Magazyn Miasta

CITIES MAGAZINE

What do we share in post-communist cities?

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photo Krystian Bogucki

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Editorial

Editor-in-chief MARTA ŻAKOWSKA

Twelve months ago, I wrote in this column that while the post-communist cities have a different social history than, say, Seoul, Amsterdam, or New York, our common need for sharing leads to it spontaneously popping up in our everyday life...and uniting people in the process.

This is why we decided to dedicate the first issue of the international edition of *Magazyn Miasta / Cities Magazine* to the subject of *sharing* in post-communist cities and asked how does the past practices of communism – and the huge system that accompanied it – affect our everyday life; and how does the past shape our current culture of sharing?

Thanks to the Shared Cities: Creative Momentum project, we have mapped the social status quo of *sharing* in the post-communist world, specifically in cities of our region, and want to present a variety of current projects that are shaping both the new urban wave of change and the future of our cities in post-communist Europe.

A year later, we decided to check in to see what is going on with the sharing culture of Central European cities nowadays. What are the current sharing practices and have they changed? What spheres of our urban lives do they appear in and where do they not? How do some Central-European, neoliberal markets and their history influence some of the sharing-economy projects? Do we feel responsible for our cities? Do we still want to live together or is it even possible? Are we investing in infrastructure for those with various physical capabilities? What type of resources and practices employed for sharing during communist times are still being used today? And if these practices and assets are different, do we think that our common understanding of sharing is efficient or moral?

All of these questions about the sharing culture of Central Europe were discussed by our team which consists of people from eleven different organizations from six countries in the region.

Having the international opportunity to look deeply into so many local urban cultures, we mapped the contemporary sharing practices in different cities and analyzed them. Very quickly we realised that these practices and projects lack an obvious connection or background. On one hand, more people are starting different activities based on sharing, especially members of the younger generation that haven't directly experienced the communist era. On the other hand, loads of people care about what they privately own, completely fencing off their housing estates and separating themselves from other economic and social groups. The region is full of contradictions. So, we focused on describing it, concentrating on the new urban wave of sharing culture in Central Europe.

A year ago, in the first issue of *Magazyn Miasta: Cities Magazine*, I wrote that it is our past that shapes our present – and the future. I should develop this statement now. As time goes by, it is our present that will become our past shaping the future :)

Table of Contents

WHAT DO WE SH
in post-communist

What kind of new practices of sharing culture appear in cities of our region nowadays?

POLITICS:

mechanisms of participation and deliberation

new-governance

urban social movements

TRANSPORT:

car-sharing systems

car-pooling

investments upgrading public transport

bike-sharing systems

ONLINE ASSETS:

tools for community building

new sources of identity

data

neighbourhood apps

bottom-up sources of information

crowd-knowledge

tools enabling participatory projects

HARE cities?

SPACE:

fight for public spaces

community-led areas

community gardens

pop-up community/public spaces

rehearsal spaces

co-workings

shared workshops

HOUSING:

multigenerational houses

one generation houses (single mothers, elderly people)

shared housing as result of new lifestyles

and as a result of new types of family structure (more and more single people)

shared housing as a result of economic situation

housing cooperatives

accomodation

OTHER RESOURCES:

tools

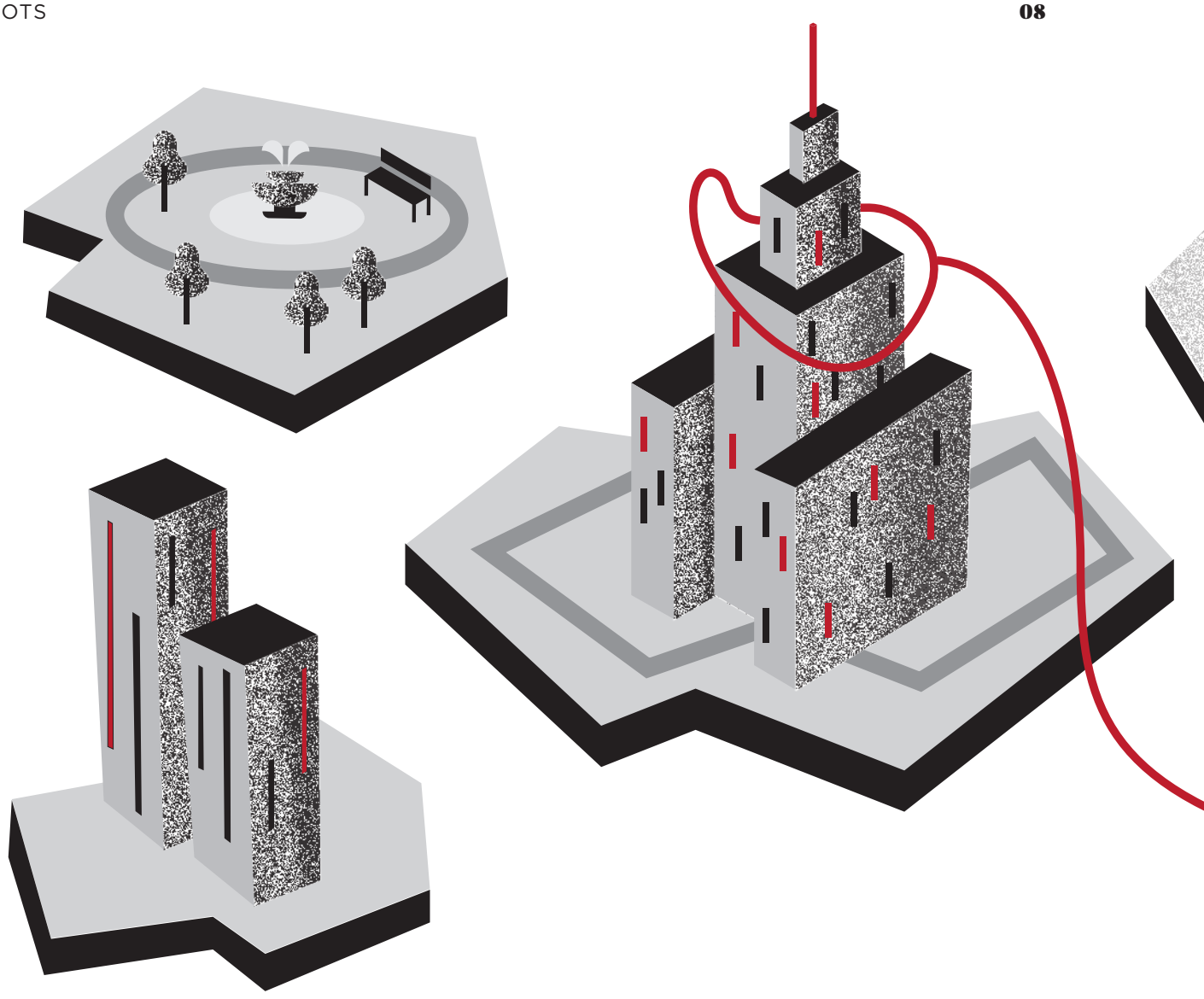
books

cloths

crowd-sourcing

foodbanks

food cooperatives



East versus West: Sharing Made Cool

An interview with Brian Fabo

by JĘDRZEJ BURSZTA

Traditionally, Western Europeans are the consumers while we, Eastern Europeans, are rather the suppliers of labor. This large segment of the sharing economy – the providing of labor on demand – is ideal for an anatomized society such as ours

