzycka Street. It received a clear, non-aggressive contemporary form, consciously respecting the context of the place and modernistic neighbourhood. The form of the spatial sculpture has been achieved through the introduction of an inclined wall coming outside of the line of the façade, thus linking two blocks – the old one (the existing building of the Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture) and the new one. This wall, along with three cubic elements, supports the overhung assembly hall for 200 spectators along with the foyer. The object is decorated in a subdued, grey-white tones, and large glazing elements on the South-Eastern and South-Western façade are enriched with the blinds – electrically controlled shutters, which in addition to the aesthetic function allow regulation of lighting and protect the object from overheating. The heart of the Centre is an internal patio – the place of exhibitions and meetings, bursting with life throughout the day. Many events also take place in the assembly hall – these include workshops, conferences and lectures on a local, supra-local and national level, and in the future – possibly also on an international scale. The objective of the makers was to create a building open and friendly not only for the Faculty’s students, but also all architecture enthusiasts.

All of these buildings fulfil mainly the educational function – the lecture halls and seminar rooms, laboratories, libraries, and also facilities of faculties and sub-departments serve this purpose. Modern equipment and technologies ensure the possibility to educate in comfortable conditions. The above-mentioned constructions, in addition to fulfilling the strict university function, play an important role in the spatial structure of the city. They are an important element integrating the surroundings, complementing the frontage, forming an axis. They improve the quality of the neighbourhood and advantageously impact its attractiveness; they also have a chance to become symbols of a particular university. They also perform a social function: they activate the environment, connect generations, are the place of various events and activities, positively stimulate the users.
These are not only places to acquire knowledge – they are meeting points, reaching far beyond the standard boundaries of the university’s building. The campuses of higher education schools – especially those renowned, of a high significance for the city – are often the urban nodes. They are places of birth of concepts and ideas, creative discussions, important research; they are key places from the spatial point of view – the campuses are often located in the city centres or near major access roads, which additionally emphasises their prestige and reputation.

Centre for the Meeting of Cultures “Theatre in Construction”

In the group of other public use objects there are both culture-related projects and sports and commercial buildings.
The newly created buildings associated to culture are the effect of image changes of the city. The leading example here is the Centre for the Meeting of Cultures “Theatre in Construction”, located in the neighbourhood of the Old Town, by the Theatre Square. The plans to locate a cultural object in this place reach back to 1970s, when it was decided to erect a new theatre. In 1974 first works were started, but not long after the construction was halted. The idea was reborn in the 21st century, when the architectural competition for a new object was announced. In 2013 the erection of the new “Theatre in Construction” was started, in accordance with the design of the Stelmach & Partners Office. The building is located in a dense urban tissue. Near the theatre there is an academic district and the Saski Park, as well as Radziszewskiego Street, one of the oldest roads in Lublin.

The resulting object is to combine cultural, educational and entertainment functions, and is described as the “hypermarket of culture”. It is strongly connected to the issue of integration, starting with the name itself, containing the word “meeting”. The cultures are to meet in there, as well as events and people, and the building itself may become a lively spot on the map of Lublin, especially thanks to the closeness of the academic district. Festivals, concerts, shows and exhibitions by the artists from all over the world are planned here. This object also aims to be a place of dialogue of religions and cultures. Additionally, its goal is to promote multiculturalism of Lublin, the city located at the crossroads of East and West.

Figure 3. Centre for the Meeting of Cultures in 2016


The block of the object is simple and calm, similarly as its façade, its character adapted to the historic neighbourhood. Thanks to the use of multimedia façade, the building will change depending on the needs – it can be both white, inconspicuous, and colourful, drawing attention of the passers-by.

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Among other Lublin’s public use buildings, which can be included in the trend of integration architecture with the cultural function, one may mention the modernised Old Theatre and Juliusz Osterwa Theatre.

**Metropolitan Communication Node**

There is a chance that in the coming years Lublin will be enriched by another important integration object: modernised railway station, which can transform into a metropolitan communication centre. Long-distance mass communication in Lublin is currently housed in two locations: railway station, located near the People’ Park, between Myrńska Street and Kunickiego Street, and the bus station – in Podzamcze, in the vicinity of the Castle. This situation is disadvantageous for travellers, because it unquestionably makes the change of transport means and any transfers more difficult. Additionally, the railway line clearly divides the city into two parts – North-Eastern, bigger and more important (among other reasons because of the Old Town) and South-Eastern, smaller and less significant. This division is particularly perceptible in the direct vicinity of the train station, where numerous rail branch lines and sidings (supporting transport of passengers and goods) are both visual and communication obstacle.

![Figure 4. Metropolitan Communication Node](image)


It would be recommended to create a communication node connecting rail and long-distance coaches, as well as city’s public transport; it should also merge and link two parts of the city divided by the railway tracks.
The reconstruction and modernisation of this place is assumed by the diploma project of Magdalena Banach, a graduate of architecture at the Lublin University of Technology, completed under the supervision of Dr Eng. Arch. Jan Wrana. The goal of the project was to create an interchange node, consistent with the needs and renown of Lublin. The new centre, thanks to the walkway and tunnels (both pedestrian and road), connects two parts of the city – Eastern and Western, for years separated spatially by the extensive tracks, being an obstacle both in terms of logistics and transport, and a visual one. In addition, thanks to the attractive, attention-drawing form, the object becomes a modern “gateway to the city”. The designed object also improves the quality of the area and can become a foothold for revitalisation of this fairly neglected part of the city.

Summary

Connecting space – “the Achilles’ heel of contemporary concepts and implementations” (Böhm, 1981, p. 5) – is a task just as difficult as it is necessary, especially in the era of deepening spatial chaos of the cities. One of the possible ways of accomplishing this objective is integrating through architecture – erecting new, but also adapting and modernising the existing objects with the integration functions in the nodal points, which supplement and complete their surroundings, acting as a missing “puzzle” in the city’s tissue. These objects belong to the trend of integration architecture, which connects and merges not only spatially, but also socially – generationally, environmentally, multi-culturally. Such constructions are often socially needed and accepted, becoming important points not only on strict urban, but also on the “social” maps of the cities. Integration architecture can be an important “binder” in the process of integrating the spatial structure of Lublin. The implemented to date projects activate the area and restore its coherence. They are also buildings with an interesting architecture, which significantly improve the quality and attractiveness of their surroundings. It is essential to continue this process and extend its reach into the entire city. This could be helped by the next objects from this trend, located in important nodal points. The example here can be considered the project of the integrated communication centre in the area of the current rail station.

For the efficient integration of the city also the appropriate policy of the city’s authorities is necessary, as they should notice the problem of spatial chaos and the necessity to counteract the deepening of this phenomenon. The support for the integration processes can be carried out through, among others, adopting the Local Spatial Development Plans, as well as organising public consultations, workshops and architectural competitions.

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