

HALLE-NEUSTADT – THE SHRINKING ICON OF MODERNISM

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Abstract

Halle-Neustadt, built as a new city for the workers of the chemical industry, was recently celebrating its 50 years of existence. The former pride of socialism is now facing dramatic shrinkage, with the population drop of 46%. The paper presents the history of the city – its growth and fall. It discusses the demolitions which took place in the city and the simultaneous 2002-2010 IBA Saxony-Anhalt revitalisation programme, including the post-evaluation facts. The Kompetenzzentrum Stadtumbau workshop conducted in 2014 by HTW Dresden, TU Delft, CUT Krakow, Gent University and UT Chalmers – a project carried out under the auspices of the City of Halle and the Land of Saxony-Anhalt offers a new perspective onto the problem. The final results and strategies developed within the framework of the project raise the question of relations between an urban form and the community. The problem manifests itself by uneven distribution of population between the modern Neustadt and the traditional Altstadt – the latter still featuring the authentic historic block structure. Serving for over millennium as the centre of Halle – Altstadt, saved from the ravages of wars, now renovated and vibrant with life, exemplifies the return of people to their identity - to the traditional sense of the city.

New towns in the modern history of Europe

For many decades, the post-war urban history of Europe was based on the universally accepted pattern of urban planning which was based on the assumption of growth. The fundamental requirement to secure accommodation for the populations of ruined cities and to restore urban areas to usability was gradually changing the cityscape of the continent. The urgent need to create some space for living and working called for immediate action rather than the laborious and slow processes of reconstruction, postponing them until “better times.” The vast areas of damage, which also affected central districts of cities, required quick remedy so that some accommodation could be offered to the people returning home. Even Warsaw, where the re-emergence from ruins was heavily charged with symbolic significance, was unable to resist the pressure of time – the reconstruction works striving to preserve the historic forms of the city were stopped in the 50s. Countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc, created after the war, were

soon faced with a new totalitarian regime. The new ideology did not spare cities – the hope for a better world, ideologically supported by the enforced vision of a socialist state, demanded new urban projects which would create the new “correct” values.

New towns were created primarily to provide accommodation for the workers employed in the dynamically developing industry. Although the needs they were to cater for were really urgent and thus the cities were built in haste, they made a mark in the history of urban design since their creators tried to develop a new pattern. Nowa Huta – implementing the concepts of socialist realism – is highly valued with hindsight and it is considered to have found a permanent place in the newly born dualism of the old Kraków and its new district. The characteristic “baroque” urban layout of Nowa Huta is now legally protected as a site of historic value. The quality of its architecture, making reference to the motifs of the historic Kraków, demonstrates that its creators valued continuity and tradition, though in a new form, and showed respect for the spirit of the place.¹

In the German Democratic Republic, Halle Neustadt was the flagship realisation of the new town concept, breaking up with tradition and following closely the ideology of modernism. The history of Neustadt, existing for more than 50 years, now a district of Halle, inspires reflection on the effectiveness of planning and its consequences.

“Ha-Neu” – ideology and creation

The foundations for the new town of Neustadt were laid in 1964. The act establishing the city was confirmed by an administrative decision of the 12th May 1967. Halle-Neustadt, also known as “Ha-Neu,” was for the party apparatus of that time the flagship construction project of the German Democratic Republic. For the First Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) – Walter Ulbricht – personally, Neustadt was one of the more important and, which he probably did not expect, one of the last undertakings.² Ulbricht was well known for his hostility towards the historic heritage and the strictly functional approach to urban planning. An example of his attitude could be his decision to demolish the historic St. Sophie church located in the centre of Dresden, so dramatically bombed during the 2nd World War. In the face of the fact that so few structures of historic value had survived the war, the decision to demolish the church was very controversial, yet – as it was explained – it was necessary to make way for the planned tram line. However, Ulbricht will be remembered in the urban history of Europe primarily because of the resolution to erect the Berlin Wall. The history of Neustadt is in many aspects related to the history of the Wall, as its fate has been permanently tied to the post-war history of Germany.