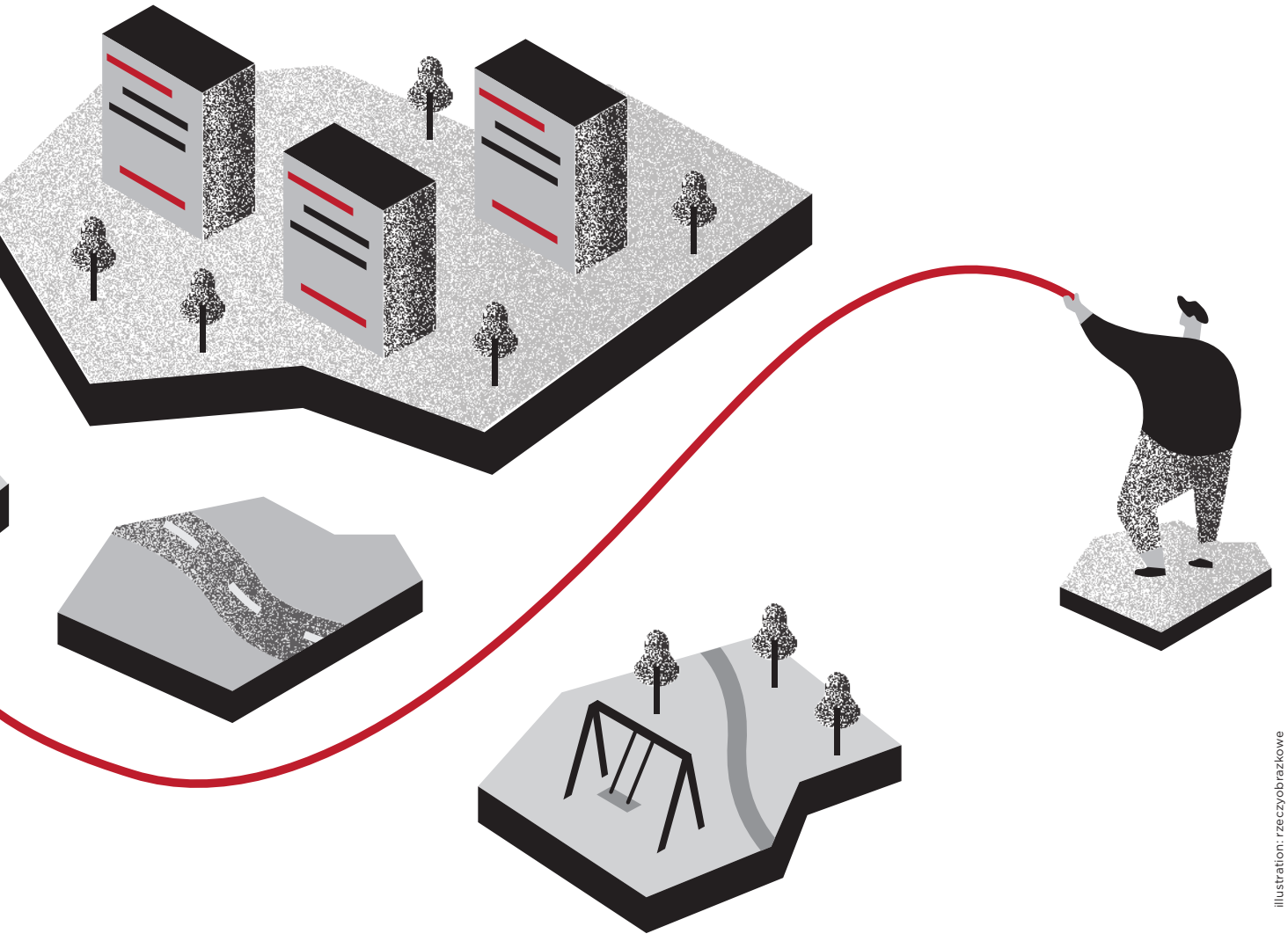


illustration: rzeczyobrazkowe

Jędrzej Burszta: Is there any common history of sharing in post-communist countries in our region?
Brian Fabo: I don't necessarily think there was one model of sharing that would apply to all communist countries. The Polish experience under that system was different than the Czechoslovakian. The most pronounced legacy of this past in Czechoslovakia was the time of the so-called normalization after the 1968 Soviet occupation. The regime almost abandoned the previous ideological core and became more cynical, in a way striking a deal with the citizens – if you will continue pretending you are loyal, then we won't beat you up.

But at the same time there was a new notion that a person who doesn't steal from the state in fact steals from his own family. This was a popular way of thinking – if you don't take some goods for yourself, including public goods, someone else will. This only became stronger after the fall of communism.

How would you explain the different attitudes to sharing today, seen not only as a kind of philosophy or social activity but also inspired by economic models introduced by capitalism?

The period of transition from communism to capitalism marked a crucial change not only in the political economy, but there was also a social and cultural change in how people living in the new post-socialist reality interacted with each other – and the space they shared.

What we discovered in capitalist societies is that the market functions more efficiently when people trust each other. If you maintain public space, or publicly-accessible sources, it becomes easier to develop trust between strangers who can then find it simpler to do business with each other.

But our models of capitalism, though they seem to be reproducing the Western paradigm, are much less developed. We can see striking differences on practically every corner. In Slovakia, we have a capital which is located on the border with Austria and Hungary. It cannot expand within Slovakia for geographic reasons; as a result, it is expanding across the border to villages in the other countries.

When Slovaks move to Austrian or Hungarian villages which are basically suburbs of Bratislava, you can tell which houses are owned by Slovaks because they have high fences around their houses. This is my property, stay

out! You never see this in households of "native" Austrians. We can see traces of this mentality even on the street – something I have never seen in Western cities. You have public space which is being used by city residents primarily for... parking their cars, naturally. People put up a sign that this place is reserved for me.

Is that why sharing initiatives are much less popular in our region?

In this sense, the "East versus West" division in Europe is still sharply defined. On any street in Western cities you see more of these bottom-up efforts than in Bratislava or Warsaw.

The sharing economy project like bike sharing picks up so much better in the West than in our region. This is not surprising in a society where the notion of public space is not as developed, making these ideas much less popular. Although this situation is beginning to change, fortunately.

Does this mean that we have different models of capitalism?

Either a lack of time, or maybe a lack of intellectuals being able to argue that capitalism works better if it follows the Dutch or Swedish versions, in which the private sphere is complemented by a highly developed public space, rather than everything being privatized.

In Western countries, it is not a natural trend for capitalism to develop public space. The experience of the interwar period, the crisis of Wall Street, using trial and error came from the notion of a mixed social economy. In our region, we were not able to come that far since we had a system for most of the post-war period which introduced a different economic, political, and cultural regime.

We were not able to learn from the Western experience. If we would share more, capitalism would work better. It would be better for business on a purely pragmatic basis. Interactions are not necessarily a zero-sum game, but they can lead to more connections between different actors.

Was this divide also strengthened by the more recent political decisions concerning post-socialist countries?

At some point, we joined the EU and gained access to the Western labor markets. This is another thing that we have in common which makes our experience quite comparable.

That's because it coincided with a time when there was quite a profound transformation in organization of labor in the service industry of Western Europe. Previously, if you had children, you would hire the 15-year-old daughter of your neighbors to babysit. Today, there is considerable pressure to make a more efficient use of capital. The old system was displaced by a wave of cheap labor coming from Poland or Slovakia. So, they would have an au pair from Poland and pay them much less than you a neighbor's or friend's daughter and perhaps treat her much worse.

Now, even those arrangements are being slowly replaced by platforms operating under the label "sharing economy" although they have little to do with sharing, but it does allow customers to strictly pay only for the actual time when a service is provided and not a minute more.

This is connected with the different sharing practices and institutions which are becoming more and more popular in Western Europe.

I think it can be already seen quite clearly in the West. Bike sharing, co-riding which are examples of a real sharing economy – not like Uber, which has nothing to do with sharing.

There are two opposing forces. One is the pressure of globalization, which entails a dismantling of the welfare state and diminishes space for meaningful sharing in society. The other is the bottom-up urban initiatives that are sometimes unfairly ridiculed as being the effort of a bunch of self-organizing hipsters that will not really change anything but are actually contributing to the preservation of public spaces and the strengthening communities.

There are many things that can make us hopeful, including wonderful examples of sharing initiatives in cities, promoted by local activists and directed at helping communities to become more connected.

Some of these grassroots examples of sharing initiatives in cities are being obscured by the more visible and controversial set of economic practices collected under the umbrella term of "sharing economy".

I find the term "sharing economy" very ambiguous. Many of them are in fact services that are only marketed as part of the "sharing economy". People who have skills, for example competent gardeners, can now post about their skills on a website and you can hire them. The ideology harkens back to times when people would help each other, but in the paradigm of sharing economy this really becomes a transaction I call "on-demand" labor. You need someone to watch over your children for precisely two and a half hours, and you get exactly what you asked for. A lot of these sharing economy services are really on-demand labor. We are starting to see it in our region – such as Airbnb.

Recently, one advantage for university students in Budapest has been that even if you couldn't get accommodation in student dorms, it was still possible to rent a relatively inexpensive apartment in the city. But now, the owners of the apartments are increasing the rent, perhaps asking them to pay double. All of this in order to get rid of the students and then rent out the property as Airbnb.

But it is not just the students, the entire economy is burdened with social costs from the transformation of the rental market. The idea is that there are positive externalities in your neighborhood – you can go on holidays and your neighbor will watch over your dog which Airbnb undermines. Instead of friendly neighbors, you may find yourself living next to an apartment rented for tourists, and you have a different group of people partying there every day.

Another important context is the geographical distribution of labor. Traditionally, the Western Europeans are the consumers. We are rather providing the labor. This arrangement is being preserved with the on-demand labor I mentioned earlier, in which odds are skewed even more against the labor suppliers than is the case on more traditional labor markets. A large part of the sharing economy, not really sharing but providing your labor on demand, is ideal for an anatomized society as ours, with people literally hiding behind fences and walls. It makes it easier to commodify these types of services.

Should we be hopeful about the future of sharing, or will this be a short-lived trend?

There are many things that can make us hopeful, including wonderful examples of sharing initiatives in cities, promoted by local activists and directed at helping communities to become more connected.

As humans, we are social animals; we are defined by the communal nature of our relations. But they are not powerful enough to counter the tendencies towards individualism and the commodification of humans that perhaps are inherent to contemporary global capitalism.

Can we see more people who are able to influence the discourse in society to popularize ideas such as sharing bikes; essentially, can you make sharing cool? I think that is the most important question concerning the future of sharing in Eastern Europe.

Brain Fabo - and Comenius University in Bratislava. Previously, he was affiliated with the Central European Univeristy in Budapest and Centre for European Policy Studies in Brussels. Brian has published extensively on various aspects of digital economy, including various sharing economy platforms. His work on the sharing economy has been widely cited by international bodies, including the European Commission.

The Eastern Roots of Sharing

Interview with Kacper Pobłocki

by CITIES MAGAZINE TEAM

To really embrace a sustainable sharing economy will require a reimagining of many fundamental aspects of our society. Take, for example, the current nuclear family model; it is the basis for our entire, world-wide, housing system, and it is quite outdated

Is there anything specific about sharing in post-communist countries that distinguishes it from any regional counterparts?
What is distinctive is the experience of state socialism which was based on the idea of sharing economy – as well as an economy based on labor. The state did not eliminate capitalist institutions outright, but instead they put them to a different use. As a result, they never fully abolished money or private property but only subjugated them to the moral principles of user value.

At the same time, socialism introduced the idea of "social property" (mienie uspołecznione)...
And it became an integral part of society. A week ago, I was walking through the Praga district in Warsaw. There, a monument is situated next to an old tenement building with a plate remembering a woman who died while defending "social property". She was a shop assistant and probably died defending the goods in the store from a robbery, and the plate itself was paid for by the residents, not the government. Today, people would laugh at the idea of dying for a

photo: Siemaszko Zbyszko, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

store's inventory, but in the beginning of communism, this idea and devotion was wide-spread and celebrated. Similarly, the entire cooperative housing movement in the 1950s and 60s began at the grassroots level though not many outside the region realize this. It was only recaptured by the state in later decades; by then, everybody had forgotten about the meaning and purpose of common property.

Around 1955, the state recognized that there was a huge housing shortage; this was due to the massive economic disaster which was WWII and the government's subsequent investment in industry necessary to spur the economy. However, the young people who moved from the countryside to the cities to work in the developing industries demanded apartments, the lack of which saw an increase in hooliganism as well as other types of "unruly behavior", a major urban problem in the early 50s.

That being said, communist Poland was not an Orwellian state – they didn't have massive state capacities, so they were forced to mobilize all possible resources. The original plan was for enterprises and factories to finance the building of new houses, but that turned out not to be enough for the needs of the growing urban communities. At some point, people had to get involved themselves, e.g. through establishing housing cooperatives. This was also translated into a massive school-building effort which created the so-called *szkoły tysiąclecia*: thousands and thousands of buildings were built together by the people.

What did the process of forming urban communities look like in the first years of People's Republic of Poland?

Well, in 1937, a few million peasants stopped sending food to the cities for ten days in the biggest agricultural strike in the history of Poland. The countryside was extremely poor, and they wanted to receive a fair share of the national economy. Of course, this revolt was brutally crushed. If you look into archives, you can quickly realize that the secret services of the police were really worried that these people are going to start a revolution.

Moreover, the country-side was well-organized and very strong politically. They equated sharing with a completely different moral economy than the city


photo: Siemaszko Zbyszko, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

elites, eventually though these were the same young people who later moved to cities, and they brought this ethic along with them.

They adapted to the new reality very quickly, falling in love with the cities. There is a spurious argument that it takes generations for rural workers to adjust to urban life. It's complete nonsense: in reality, this happened very quickly, and these people created a new urban culture.

Under communism, sharing was also a necessity especially in face of economic scarcity. How did it influence society?
There was a belief in the moral economy that, essentially, the society should be equal. In capitalist societies, life is organized around market distribution, where money is the universal medium. Under socialism, people had to create these ideological fulcrums as it had never been fully practiced before. People had to find a replacement for the institution of "contacts" (*znajomości*), an informal network of connections to people which ultimately served as a way of getting things done. As always, there were both benefits and downsides to this societal shift.

The vacuum that was left by the market was quickly filled by a number of different institutions or social practices, for instance – the queue. We often forget that it is one of the most democratic institutions; you have to wait your turn. In communism, queue committees were formed at the grassroots level. After all, there was no queue in the countryside!

One of the most symbolic examples of everyday sharing was television – sharing one TV set among neighbors in one block of flats.

Even more impressive is that people collectively raised money to buy transmission equipment, so they could send/receive transmission signals in Łódź and Katowice. For example, a lot of effort was spent in Łódź in order to create local channels, a form of common property, but they were eventually nationalized and taken over by Warsaw. Seeing their toil reappropriated angered many people, and they weren't alone.

Neighborhood associations – which were very important in blocks of flats and the newly created housing estates – as well as other networks of trust began to flounder in the 1980s. Until then, the people had been quite innovative in their use of property. Furthermore, it was considered bad taste to keep something for yourself. Instead, if you had something, it was expected that you should share it with others, and people actually enjoyed doing it.

Nevertheless, state socialism in Poland was an aborted revolution. For instance, in the countryside, collectivization was a failed project; it required a strong government to reinforce it, and this was non-existent. Coupled with the fact that serfdom was abolished a century before, and there were few families who had any real or perceived – private or collective – property to go back to.

Related to this is the social phenomenon of "peasant individualism"; a recent development that people attribute to the boom in urban gated communities. Many Central and Eastern European cities love to fence, divide, and separate themselves from the rest of their community, a manifestation of rigid individualism. Finally getting what their families had wanted to acquire for generations has led to the near obsession with private ownership. It is fascinating that these two dimensions coexist at the same time: sharing and dividing.

In today's post-communist societies, there is a very strong feeling of individualism. We may even call it "the cult of individual property". Periodically, there are moments in history when some traditions are amplified by external situations. When the regime was ostensibly pro-social, all of these more social traditions were magnified. Then, with the crawling neoliberalism, these more individual inclinations began to surface. Today it has

become grotesque – trust in society, in your community, has almost been completely wiped out.

There was also a strong effort put into popularizing common, participatory work in cities. People worked together to build these new urban realities.

That came from the idea that you have to do things together because the city itself is a kind of common, social property. Another example are land use violations and the erection of unpermitted buildings.

Although it is often burdened with pejorative meaning, under communism, especially in the 1970s, there were thousands of self-taught builders who erected whole neighborhoods. Often it came down to two brothers-in-law helping each other to build a house for their families. You can still see some of those houses today, especially on the fringes of cities; aesthetically, they are pretty terrible and badly constructed.

The same goes for the mass phenomenon of collective church building in the 1980s. Architects were very annoyed that they didn't have the last say in how these temples were going to take form. I remember my grandfather was part of a movement – a network of people distributing goods from the West which came to Poland via the Catholic Church, mostly clothes, sweets, and food, which was another layer of the sharing economy.

Are these grassroots traditions of collective house-building in any way present in today's society in Poland?

When I started doing research in Poznań on local urban movements, I quickly realized that there is a strong connection between those tradition of autonomous house-building and these new emerging urban activists. It became clear that this early 21st century eruption of urban movements in Poland was in fact a late blossoming of these urbanites from the 1970s and 80s. The social capital, so to say, actually survived as a neighborhood bond and became politically productive in later decades.

When you look at the results of the local election in 2010, the results were very uneven in Poznań. A newly established urban activists' political party called "My-Poznaniacy" on average gained 10% of the votes, but in some places the support was much bigger, even reaching 20%. The strongholds were exactly the same places where there had been a concentration of self-constructed houses.

What do you think about the growing popularity of sharing economy?

It has little to do with actual sharing. Of course, it can be something exciting, a current buzz phrase for people who were brought up in the neoliberal era. But of course, on many other levels, this is not something completely new. There was always some kind of sharing economy, but it was never sexy from the point of view of marketing. If you look at Detroit, urban gardening is only a fraction of the city's economy. This is an African-American city that for the last fifty years has been devastated by Wall Street and racism. A few middle-class hipsters who are turning empty lots into urban gardens are not going to bring structural change to this community.

Non-Western cities always had some kind of urban gardening. For example, in Russia a huge percentage of food is still produced on urban farms. The same goes for Hong-Kong or Havana. People have been doing it for years – perhaps they had a different name for it, but in the past, nobody was looking for a way to change it into a cool marketing campaign.

Still, do you think countries in our region will buy into this fad?

In Poland, there has always been this idea that we lack resources, that life is difficult, and this forces us to share different commodities. Any trend should always be translated into our own experience, but yes, this movement feels intuitively linked to our region, whether or not it will work is another thing.

The Polish anthropologist, Tomasz Rakowski, wrote about the contemporary practice of "splitting up" (*rozdrabnianie*). A few families get together and buy one chicken in a supermarket, and then divide it into smaller parts because it's much cheaper than buying individual segments. There is nothing cool or hip about it; it is how poor people manage to survive.

Sharing economy practices seem to be gaining popularity especially in the United States and in Western Europe. What effect do you think this will have on these societies?

Recently in Sweden, the government began to subsidize maintenance. If you have a washing machine and it breaks, normally you buy a new one, but now the government pays you to repair it. Perhaps Swedes need this kind of training to encourage mending rather than replacing things.