Neustadt was built in the vicinity of Altstadt Halle – a site which was unique at that time as it had emerged intact from the war inferno. The decision to locate the new town at this particular site was not unusual in those days. We could invoke here the parallel situation of Nowa Huta and old Kraków, the latter also miraculously saved from being ruined during the WWII. Both Halle

¹ The chief designer of Nowa Huta was Tadeusz Ptasiński, and his team included: Bolesław Skrzybański, Janusz Ingarden, Adam Foltyn, Stanisław Juchnowicz, Tadeusz Rembieszka, Janina Lenczewska, Tadeusz Janowski and Andrzej Uniejewski.

² Walter Ulbricht died in 1973.

Altstadt and Kraków are important cities of great history and with important universities – the Martin Luther University (in Halle) and Jagiellonian University (in Kraków). Halle-Neustadt and Nowa Huta were designed as huge urban complexes for the populations of up to 100,000 residents, the only difference being that Nowa Huta was never an independent city, it has always been a district of Kraków.

The location of working class Halle-Neustadt emphasised forcefully the new dimension of socialism – a city breaking up with the past. The socialist party leaders deprecated the value of the historic Altstadt Halle with its petit bourgeois development, characterised – as it was then presented – by pokey underlit courtyards. Neustadt was also a city, which was to highlight the equal status of both entities and ultimately the superiority of the new place as the one offering its new residents bright flats, green yards, modernity and comfort. Altstadt and Neustadt were connected by a central communication route – the Magistrale. The artery of Magistrale had 6 lanes of traffic and was 6 km long. The introduction of the burdensome function of transportation brutally thrust into the area of the historic Altstadt seems to confirm the thesis that the new city was more important than the old one. Another decision that seems to be puzzling from the contemporary perspective is the controversial resolution to mount the thoroughfare onto a flyover running through densely built up areas, level with the upper floors of historic town houses.

The form of Halle-Neustadt and its location was heavily affected by ideology from the very beginning. The city was designed for the workers of the chemical industry, employees of the neighbouring huge chemical plants – Buna and Leuna. Communication between the city and the industrial sites was to be provided by a fast agglomeration railway, with the railway station located in the centre of the city. The design team, led by Richard Pulick, included Joachim Bach, Karl-Heinz Schlesier, Horst Siegel and Harald Zaglmeier. Neustadt was a model modernist city. Functionally, it remained primarily an enormous dormitory – 90,000 people lived here at its best times. The most distinguishing feature of the urban design was its grandeur. Architectural solutions, based on the great slab technology, enabled systematic and relatively fast construction of the gigantic for its time project. However, in spite of the efforts to introduce some quite interesting detail, they were characterised by excessive spatial unification, which has turned out to be one of the major problems of this area, even now.

The demographic disaster

In the case of Halle-Neustadt, the contemporary demographic situation and its derivative spatial situation should be considered in the context of the whole region. The land of Saxony-Anhalt has been continuously losing inhabitants for quite some time now. The process started already in the early 50s, yet it became really significant in the period following the reunification of Germany. The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the beginning of a very difficult process for the cities of East Germany, for many of them – the beginning of ruin. The newly acquired liberty enabled German citizens to migrate freely within the new common borders, which turned out very tempting for the people hitherto living in isolation. The transformation commenced following

1990 also entailed deindustrialisation, reaching 80 – 90 % in the region, whose contribution to the poor condition of many cities is indisputable.

The number of inhabitants in Saxony-Anhalt dropped by over 18% in the period between 1995 and 2015.³ At the same time, the population of Saxony is rapidly aging. The average age of the people living in Saxony-Anhalt is the highest in the whole area of Germany, it was 45 years in 2007 and is still growing.⁴ A lot of cities have suffered depopulation reaching 20 – 30 % in the last two decades. The only cities which have registered growth are Dresden and Leipzig. Adverse demographic processes may and most probably will continue to increase. Estimates show that by 2040 the population may have shrunk to a half what it used to be 90 years before.⁵ The decline of the magnificent history of Halle-Neustadt coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall. In 1990 Neustadt was incorporated into Halle (Saale). The date could be viewed as a symbolic beginning of the end of the socialist ideal. Changes were taking place very fast. The population, deprived of any employment opportunities, started gradually to abandon their flats. In years 1992 – 2009, the population of Halle-Neustadt shrank by 46%.⁶ Now it is practically a half of what it used to be in 1981, when the number of inhabitants amounted to 93 thousand. So, the contemporary population size, which is approximately 45 thousand, means an enormous shrinkage of the city.