To really embrace a sustainable sharing economy will require a reimagining of many fundamental aspects of our society. Take, for example, the current nuclear family model; it is the basis for our entire, worldwide, housing system, and it is quite outdated. In the Netherlands, as well as elsewhere, there are interesting experiments being done combining student dorms and pensioner apartments. The intention is to teach people how to share between generations, and this could lead to numerous, unforeseen benefits.

The West is starting to catch up; however, this is the first time in quite a while when the younger generation will not be better off than their parents. For them, the idea of constant growth and economic progress is over. Western societies will be forced to learn how to maintain and share things; you can prepare for this eventuality or have it thrust upon you, either way this is going to be the future.

Kacper Pobłocki – anthropologist and writer who holds a PhD in Sociology and Social Anthropology from Central European University. He is also a graduate of University College Utrecht and was a visiting fellow at The Center for Place, Culture and Politics at CUNY (directed by David Harvey). His dissertation "The Cunning of Class: Urbanization of Inequality in Post-War Poland" won the Polish Prime Minister's Award for Outstanding Dissertations. Actively involved in Polish and Central European urban activism from their very onset. He was the co-organizer of the first national Polish Congress of Urban Movements in 2011 and he co-authored a legal manual for urban activists titled "A guide for the helpless: practicing the right to the city" (2013).

IS SHARING EFFICIENT OR MORAL?

set edited by KATARZYNA DORDA

We couldn't have stopped discussing this issue so we asked experts from Central Europe to answer this question their way. Here it comes!

The Sharing Economy – An Amoral Instrument

THOMAS DÖNNEBRINK

Sharing ecoomy is just like a knife: it can become a life-saving tool or a lethal weapon depending on the context, the person in charge, and their motivations

fot. Thomas Dønnebrink

The background is known: the sharing economy or the collaborative economy – as others prefer to call it – is booming. Over the last decade, platforms, and marketplaces that allow an increasing number of people to barter, share, rent, and connect have popped up by the thousands. More than a few have reached market valuations of several billion, turning them into attractive unicorns for some and frightening death stars for others. Whether one likes it or not, this sector is rapidly transforming and profoundly disrupting our economies and societies. In this regard, it is highly efficient – but is it also moral?

Moreover, is it good for our nature, our environment, our social, economic, and political coexistence? And how green, sustainable, or dynamic is the sharing economy?

These three questions were also central to the recently-completed German research project www.peer-sharing.de which uses internet-based business models for collaborative consumption as a contribution to sustainable economic activity. The outcomes suggested that the sharing economy is quite dynamic and has considerable potential, but that the current offers, use, and development – which lack a sustainable orientation and guidance – are at best mildly green and only fit for limited sustainability and, I want to add, can even be dangerous.

The sharing or collaborative economy has gone through different phases as each one can be seen as a reaction to its predecessor: 1.0 – also referred to as social sharing – was more about sharing and collaboration than economy. It predominately received positive coverage in the media with examples including Linux, Wikipedia, clothes sharing schemes, and retirees starting repair cafés.

2.0 – also named platform capitalism – was more about economy than real sharing and collaboration. VC-sponsored startups, UBER, and Airbnb are the most (in)famous examples from this phase, but they focused on profit maximization, extraction, market share, and becoming monopolies. Here enthusiasm in the media decreased while criticism rose.

The third incarnation – which includes the cooperativism movement – is experimenting with how sharing and collaboration can also be extended to the question of ownership and the very governance of the platforms itself. This phase is focused on addressing problems around commercialization, the permanent need to grow, and the concentration of power and inequality.

The sharing economy in itself is not good or bad, eco-friendly or environmentally harmful, social or unsocial – or, answering the primary question, is it moral. It is a tool with its own potentials and perils. It depends in which context it is embedded, who benefits from it, and what are the intentions of those controlling it. Like a knife it can become a life-saving tool or a lethal weapon depending on the context, the person in charge, and their motivations.

In order to avert or correct market failure and prevent any misuse of well-intended individuals, the platforms need to act as intermediaries and the city or state governments as regulators. It is time to have a close and honest look at the status quo and direction of the sharing economy, decide how to differentiate, ask the right questions, and collaboratively work as a society – not just the few platform owners or politicians – to promote and support what is in the common interest and prohibit and discourage what could be harmful in the long run.

Thomas Dönnebrink – Ouishare connector and freelance expert on collaborative economy, platform cooperativism, transformation and social innovation.

The Quandary of Collective Housing

HANNA SZEMZŐ

Urban real estate has not been able to escape the ever-increasing presence of – or at least the proliferating discussion around – the sharing economy. Now, there are those wondering if this debate could bring about a possible transformation to the housing market

photo: Hanna Szemző

The term collective housing covers a diverse set of housing arrangements, all of which put an emphasis on community involvement that can stretch from sharing the responsibilities of planning to the daily routines of everyday life. The discussion has brought to the forefront arguments both about the economic efficiency of the collective solutions, and the social/ethical questions around the supposedly positive effects on integration.

Discussion about economic efficiency has focused on seeing the costs and benefits of collective housing, more precisely the need to see the extent to which its diffusion can contribute to reaching the goals of sustainability – be they social, economic, or environmental – in cities and contribute to the general public good. There is tangible evidence that, with efficient municipal support, collective housing can help keeping rent levels from ballooning, can contribute to revitalizing neighborhoods and provide help in re-using abandoned sites (both in terms of buildings and land). Although there are economic uncertainties surrounding such collective endeavors, they can be minimized with the involvement of professional mitigation agencies and specialized financial institutions, ethical banks.

Focusing on the ethical side of the argument, it is important to see if these collective arrangements are beneficial to the people in need. It seems certain that collective housing arrangements can be important tools to increase the role of local communities in the life of cities. But who are the people living in the collective housing arrangements today? To what extent are they the subjects of current policies for affordable housing solutions?

Both qualitative and quantitative data suggests that the overwhelming majority of its residents are highly educated, have a relatively good income, and even in countries with high numbers of second- and third-generation migrants, these communities are less diverse than the cities in which they are located. There are a few exceptions to this where massive state/municipal support makes the integration of less affluent households possible, allowing for the establishment of more diverse communities. This, however, raises the question if this is the most cost-efficient way of providing affordability in the housing sector since it seemingly goes against the rationality dictated by economic efficiency.

The growing presence of sharing and collective initiatives create new opportunities for city development, but requirements of efficiency and morality seem to be a bit at odds in their case. To really see the role collective housing can play in metropolitan life and the public support necessary to sustain it, more nuanced analysis is necessary to focus on finding arrangements and models where both economic and ethical requirements can be fulfilled (at least partially).

Hanna Szemző – a researcher at the Metropolitan Research Institute. Lately, she has been working on the possible impact of collective self-organized housing on the European housing market and has been the coordinator of HomeLab, an experimental project financed by DG Employment on measuring the effects of integrative housing and labor market policies.

Meters Shared or Stolen

LJUBICA SLAVKOVIĆ

On this very day, while I sit in front of my computer answering the question "Is sharing in cities efficient or moral?", here in Belgrade, we have a little anniversary. The main drive for the event was the urge for sharing

photo: Ljubica Slavkovic

Two years ago, a destructive and violent event occurred that brought thousands of citizens out on the streets. On the same day one year later, we raised our joint voices to protest again in Belgrade. Today, we are on our way to do the same in the south of Serbia, in the city of Niš. Belgrade shares a lot of transitional issues with other post-communist countries. It has had a turbulent relationship with both its urban planning and development. From having or lacking access to commodities, on to sharing and privatization, with each change or total collapse of a system, the city fell prey to forces which left it exposed and vulnerable.

Special interests were constantly on the hunt to kidnap city space, turning it into an endless possibility for gaining more and more wealth, but that individual prosperity comes from what was once shared, and what has been lost in the process is enormous.

The region became recognizable for its "extra"-legal and illegal upgrades– nadogradnje. They are everywhere; you see them on practically every step you take. They have materialized from numerous and differing intents – some stemming from altruistic impulses all the way to those seeing each square meter as a fast opportunity for easy money. The system was not only willfully blind to this, but it in fact takes an active role in the transaction as many handshakes occur before the process is complete. What was once shared: common spaces, rooftops, meeting rooms...now serve particular interests.

And the process grew – wherever free space existed, it eventually became occupied. As the emerging picture began to take shape, the supporting infrastructure become a problem: parking spaces, streets, schools, hospitals, kindergartens... none of these fit inside the new dimensions created by the extra-legal upgrades of the city. Everything that should be shared is now possessed.

This can be exemplified by the Belgrade Waterfront project which basically usurped the public waterfront for development aimed at tourists and not the local population. Some citizens organized and founded the Ne da(vi)mo Beograd {Do not let Belgrade d(r)own} initiative which attempted to act as a counterbalance to the Belgrade Waterfront. While the project was formed in the name of public interest, it struggled greatly in reaching the people.

Then, two years ago, another kind of occupation occurred. On election night, a group of masked men – armed with baseball bats and heavy equipment – demolished multiple buildings on one of Belgrade's streets. They apprehended people who worked in the area, tied up night guards, confiscated mobile phones, and prevented passers-by from moving through the area.

The citizens called the police and tried reporting what was happening, but the police did not react at all. It was a landmark moment in the citizens' fight against the Belgrade Waterfront project, on whose behalf the thugs acted and the demolition supported. There was no investigation and the case was dropped before it was even opened.

However, after this low point and as a reaction to the city's direct compliance or utter incompetence, the Ne da(vi)mo Beograd initiative invited people to raise voices to demand for respect of their basic rights. And they were successful!

Ljubica Slavković – an architect and a PhD student at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade and a member of the civic initiative Ne da(vi)mo Beograd (Don't let Belgrade d(r)own) and the Editor in Chief of the Belgrade architectural magazine and research platform, Kamenzind.

Towing the line

KACPER POBŁOCKI

Sharing is efficient because it is moral. Except for the obvious examples of urban commons, urbanites have also developed many informal - and often unnoticed - institutions of sharing. Such as the queue

photo: Kacper Pobłocki

If sharing is about democracy, then the queue is the most democratic institution we have. No matter if you are the British Queen or a rough sleeper, once you get your spot, then this is where you stand. Many people, of course, try to cut the line, but usually the "queue forces" make sure the usurper tows the line. No single person invented it and yet it underpins how city dwellers organize access to their shared, urban resources. Rural societies don't really need the queue, they share by organizing festivals and events such as the Amerindian potlatch - a gift-giving communal feast.

Each society organizes the queue in a different way. Once, when trying to exchange money at the Tehran airport, I learned about what the sociologist Asef Bayat means by the "quiet encroachment of the ordinary" as I attempted to line up in front of the exchange office. It turned out there was no line, and people just elbowed their way to the counter.

I soon discovered that Teheranis, of course, lined up as well, although their "moral economy" was slightly different from the Polish one. In Street Politics (1997), Bayat described how the poorest of the poor denizens of Teheran - the street vendors, the homeless, the jobless - were engaged in a type of politics that usually passes under the radar of pundits or academics. They had been outside of the official line, a line organized by formal politics that normally discounts them. Yet, their methods of elbowing their way through, by occupying payment space or squatting, constituted a miniature form of political act. In this way, they managed to get access to the urban resources they had been excluded from.

During communism, for example, the queue used to be one of the most important social institutions in Poland. Access to consumer goods was limited, so Polish urbanites, with no supervision or incentive from the top, organized and managed the queues to make sure democratic principles were enforced for these most quotidian (and hence fundamental) moments. People spent hours in the line, exchanging words, favors, and ideas. Many marriages were forged in the queue, and many broke down as a consequence. Today, the queues in Polish supermarkets are characterized by impatience - after standing for a few minutes, shoppers usually demand that more cash registers be opened up, and if this does not happen, they vent their anger at the shop assistants.

Contemporary urban culture is tired of sharing with others - the sharing of space and the sharing of access. The current frustration with the queue, even if it entails a few minutes of waiting, is a sad litmus test of the actual contempt for a egalitarian ethos of the queue - and the silent encroachment of the what Jacques Ranciere described as a "hatred for democracy".

Kacper Pobłocki – Polish anthropologist, urban activist and writer

The Moral Ambiguities of Sharing

JAN MAZUR

In fact, sharing is not only moral, it is essential. We need sharing to form a society, which is based on common values, concepts and space shared

photo: Jan Mazur

Recently, Bratislava hosted probably the largest demonstrations in its history following the assassination of a young journalist and his fiancée. At their peak, 50-60 thousand people were neatly packed together on the poorly developed public space in the very center of the city, in front of a monument devoted to the WW2 Slovak National Uprising.

People came to show solidarity, demand accountability and to calmly express their shared discontent with current state of public affairs. The gathering showed the immense value of shared space: space for political demonstration, public discourse, and civic engagement. The governmental negligence and incompetence the people were protesting seemed echoed in their very environment as that same space is one of the many that has received little attention from the city representatives over the past several decades.

The corruption which sparked the protests can spur another ethical issue, one reflected in the gathering itself, is sharing in cities moral or efficient? In its phrasing, the question creates a sense of false dichotomy – cannot sharing be both moral and efficient at the same time?

In fact, sharing is not only moral, it is essential. We need sharing to form a society, which is based on common values, concepts and space shared. In ancient Greece, the idea of polis meant both city and a body of citizens, connecting the physical proximity with political power and self-governance. So too, for most of our history, sharing was something unwittingly natural to human societies – it happened when it did – and if we admit that forming a society is a good idea, then sharing must surely be an integral component of civilization itself.

Recently, we have started to think of sharing in terms of efficiency as well; sharing idle resources – besides the sharing space or values – not only makes sense, but it has become rather simple. It's hard to imagine any recent urban policy initiative that would not mention sharing or the sharing economy. Sharing has become so pervasive that it affects more or less every aspect of the urban economy – from transportation, long- or short-term accommodation, work space, technology, or even – unsuccessfully – personal umbrellas.

Sharing idle resources indicates increased efficiency in resource utilization. Yet, the true peer-to-peer sharing economy models, more sensitive to local concerns, have not (yet) been able to expand on the scale some had anticipated. Instead, it appears that concentrated economic powers, disguised as sharing economy models, get the upper hand, sometimes to the detriment of local communities.

It is not that Uber or Airbnb do not use idle resources or that individuals may not benefit from their business models. It appears that some of these businesses often push the limits of efficiency ever further, beyond the limits of law and morality, although others have decided to introduce corrective measures on their "creative destruction".

It is the cities where spatial sharing takes its most notable realization – we are packed into densely populated cities sharing streets, squares, shops, elevators, roads, cafeterias. While we have long-adapted to shared spaces, physical infrastructure, and numerous services, we are still figuring out the limits of novel sharing economy businesses.

Jan Mazur - lawyer and researcher, co-leads the Old Market Hall Alliance's EU-co-funded project Shared Cities: Creative Momentum in Bratislava, works as a lawyer at crowdinvesting platform Crowdberry. Jan studies public administration at Hertie School of Governance in Berlin and lectures at Comenius University in Bratislava.

TIME'S UP *for politics*

MILOTA SIDOROVÁ

Without understanding the process of reprivatisation, it is difficult to understand the post-communist relation to property, sharing, and urban space

The history of Central Europe is an unsettled one. In the span of a century, our social, political, and economic systems – along with their associated values – were reset no less than four times.[1] When analysing the contemporary political involvement of the generation just coming of age, it is important to consider how these different systems affected the organization of the society and what bearing they may have on its current manifestation.

Communist society was defined on two levels: the national and the individual. Almost all the aspects of one's life were defined by state, and it has been implied that nothing existed between the state and the individual. Since the 1990's, most of Central and Eastern European countries have accepted, to some degree, the decentralization laws and rechannelled the responsibilities back to the level of local governments and counties, which means another level of governance has been (re)opened.

Themes of urban development and the quality of urban life, particularly the quality of public spaces, have been resonating since the late 1990s. These were overlapping points where activists, citizens, and experts came into direct contact with planning administration and (mostly) local politicians. These first encounters between civic society representatives and the larger system were mostly negative, with citizens and activists taking a critical stance against the political leadership.

Citizens of the 90's mostly organized themselves around environmental issues. They were protesting against massive developments emerging in the new democratic cities as well as enclaves which lacked regulations and where politicians had little to no care for the negative ecological impact their communities had to endure.

It is interesting that, in Central Europe, we (still) witness a significant age gap between the current politicians (mostly from communist and post-communist era) and the active young population. While this new generation clearly has ambitions for better social and professional conditions, they are typically inhibited from engaging in traditional politics, like entering parties or even participating in elections. Generally, very few of them choose to work inside the public administration or run as politicians - to actively share in the responsibility for their cities' development.
After traditional activists and urban experts have attempted for decades to change cities, with varying degrees of success, the first leaders from a generation who experienced democracy during their youth have arrived, and they share one thing in common. Most of them have had international experiences whether from school, work, or simply the ability for unlimited travel abroad.

Most of them were, to some degree, activists or engaged in community work. In general, they are highly creative and claim to want to improve their home cities, citing foreign cases as references for their ideas and reforms. A familiar story developed, they would explain that, as they aged, aspects of society and their professions were not changing as quickly nor in directions they wanted, so they had to take responsibility and enter politics themselves. It comes as no coincidence that most of these candidacies start on the level of local governments.

1 1918 - Collapse of Habsburg Empire, transition into national states, 1930'-1945' - Fasist governments, 1948 - 1989 - Communistic regime, 1989 - transition into capitalist Democracy.

Assume Responsibility

MATÚŠ VALLO

activist, architect, candidate for Mayor of Bratislava 2018, Bratislava, Slovakia

photo: Vallo

Why politics?
Criticism without solutions doesn't get us anywhere. But after some time, we have realized that whenever we or the other active people in this city had any solution, the current city leadership didn't utilize it at all. We have decided to take the responsibility into our own hands and enter politics.