The diagram presented here, showing the number of inhabitants of Halle-Neustadt against the background of the whole Halle starting from 1972, demonstrates huge oscillations in its demographic structure. In the first decade, we can see a rapid growth, with the size of Neustadt population almost doubling. Negative changes in the area first appear in the late 80s, the population rapidly shrinks after 1987, with the decrease reaching its peak in the 90s. The prospects for Neustadt are still rather pessimistic – the uncontrolled process of population loss may lead to the demise of the city.

The downward demographic trends in Neustadt are reflected in the diagram showing Halle as a whole. However, the population decrease in other areas of the city seems less dramatic. Interestingly, the demographic curve for Halle has clearly levelled out in recent years, or has even minimally grown. It may lead to important observations suggesting that, contrary to Neustadt, other districts, including Altstadt, have stabilised their social, demographic and spatial situation [Fig. 1].

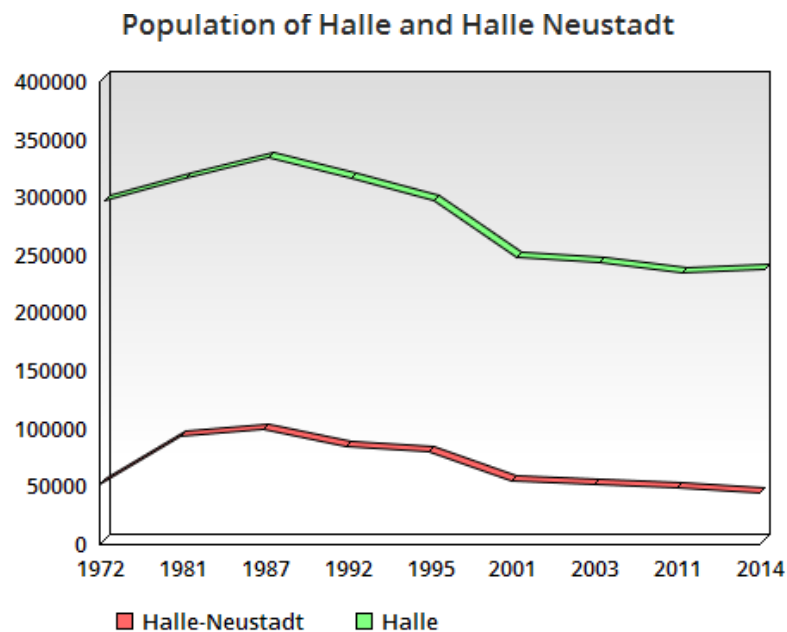
³ Based on the data from portal www.citypopulation.de [as of the 10th Feb. 2016].

⁴ See: www.sachsen.de [as of the 10th Feb. 2016].

⁵ See: *International Building Exhibition...*; R. Sonnabend 2015, after: KARO*Architekten & urbicon.com.2010.

⁶ Source: Stadt Halle, Amt für Bürgerservice, Soziodemographische Daten – Halle-Neustadt, http://www.spi-ost.de/data/document/document_935_837.pdf; [as of the 10th Feb. 2016].

Figure 1. Comparison of estimated populations in the area of Halle and Halle Neustadt



source: Stadt Halle, Soziodemographische Daten – Halle-Neustadt, http://www.spi-ost.de/data/document/document_935_837.pdf; www.citypopulation.de; [as of the 10th Feb. 2016].

IBA – in search of alternative solutions⁷

The difficult demographic perspective has provided the impulse for a number of remedy actions. The experience of urban planners and architects who have been trying to address the problem of city population shrinkage in Saxony-Anhalt within the framework of the International Building Exhibition IBA Urban Redevelopment may offer a host of interesting observations. The activities of IBA in years 2002 – 2010 covered 19 medium size towns, including: Aschersleben, Bernburg, Bitterfeld-Welfen, Dessau-Roßlau, Halberstadt, Hansestadt Stendal, Köthen, Lutherstadt Eisleben, Lutherstadt Wittenberg, Magdeburg, Merseburg, Naumburg, Quedlinburg, Sangerhausen, Schönebeck, Staßfurt, Wanzleben, Weißenfels as well as Halle.⁸ The project was carried out by Saxony-Anhalt in cooperation with Bauhaus Dessau Foundation and Saxony-Anhalt State Development Company SALEG. From the very beginning the assumption of the IBA was to refrain from trying to create one template for the actions. In each case it tried to relate to the identity and the characteristic features of a given town, viewing them as the aspects which should be supported and promoted. In each case, the project participants were seeking to discover an individual spatial typology specific for the area that would be suitable for the population shrinkage process in this particular area. An important component of the works was using green areas as enlarging and redesigning green areas is one of the fundamental

⁷ Material prepared on the IBA programme as presented on the following websites: www.iba.stadtumbau.de; *International Building Exhibition...*; R. Sonnabend 2015; *IBA Urban Redevelopment Saxony-Anhalt 2010*.

⁸ The programme was led by Omar Akbar (until 2008), Philipp Oswalt (from 2009) and Rüdiger Schulz.

transformation models in cities with high depopulation rates. A lot of actions were of an experimental nature. Transfers of residents and demolitions were a difficult and less-than-glamorous challenge, requiring extraordinary commitment on the part of the local community.

The IBA team dealing with Halle asked a very important question: what is the significance of Halle-Neustadt for the whole city? What will happen to Halle when Neustadt finally meets its end? The remedy programme was called *Dual City: Halle (Saale)*, i.e. a city composed of two interrelated parts. Naturally, the most striking problem was the obvious disproportion of the two organisms. How could Altstadt, with its history of 12 centuries, be compared to Neustadt, whose history hardly goes back 50 years? This polarity of history has made a clear mark on the city of Halle. Altstadt started to flourish again after 1990, when its historic development had been renovated and revitalised. At exactly the same time Neustadt started to feel very strongly the economic turbulences of the period and the outflow of inhabitants.

The IBA decided to focus on the actions carried out in the vicinity of the Magistrale connecting both districts. The Magistrale itself also became part of the programme. The brutal ingress of the artery into the historic part of the city and the excessive traffic volume were some of the arguments used in the discussion debating the options of limiting its functions. In 2006, inhabitants of the area put forward an initiative to tear down the Magistrale altogether,⁹ it was never realised, though, and the artery continues to be the major link between Altstadt and Neustadt.

The IBA undertook seven interventions into spaces selected from the whole area of the city of Halle, which highlighted the significance of its both major parts and the necessity of creating interrelations between them. The island of Saline located on the Saale river also became a key area. The island, once a salt mining site, now features a defunct industrial port. The project proposed to connect the island with Altstadt by a pedestrian bridge. Revitalisation of the island was to bring the old town closer to the new one. The IBA suggested building a small port to be used by practitioners of water sports, accompanied by an open swimming pool.

Two projects were successfully completed in the area of Neustadt. The first one, related to the district centre, was aimed to activate young people, so the idea was to build a modern skate-park. The project proved to be successful and, with hindsight, it has fulfilled its role. Now the park is under the supervision of a youth club, which solution ensures that it manages to balance its finances without public funding. It is a venue of various tournaments, including pan-European ones. Regardless of the weather, the skate-park attracts young users. Visible from the tram, it constitutes an attractive place in the centre of Neustadt. The park is situated in the close vicinity of the main building housing the local administration, offering – inter alia – assistance to the unemployed. There is an open street market next to it, which may not be over-exclusive, but it is eagerly frequented by the inhabitants of the area.