You introduced your program in the publication *Plan for Bratislava*. Who is behind it?
I wouldn't have run without this book. I got the idea first idea for *Plan for Bratislava* after my return from New York in 2011. When the decision came and I asked people to join me in writing, I added that if I were a mayor I would built on real things captured in this book. People liked the idea, so we brought together twelve chapters outlining where Bratislava should be heading in the future. These 60 experts united in 'Platform for Bratislava' that remains an informal group of people who support me as a candidate in addition to the formal political 'team Vallo' that some of them joined. These experts will work with me to transform Plan for Bratislava into reality. Some will compete for jobs in municipal organizations, some of them will run as representatives in local and city councils.

If you won, what would you start with?
Everyone who becomes a mayor must deal with difficult topics like transport. We are probably the only EU capital without a parking policy, but we have also other themes: the quality of environment, disadvantaged people and, of course, public space.

What is the difference between Vallo – architect and Vallo – politician?
Although I am an architect, I strive to defend the public interest. Architects should know how to stand behind not only the people who use their buildings, but also the those who see it. Of course, the politician deals with many variables that must be perceived.

How are you different from the other candidates?
I'm not an "in rush" type of a person. I started *Plan for Bratislava* 7 years ago, so today I am finishing. During this time, I met many great experts which I find a huge advantage. Give me any question about the issues facing Bratislava, and if I cannot answer in one minute, I call a person who gives me very accurate information. Certainly, I am the most prepared candidate who, unlike the others, is running with an expert team.

What if you do not win?
I will also run as a city representative. If I do not win, there is a possibility that the campaign will bring enough voters to enter the City Council.

What do you find the biggest challenge in the current political setting?
It is not difficult to come up with an idea. The most important thing is to get the support of the others, make compromises and realize it. The biggest challenge is to bring together different conflicted parties and groups to finally start working for Bratislava.

And do you have such a talent for communication?
For the past 22 years, I have managed an architecture studio and a music group. It's a type of artform, bringing these people together. So yes, I hope so.

More Women in Politics

KSENIJA RADOVANOVIC

architect, activist Belgrade on Water, candidate for local election in Belgrade 2018, Belgrade, Serbia

photo: Vladimir Živojinović for VICE Srbija

If political culture is ever to change, it needs more young, educated women says Jón Gnarr, the famous Reykjavík ex-Mayor. Central and Eastern Europe is an ideal battleground for this issue, with most of the countries having only around 20% of politicians being women.

Although the EU is a strong supporter for gender equality, tools to balance male and female chances have been followed with strong resistance from the media and current politicians in power. Succinctly, gender equality is not a popular term in Central European EU member countries. So, when we are talking about Serbia, a country outside of the EU and a country known for its patriarchal and militant system, the story of Ksenija Radovanović casts longer shadows than elsewhere.

Radovanović has been focusing her efforts on the Serbian capital for quite some time, where she initially studied and graduated from the University of Belgrade. She is a member of the Ministry of Space, a do-tank from Belgrade that connects social activists, socially engaged artists, architects, and citizens. Radovanović is also a part Ne da(vi)mo Beograd [*Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own*], a broader coalition of individuals, professionals, and organizations raising critical voices against the imposition of the Belgrade Waterfront project for its lack of transparency and exclusion of the public, citizens, and professionals.

This initiative has earned a notable reputation for its campaigns which have been led through institutions, public talks, research and information dissemination, media engagement, publications in print media and accompanied by campaigns of civil disobedience and protests that have grown to include more than 20,000 people on the streets of Belgrade.

The decision to run for local politics was a natural step for Ms. Radovanović, who is intent on widening the arena for citizens' voices to be heard and channel the energy from protests.

Radovanović says that women in politics often have to fight on two fronts. The first deals with the stereotypical, patriarchal environment where "they have to prove themselves", and the second is the political front. In a society whose history (and present) is significantly marked by strong masculine leaders, she says that their choice to have a female representative on the ballot was a statement on the necessity for equal rights and representation. On the day of elections, there were 24 party lists present, and Ksenija's was the only female name on the entire ballot.

The initiative list of nominees for *Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own* reflected the participation of women and men in their local political activities which resulted in more female than male candidates. She says, it is not just about a (male) leader as such simplification doesn't add much to recognizing the actual contribution and everyday sacrifice of the team - and changing the system of politics.

Gender equality must manifest itself through the absolute equal participation of both men and women in political life, not just a number on a piece of paper. She believes there is a female perspective that is more likely to avoid muscle flexing and take a broader perspective to strategically address issues of the day.

Whether in her political or expert careers, Radovanović would like to foster citizen's participation in planning practice. Representatives of different sexes and genders, social, education, race and age should be included into all political decisions.

Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own did not formally enter the City Council, but for Radovanović this is not over. She added:

"We will continue to open new battlegrounds, learn, connect and empower each other as we have seen that well-informed, interested, and persistent citizens were able to tackle and deal with important issues with greater energy and clearer intentions than our institutional representatives".

Political Resilience

REBEKA SZABÓ

Deputy Mayor, Budapest 14 - Zugló, Budapest, Hungary

photo: Szabó

Rebeka Szabó is a Hungarian biologist, ecologist and politician. She started her political career directly in the National Assembly where she was elected as a representative for the Politics Can Be Different (LMP) party and served from 2010 - 2014. After the 2014 local elections, she was appointed Deputy Mayor of Zugló (Budapest 14th district) for the left-wing green party, Párbeszéd Magyarországért (Dialogue for Hungary).

What are the important topics and vision you strive to make a reality?
Our vision is to build a community that is able to cherish its own values, protect its green environment and implement its developmental projects along the lines of sustainability; a community which cares for its citizens and a place where people like to live and find it worthwhile to invest in.

Our crucial aim is to decrease social problems, especially for those groups who are lagging behind. We have initiated a new housing decree, which allows a more transparent and fair distribution of council-owned apartments for those in need. We have a strong emphasis on participatory processes. With the involvement of citizens, we can solve challenges related to sustainable mobility, financed by funds from two EU operational programs. We are in the INTERREG Central Europe application process with projects focused on promoting a circular economy and energy efficient building renovations.

How do you manage to push your vision on the local politics?
The composition of the Zugló district, which is equally split between supporters of the government (Fidesz) and left-wing opposition members, implies there's a need for continuous coordination and compromises, which does take a lot of energy and time from working on actual development.

What is the biggest challenge in your work?
The Hungarian local government system is generally an old-fashioned, strongly bureaucratic, and heavily centralized system. Many tasks belong to Budapest; it often causes severe hardships (when we face a problem in our district but have no power to deal with it). In this system, it is difficult to accept initiatives from citizens or district councils.

The district receives most of its funds (especially in social and public health policies) through the state's normative distribution. Since funds through centralized tenders are often distributed on a political basis, the district council is barely able to fulfil its duties lacking financial capacities for larger projects.

The biggest challenge of the District Council is to comply with modern approaches towards operation, planning, and developmental requirements. The lack of comprehensive information and knowledge management leads to serious issues. There is a chronic lack of data, which is another huge problem.

Do you have some advice for those thinking about entering politics?
Set the core values that will serve you as a basis for all policies and decisions. Elaborate a clear vision of important goals and changes you want to achieve. Politics works through compromises. The decision-making process always includes deals on different levels, so it is essential to always keep the original values and goals in mind.

The Mission of Taking Public Office

MICHAŁ KRASUCKI

Conservation Officer,
The City of Warsaw,
Warsaw, Poland

photo: Krasucki

Although the 90´s and the beginning of a new millennium saw a significant flow of young Polish (and other Central and European) citizens seeking better conditions for studying or working in the West, leaving was never an option for Michal Krasucki. Warsaw, a city he has a heartfelt connection with, was his home.

Krasucki graduated from the University of Warsaw with a degree in art history. He has worked in , among others, the control department of the Voivodship Office for the Conservation of Monuments and ran a private research project, laboratory for monument research and documentation. He was also a member and president of the Warsaw branch of the Society for the Protection of Monuments (Towarzystwo Opieki nad Zabytkami). Replace withzamienic na: He has initiated many social work campaigns such as the annual Open Apartments Festival (Festiwal Otwarte Mieszkania).

After years of individual projects, he decided it was time to switch sides and change strategies. According to his own words, the only way he saw to change the system of protecting monuments and buildings in Warsaw was to start working for the local government. Krasucki was appointed as a specialist in the Department of Monument Conservation in 2015. During his first year in the office, he was responsible for granting permission to real-estate investments in the city. Due to strong pressure from the national government on the local municipalities, his own office faced staff changes and Krasucki lost his position. Currently, he is the Director for City Conservation and deals with funding programs, research projects as well as working on the Culture Park in Warsaw.