The actions of the IBA were also meant to accentuate the possible transformation of the former complex of housing block estates into a friendly residential district. The area selected for that purpose was Tulpenbrunnen square, which was redesigned and furnished with small services. The project was realised in cooperation with the inhabitants. An important feature of the project

⁹ See: Guratzsch D. (2016)

was creation of a proper communications link between the square and the centre. This was achieved by creating a park alley – the Green Gallery – lined with sculptures of the GDR era. This part of Neustadt has indeed benefited from the IBA actions undertaken successively with subsequent projects being implemented. The housing development situated along the park was revitalised, and now it boasts the most elegant residential building in the district.¹⁰

The IBA programme was of an experimental nature. Diversity and individual approach to each of the topics were important elements of the works. The actions in the area of Saxony-Anhalt were founded on the involvement of the local community, which was to safeguard the acceptance and the lasting effect of the complicated transformational processes. The commentaries evaluating the programme included the opinion that one of the most important outcomes of the IBA programme in the case of Neustadt was engaging the inhabitants in changing the image of their city, even if the practical results of the implemented solutions may be judged in different ways. The social dialogue was to ensure acceptance of the initiated actions, all the more needed as the IBA programme was accompanied by a series of demolitions in the whole area of Halle. The demolitions were part of the process of adjusting the city to the new demographic situation. In 2000, there were 150 thousand flats in Halle, 26 thousand of which remained vacant. In consequence, the city initiated the process of making the development less dense, by tearing down some of the superfluous buildings. The years 2002 – 2009 saw the demolition of over 11,700 housing units.¹¹ Thus, the IBA programme was to a certain degree an important step towards raising the community spirit, as it had demonstrated that demolitions are not the end of the city history, but a move to improve its image.

Further remedy programmes – Kompetenzzentrum Stadtumbau workshop

In the years 2013 – 2014, the authorities of Halle entered into cooperation with the organisation Kompetenzzentrum Stadtumbau, which was to coordinate further revitalisation works. I was able to participate in these works. A meeting took place in November 2013¹² in order to explain the situation of the town/district. The Halle authorities emphasised that in spite of the enormous expenditure, reaching 37 million euros, the contribution made by the IBA and other projects, the revitalisation of Neustadt had failed. The district was still plagued with enormous problems, and its future remained uncertain. In the meantime, 4,400 flats were demolished out of 40,000 existing ones, which amounted to 11% of the total Neustadt housing stock. A decision had been made to modernise the remaining housing resources as part of the revitalisation process, and, as a result, 60% flats were completely and 30% partly renovated. A small number of flats had been sold. Now, most of the residential buildings are still owned by three local housing societies. Despite all the financial outlay, the demographic situation in Neustadt has not improved. Most inhabitants of the district are elderly people who came here in the 60s. Today,

¹⁰ The budget of the project exceeded 1 million euro.

¹¹ Source: www.stadtumbau.de – Halle (Saale) Balancing Act Dual City...

¹² 15th Nov. 2013 – the meeting included the following participants: representatives of the Halle city authorities, representatives of the Kompetenzzentrum Stadtumbau Departments of Architecture and Town Planning and experts: A. Mensing-de Jong from Dresden University of Applied Sciences, Micha de Haas from TU Delft and K. Racóń-Leja from CUT Cracow.

the typical family living in the area consists merely of two people, and there is a growing number of one-person households.

The city authorities announced that laying down a new tram line in 1999, connecting Neustadt with the other parts of the city, was considered a success, the only downside being that it was done so late. A shopping centre was built at the heart of the district and the main pedestrian zone – the Neustadt Passage – was renovated and furnished with attractive park furniture and greenery.

Apart from the shrinking population, Neustadt has another problem to cope with as its centre is getting more and more deserted. The symbol of the failure of this area are the high towers – former symbols of splendour – now abandoned and empty. The five towers were to counterbalance by analogy the five towers situated in the Altstadt market square – the four towers of the Virgin Mary Church and the fifth so-called Red Tower. For years, the towers performed the function of hotels for workers and students' dormitories. Today, only one of them is used as office space for the city administration, whereas the remaining four are gradually falling into disrepair. For years, the city has been looking for a concept or an investor that would have an idea how the buildings could be put back to use, otherwise the towers will have to be demolished, which is a costly and time-consuming process.¹³

Kompetenzzentrum Stadtumbau, which got involved in the actions aimed to save Neustadt, is engaged in a wide array of activities related to urban areas activation in Saxony-Anhalt. They initiate and coordinate revitalisation programmes in cooperation with academic and scientific circles, experts and other stakeholders, including city authorities, representatives of the Land of Saxony-Anhalt, the media, local communities and entrepreneurs. Several universities have been invited to participate in the works, including the coordinator – Dresden University of Applied Sciences, as well as TU Delft and CUT Cracow, University in Gent and UT Chalmers.¹⁴ The works included a week-long workshop in Halle,¹⁵ where students were asked to develop variants of urban planning strategies. Students continued working on their design projects also after the workshop was over, and the results of their work were presented to the local community and subjected to public debate. An important part of the programme carried out by the Kompetenzzentrum was dissemination of the workshop results in the form of exhibitions and publications, also available online.¹⁶ The designs were also presented in Neustadt during the celebrations of its 50th anniversary in October 2014.

¹³ At the end of 2014, the demolition variant was the most probable.

¹⁴ The project initiated by the authorities of the city of Halle and the land of Saxony-Anhalt was led by Kompetenzzentrum Stadtumbau headed by director Jo Schultz. The coordinating university was Dresden University of Applied Sciences represented by Angela Mensing-de Jong, TU Delft was represented by Micha de Haas, CUT Cracow by Krzysztof Bieda and Kinga Racoń-Leja, University in Gent by Peter Uyttenhove and David Peleman and UT Chalmers by Michiel Ekegren.

¹⁵ The workshop lasted from 18th to 24th March, 2014. A year before, the topic of the common workshop was the shrinking town of Schierke-Wernigerode. The participants came from three universities: UoAS in Dresden, TU Delft and CUT Cracow.

¹⁶ The outcomes of the workshop in Halle were presented in the publication *Studentischer Workshop zur Stadtteilentwicklung: Halle-Neustadt* (2014); www.kompetenzzentrum-stadtumbau.de [as of the 10th Feb. 2016].

Record of the observations made on the condition of the 50-year-old city¹⁷

Zoom out

The 50th anniversary of Halle-Neustadt was the right moment to stop and ponder over its history and also to try and evaluate the consequences of the urban actions undertaken here. The design principles of Neustadt include numerous positive aspects. Although the overall composition follows the modernist urban model, it nevertheless exhibits certain effort to create a street in the more traditional sense by aligning the buildings with the edge of the road. The tram line seems to promote communication between Altstadt and Neustadt. Looking at the general correctness of the urban plan, it does seem surprising that the demographic statistics are so bad, the plan most certainly does not explain why it should be so.

Zoom in

Observations made *in situ* seem to throw some light on the depopulation processes going on here. First of all, Neustadt seems to be hugely out of scale. The Magistrale, with its width reaching even 80 metres at certain points, creates a gigantic barrier between the more active north and the southern part of the district, which is characterised by a slower rate of growth. Housing blocks are disproportionately large, making it difficult to develop bonds within the community of residents. Small services and shops situated in the central courtyards function rather poorly. The peripheries of the district bear the traces of demolitions. Neustadt simply ends abruptly and without warning. An epitome of the town's excessive scale is a block of flats – 380 m long and 10 storeys high. The building used to be considered the largest in the former GDR, it could provide accommodation for 2,500 people. The paradox of history may be seen in the contemporary function of this building – it is used now as an old people's home. The building has its own medical service and a post office, yet the huge structure is devoid of any individual features. Identical windows offer no chance of creating a sense of identity, no matter how much the residents want to make them look different by adorning them with individually chosen curtains. It is one of the more scary visions of the end of life or city.

Large distances are an obstacle in accessing the centre of Neustadt, which is important as there are virtually no basic services in the housing complexes. Public transport is rather infrequent, especially in the evening. The organisation of the municipal transport discourages young people from moving into the district, as they find it difficult to get from there to university or to the vibrant and lively Altstadt. It is symptomatic that first year students live in Neustadt, whereas the students of more senior years move closer to the historic centre.