Similar to most other millennials, he has entered public office by being active on social media. But when asked about the most signficant change he has noticed since entering office, he responded: *"The city of Warsaw has taught me how to be responsible for my own words at all times. Practical changes have come, for example, to my Facebook account. Since 2015, it is no longer a private but public tool, and I have to be really aware of what I am saying to not foster any trouble. You also cannot show your anger to the people. On the contrary, you have to accept them and find deals with them."*

This change of mindset is the key difference between a critical activist and someone who is suddenly involved in creating the system. Krasucki claims that such a change is not very popular in the eyes of the public, but there are more former activists and people with non-governmental backgrounds working for Warsaw at the moment. *"We have created a network, and we know each other very well,"* Krasucki noted.

Although he admits there are difficulties stemming from a hesitance for change, political pressures, and the general bureaucracy related to the administration, he is determined not to leave the office until his task is done. That means creating a well-thought-out system of protecting monuments, parks, and buildings in Warsaw. Since protecting history in a city that was razed to the ground and has since been facing considerable developmental pressures, achieving his goal is a bit of long shot and an uphill battle.

What will happen if he isn't successful? Krasucki sees his future in the system, although not in the political sphere, but as an expert working for regional or national administrations. *´´Then I can create a program for the whole of Poland. Being a conservator is a life-long mission´´*, he adds.

A Growing Appetite for Change

LENKA BURGEROVÁ

architect, Municipal District Councillor, Prague 7, Prague, Czech Republic

photo: Burgerová

Lenka Burgerová, the architect and professor, decided to enter politics after a controversial case involving a tender for a new municipal district hall in Prague 7 caught her attention. She joined a civic initiative, *Praha 7 sobě*, which pushed for a referendum to change the tender's proposal. Experts demanded an architectural competition and a reasonable price limit. After struggling with the former leadership, a court decision set the referendum on the day of a presidential election. Due to high level of attendance, the referendum passed. *Praha 7 sobě* decided to use the energy garnered from this action and had one of their participants run for local government. A success came when their candidate won with more than 40% of the vote, and Lenka Burgerová became a councilor for urban development.

How would you describe your achievements?
We found something that really bothered people. Basically, we had small changes that added up to what you can call a pleasant environment for life. This means we have schools and kindergartens for your children; we take care of the public space; we organize cultural events for people who live here. We keep a rational head when it comes to funding; we avoid corruption scandals, and we are conscious of the need to preserve and maintain cultural monuments.

What are you particularly proud of?
We incorporate elements that animate public space into all new housing projects. We always make investors pay for the restoration of the pavement, plant treelined alleyways, contribute to civil infrastructure like schools and kindergartens, and push to have the ground floors open wherever possible. We are also working on reviving the river shores, supporting projects the City Hall has prepared. If the shores are private, we find deals with the owners to make them accessible to the public. Recently, we managed to change the public's perception of the northern bank of the Vltava by opening a simple gravel road through private property.

***Praha 7 sobě* will run on at the city level in the upcoming elections in October 2018...**
We want to manage Prague the way we do Prague 7. We have experience working with the public administration, and although it is not easy, we still have a lot of energy. I believe the changes in Prague 7 are visible to citizens of other municipal districts. At the moment, we are collecting 100,000 signatures so that we can run with Jan Čižinský, as our candidate for mayor.

What differences do you find between being an architect and a politician?
Every architect or urban planner should have experience in politics. Then they will know that often the smallest projects are extremely important for people who are watching them through their windows. The politician should be a guardian of continuity and meaningful connection among all incoming projects.

What would you advise to people who are thinking about entering politics?
You will face different pressures, such as the benefits brought from bribing. The easiest thing to do is to always say the same thing, to always give the same information. We do not make a difference between investors, and we provide everyone with the same quality of information. I also think it is necessary for architects and urban planners to work not only with the perspective of what will be in one year but of what will happen in 5-10 years. They are obliged to bring this perspective into the debate.

* the material was prepared by **Milota Sidorová** – a facilitator, planner, analyst, networker and feminist discovering clear facts to create effective information, opinions and observations for equitable urban planning, one of the authors of Shared Cities: Creative Momentum.

The Hidden Possibilities of Public Spaces

MAGDALENA KUBECKA, *main photo* MACIEJ KRÜGER

Official, well-known squares, plazas, or streets located usually in city centers are meant to be shared public spaces, but they often don't play this role for the local communities. So, people have started taking action themselves

Every day in Bratislava, many people pass through Kamenné Namestie, entering either the Tesco supermarket or other commercial venues. Very few spend more time in this square because there is no good reason to stop. Until the 1990s, it used to be a bustling place with a functionalist, exciting design; now, it looks sad and empty.

People have no inclination to stay in the chaotic, unpleasant square full of billboards and cars. The area is fragmented, and its missing a sense of space and continuity. It becomes even more painful when we think that this is the psychological center of the city, and the plaza, with its surroundings, should be one of the most important urban spaces in Bratislava.

It is also only a five-minute walk from the main square – Hlavne Namestie. In 2016, research carried out by Marco & Placemakers – a city design and research consultancy – showed that the square had almost no permanent users, which gave it a feeling of anonymity. Most of the activities in the area are strictly

fot. Maciej Mu

utilitarian – transition, purchase, waiting – and do not combine with any pleasant ways of spending time. Some people gather around the old Paulownia tree, but even here there is an imbalance as they are mainly men since women usually feel unsafe in this place. But we've seen a few proposals for the revitalization of the entire square recently, but the difficulties come when talking about a common vision for the space and the current status of the land ownership.

This one of the most neglected areas in the Slovakian capital city, and it is only one example of the gradual decline which represents a serious problem for many urban spaces in European cities. It has undergone dramatic development, but its current condition is quite disappointing, similar to, for example, Parade Square in Warsaw, located in front of the giant Palace of Culture and Science. It is hard to imagine such a large, under-utilized space in the very heart of a capital that is so over-extended that it excludes itself from everyday metropolitan life. Despite being located in the transport and administrative center, its role in social life seems to be marginal. It functions as a temporary bus station and a car park. The discussion over the Polish square has lasted more than 20 years now and had so many ups and downs that very few believe in the implementation of any idea there. Even in the face of a new architecture competition around it organized in 2017.

PUBLIC REALM

Public space has become an increasingly important focus in the discussion of European societies. Urban designers, architects, geographers, journalists, sociologists and others interested in improving life in cities have turned their focus on this issue, more and more often. Every sizable European city has some kind of central, main outdoor space, and this is especially so for the former socialist cities, which placed a considerable amount of significance on locations which could reinforce the grander sense of community they wanted to promote. Investments in wide boulevards, supersize

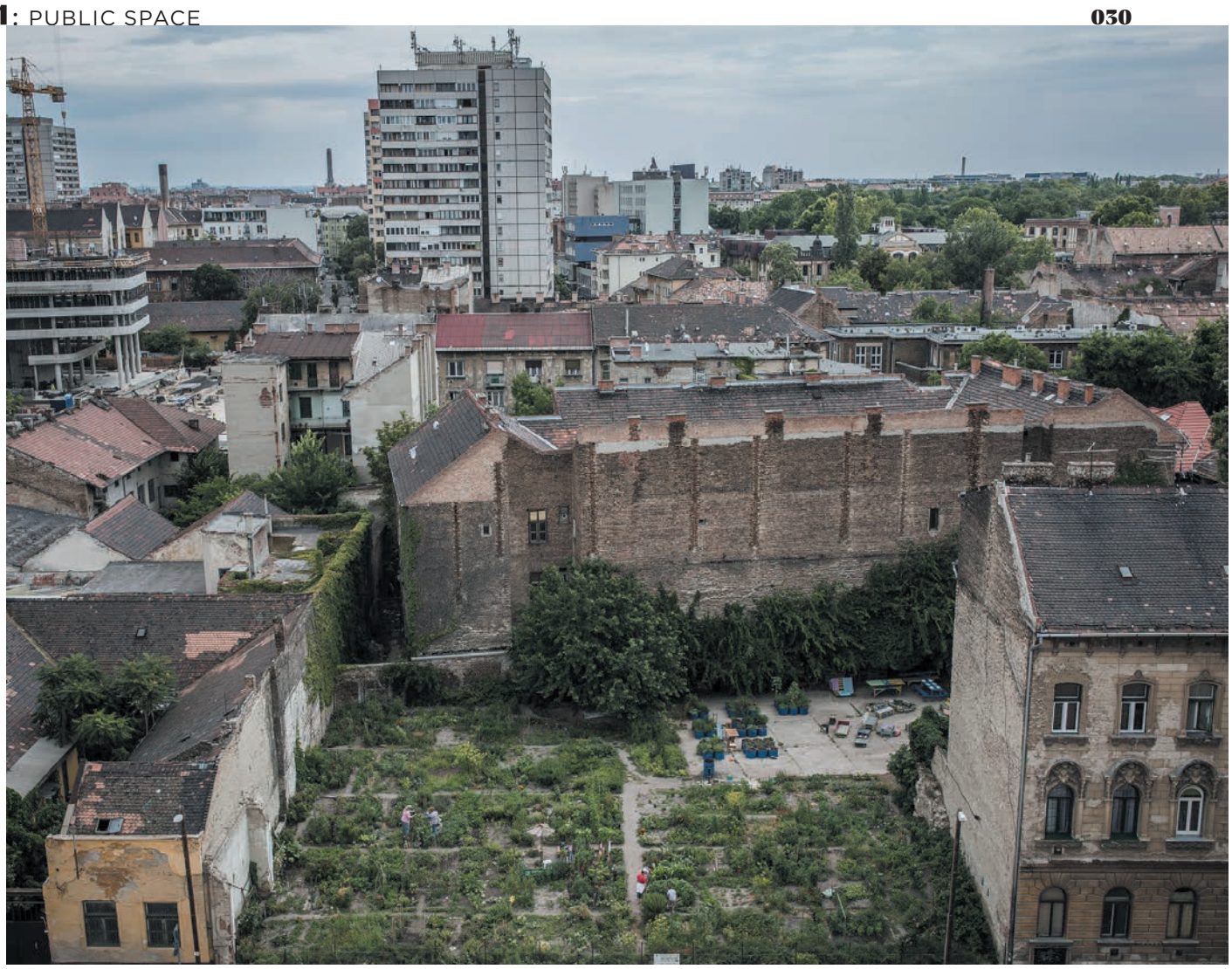


photo: Leonardo garden, Budapest, photo KEK

squares, open green parks, spacious yards in residential zones were massive.