The centre of the district is a truly depressing sight. Vacant high-rise towers have been wrapped in nets which are to protect them from pigeons. The main problem of the centre, though, is that it is in no way connected to the railway station. The new shopping centre functions well and is keenly visited by residents, whereas the Neustadt Passage, once the city's pride and glory, comparable to Prager Strasse in Dresden, seems rather deserted now. A considerable

¹⁷ The recorded observations were made by the author in March 2014.

difference in altitude discourages visitors from using the lower level. In spite of heavy investments, the attempt to create a closer connection between the Passage and the shopping centre on the one hand and the railway station on the other has failed.

Towards new visions – designs by the students of CUT

Developing a concept that might provide a solution to the difficult condition of the city required an experimental approach. The students participating in the workshop in Halle in March 2014 continued their design projects on their own. The team led by prof. Bieda and me developed several possible variants of urban design for Halle-Neustadt.¹⁸ Different remedies to Neustadt shrinkage were considered. One of them was the proposal to use the areas freed from development and the extensive courtyards within the housing blocks for urban farming. Kamila Głodowska and Michał Matraszek suggested numerous farming forms, such as private back gardens, community gardens, educational and institutional gardens, farming businesses as well as landscape designs using edible plants. The food grown in these gardens was to be sold at green markets, which would promote the concept but also help reimburse some of the cost. The concept of urban farming would also find application in the form of vertical farms ultimately occupying the vacant high-rise towers in the centre. However, such project may only be successful if it engages the local residents on a mass scale, who would also require training in gardening and farming. This aspect of the concept was evaluated negatively by the inhabitants of Neustadt. Nevertheless, the idea of eco-district may find more resonance among young people. [Fig. 2]

¹⁸ The variants were diploma design projects prepared at the Faculty of Architecture of Cracow University of Technology by the team supervised by prof. Krzysztof Bieda and co-supervised by dr Kinga Racoń-Leja and composed of the following students: Julia Kosa and Konrad Limanówka, Tomasz Guziak and Kamil Trojan, Kamila Głodowska and Michał Matraszek, Karolina Sadowska and Patryk Urbańczyk, Dagna Pękala, Ewa Machnik and Anna Oleksy; the diplomas were successfully defended in 2014.

Figure 2. The model of addressing the city shrinkage featuring the concept of urban farming; authors: K. Głodowska and M. Matraszek. Diploma design project prepared at the Faculty of Architecture, CUT; supervisor: prof. Krzysztof Bieda, co-supervisor: dr K. Racoń-Leja.



Figure 3. Neustadt as a university district, authors: K. Sadowska and P. Urbańczyk. Diploma design project prepared at the Faculty of Architecture, CUT; supervisor: prof. Krzysztof Bieda, co-supervisor: dr K. Racoń-Leja. The buildings related to the academic function have been marked red.



An interesting model of addressing the district shrinking was created by Karolina Sadomska and Patryk Urbańczyk, whose concept was based on transforming Neustadt into a university district. Teaching facilities and research laboratories concentrated in the centre of the district would become the heart of the former residential neighbourhoods, which were planned to be transformed into a sort of students' campus. A distinguishing feature of the new centre would be hybrid buildings – the existing vacant towers, renovated and turned into mix-use facilities, attractive both to the local residents and prospective students. [Fig. 3] This concept would require involving and potentially relocating the existing university amenities, both in the old Altstadt and the nearby Leipzig. It would also entail finding new business companies interested in research into new technologies and willing to get involved in this academic project.

Several concepts were suggested to address the problem of transformations within the central areas of the district. An important element of these concepts was preservation of the high-rise towers as symbols of Neustadt's former glory. Dagna Pękala suggested adapting the interiors of the towers for server farms. Server farms would fit into the concept of urban, but also architectural, recycling and reuse. The heat generated by the farms could be used to heat the neighbouring buildings and for water heating. Façades, furnished with integrated wind turbines, would ensure ventilation of the interiors. It is an innovative solution, in line with the contemporary concepts of providing services to global corporations requiring vast spaces for their servers. [Fig. 4]

Fig. 4. Architectural reuse – adaptation of the existing buildings for use as modern server farms; author: D. Pękala. Diploma design project prepared at the Faculty of Architecture, CUT; supervisor: prof. Krzysztof Bieda, co-supervisor: dr K. Racoń-Leja.



A prominent component of the new strategies put forward by the CUT students was the centre of Neustadt with its existing high-rise towers, which all the revitalisation concepts were striving

to save from demolition. Students also suggested reinforcing the role of railway by a closer integration of the existing railway station with the transformed centre of the district. The ideas how to attract new residents included a concept to create recreation and sports trails, or even using the high walls of the buildings as climbing walls for sports climbing. In order to integrate Altstadt and Neustadt, several new functions were proposed for the island of Saline, taking into account the issues related to flood hazard. Actions transforming the housing blocks were also featured among the revitalisation concepts, they suggested bringing the existing development to the right scale by lowering the height of buildings and loosening the compact street frontages. Lesser services were also to be introduced creating small centres activating the local community.

The future of Neustadt

A lot of *new towns* are now faced with difficulties. The already mentioned Nowa Huta is no exception to the rule. However, time has done by this town more kindly due to its urban identity but also to the strong bonds existing between the spaces and their inhabitants. The district became the arena of struggle for democracy in Poland as well as for the freedom to practice religion – following a long battle, the local community were finally able to have a church built, which became part of its ultimate success. Today, some inhabitants of Nowa Huta see the future of their district as separated from Kraków, and motions to transform it into an independent town are frequently submitted to the city hall. So, it would seem that in this case the invisible bond between a place and its inhabiting community has been created.

Will the dismantling of Halle-Neustadt ever be completed? The most important component of Neustadt – the town established in 1964 – was its community. The people who came to the town when it was brand new have always been and unfortunately still continue to be its most stable group. These are the people for whom this town was created. The history of Neustadt is practically the history of one generation who came here to build a better future. The first photographs of the town radiate with the enthusiasm and commitment of its inhabitants. The generation of newcomers, the majority of whom were in their 20s at the time, have spent their whole lives here, their children were born and raised in this town. Today, these enthusiastic young people from the past are in their 70s, so for the majority who have stayed in Neustadt the town is a place where they are going to spend their waning days. Faced with the fact that its population is slowly passing away, Neustadt is losing the grounds for its existence, its perspective ends here. A question thus arises whether a new generation may emerge who will fill the gaps in the structure of the town. What will happen to Neustadt?

Difficult duality

The past, the present and the future of Neustadt cannot be considered without taking into account the context of the whole city. From the very beginning the fates of Neustadt have been intertwined with the history of Altstadt and it has not been an easy relationship. Reunification of Germany accelerated the disaster that had been looming over Neustadt, but at the same time it allowed Altstadt to open a new chapter in its history by initiating the process of the old centre

renovation. Today, Altstadt has flourished as the heart of a city of unique history and identity. The university functions have integrated well with the old urban structure and they harmoniously serve the community. Interestingly, the historic centre has enjoyed quite a surge of interest in recent years. Residents from neighbouring districts are moving into Altstadt, flats for rent are highly popular with students and young people. Developers as well have started to shift their focus into this area. The return to Halle-Altstadt is in a profound sense the return to the essence of the city, with its tradition, culture and architectural as well as urban works, layer after layer forming the thousand-year-long history of the place. A city of such strong identity is very difficult to compete with. Looking at things from this perspective, the future of Neustadt seems to be even more uncertain.

Halle-Neustadt is one of the more interesting towns in which the 50-year-long history encompasses both the process of the town creation and its gradual decline. Half a century of Neustadt includes both the initial optimism of the organism in *statu nascendi* and the depressing vision of the town's downfall. Halle-Neustadt was a model town, and as such, it may serve to demonstrate that models created to cater for the needs of ideology age fast, especially if they are based on urban unification and architectural typicality. Is a revival of a town so strongly connected with the now defunct industry at all possible?

Neustadt has survived the fall of the Berlin Wall and the transformations following the year 1989, yet how much longer will it survive? The case of Halle-Neustadt clearly demonstrates that the most important component of a town are its inhabitants. It proves how dangerous are urban planning experiments where towns are created instantaneously for a community of uniform age and social background. Neustadt is now facing the prospect of ending its existence, which is, unfortunately, one of the more likely scenarios, unless some new generation is found that would be willing to bind their fates with this place.

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