But a public, open, and inviting character is not necessarily given or assigned to these spaces. Monumental spaces are often far from enabling an inclusive public realm. Quite a lot of them are rotting and lacking vital attributes of urban life. Many have been affected by privatization, advertising chaos, or new developments that don't meet inhabitants' expectations.

However, it is untrue that cities authorities don't pay attention to public squares. Big central spaces are often created by authorities with the purpose of improving social and public life, giving people opportunities to gather together, but also as tools for displaying the prominence of their power, disciplining the public, or winning over the electorate.

Mayors are ready to invest a lot of public money or to let in private capital, all in the name of progress. In these cases, the public space is a bone of contention and a cause of social disagreement. Different, often opposing, visions of its functions and arrangement come to the forefront.

TOP-DOWN DECISION-MAKING

Belgrade Waterfront is a project – headed by the Serbian government – which is being presented as a visionary attempt to turn a neglected stretch of land on the right bank of the Sava river into a commercial complex with office buildings, luxury apartments and hotels, promenades, green spaces, and the largest shopping mall in the region.

In this development, the disconnect between the proposals and the lifestyle of Belgrade's residents caused much anger and consternation about the forces changing the identity of their city. This is an issue of special importance as there is a considerable housing problem coupled with an increasing number of people living below the poverty line.

Citizens started protests, complaining about the lack of public consultation or discussion on that idea. *Ne da(vi)mo Beograd* movement [*Don't Let Belgrade D(r)own*] accused the project of money laundering and corruption. The Serbian government has declared a lease agreement with a private investor – a recently established real estate firm based in the United Arab Emirates – giving them access to 100 hectares of the most valuable land in Belgrade.

This project, a manifestation of large scale development without proper consultation with citizens or urbanists, sociologists, activists – is not unique. Developments in Városliget, one of the largest green zones in Budapest with an area of 1.2 km2, are other examples of top-down, controversial projects in the region. Life buzzes in this central city park all year round; many bikers, joggers, dog-walkers and families use this recreation area every day. The park also has

Nástup na terasu OD Tesco (foto: Braňo Bibel)

historical value, being one of the oldest parks in the city and in Europe. The first trees and walkways were established in 1751 and the public park was created in the first decades of the 19th century. But there was to be a new chapter of its life since the Liget Budapest Project was announced in 2011.

This is a governmental project running parallel with the reconstruction of the Buda castle district, and its aim is to create a museum district for Budapest. It plans to erect four new buildings in the park, including the new National Gallery (relocated from the Budapest Castle), the Hungarian House of Music, a Museum of Ethnography and Városliget Theatre. Although the plans of the new buildings were designed by an acknowledged Hungarian and foreign architects, working with foreign agencies, and received some positive coverage in the media, the whole idea was disapproved by many museum professionals, urbanists, politicians, public intellectuals and civil organizations.

It has been criticized mainly for encroaching on one of the most used green spaces in Budapest, a city sorely lacking public parks.

"It's being completely reconfigured, reprogramed and rebuilt to be turned into a quasi-museum quarter, where most of the largest and most tourist-oriented museums and cultural venues are to be located. No regard is being paid to what the function of a common park is, what people in the surrounding area and in Budapest general want, or what independent experts say could be a plausible and beneficial solution for a renovation and upgrading process of a crucially important park that, by the way, really does need some attention and care" – says Balint Horvath an urbanist based in Buudapest.

PEOPLE TAKE ACTION

People from KÉK Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre have their own way of bringing together locals and giving them an opportunity to share the space. One of their ideas is to initiate and manage community gardens and inspire a self-organizing movement in the city. One such project of KÉK, Leonardo Garden, operated in the 8th district of Budapest for six years. There you could smell maturing tomatoes, meet smiling people working with the soil and hear the buzzing of bees. But you were still surrounded by large tenements and apartment buildings and the other sounds we associate with the voice of a big city.

Community gardens are often located in a densely built-up inner-city area. There is little room for enlargement but actually shrubs, herbs, vegetables patches and flowerbeds don't need much space to create lush green spaces and social settings open to the public. Some of the gardens are in fact jammed between apartment buildings, located on currently empty allotments where investments were stalled by the economic crisis

Many places that create a true, public feeling are neither spectacular nor perfectly designed.

of 2008. Leonardo Garden occupied an area owned by a real estate investor company who have leased it to KÉK in 2012 for five years, until the land is used for construction purposes. This was extended until 2018 when the garden finally closed, so it can be considered as a pilot project and one of the best practices to reclaim urban spaces.

The only requirement to garden on one of the 88 parcels was to be at least 18 years old and share partially in the costs of maintaining it which was 33 euros per year. The cost included the fee of using the parcel and common facilities such as gardening tools, water, composting as well as professional guidance.

But Leonardo and the other gardens operated by KÉK are much more than just gardening; this is 1,400 square meters of public or semi-public space functioning as a meeting point and cultural area with events such as concerts, cinema shows, workshops, and educational initiatives for kids, students, and families. The community programs are available free of charge for the participants from the neighborhood and the city.

As research carried out by scientists from Szeged University in 2014 showed, approximately 200-300 participants were directly involved in Leonardo – one parcel being shared by families or a group of friends. The total number of people using this space was at least 500 including those who visited the open community events.

"The atmosphere of the place – its genius loci – can be mentioned as a special success factor. Our interviewee stated that 'people like to be here' and community-building is supported not only by common activities and programs, but also by the physical layout of the garden (e.g. a public 'core' with campfire place and home-made furniture)." – says one of the authors of the scientific report on urban diversity in Budapest1.

"Urban gardening that is suited to be a small-scale trial of self-sufficiency is capable of getting people together with diverse sociocultural backgrounds and from various age cohorts. Community gardeners have a growing sense of contribution and responsibility, they are environmentally conscious, respectful residents of the city". – writes Monika Kertész on KÉK's website.

And this is crucial for the function of public spaces in our cities. This "public" dimension can achieved by sharing control and responsibility over the space. Official, well-known squares, plazas or streets, usually in the city centers, that are meant to be shared public spaces often don't play this role for the local communities. So, people take action themselves. They tend to look for spaces that they have more influence on; they create unique and vivid areas in-between housing estates, in small gardens or just in backyards.

NOT OBVIOUSLY PUBLIC

Many places that create a true, public feeling are neither spectacular nor perfectly designed. They can be simple and plain; they can also be privately owned but still play an important role in creating public space if their managers pay attention to community benefits. In Bratislava, this is a case of the Steinplatz bar that runs around the corner from Kamenné Square, and the name shares the same German meaning as the Slovakian plaza, "stone square". This tiny bar runs in spot that used to be be a public toilet. You step down to the underground space but you can also use benches and a garden that the bar has installed outside on the level of the square.

Ten minutes' walk from here is another bar, similarly inspired but even more popular, called Papichulo. This previous public toilet is surrounded by green, so spending time there is more pleasurable. What is it about local bars that create public spaces? By taking care of their immediate surroundings and environment – installing benches, plants, lights – the bars build a new identity for the space; they improve the quality of the space, the sense of security and bring together a local crowd. Of course, they are running a business and you should buy a drink to stay there, but in fact they are reviving the existing infrastructure – which had stayed empty for years – and creating a place that serves a common purpose. These small businesses can reflect on the whole area and inspire a revitalization process.

Similar to Steinplatz, Studio Bar in Warsaw is both a club and a café all in one, which, during the summer, creates an open-air setting right in front of the entrance to the theater in the Palace of Culture and Science in the corner of Parade Square. Suddenly, people of all different ages have a reason to come and stay on this central plaza – it could be for a concert, to relax on a sunbed, or meet with friends at the 25-meter-long table

– everything is for free and open for everyone, even for those who are not clients of the bar.
Since 2013, Studio Bar is one of the most important cultural venues in the city which has attracted tens of thousands of Warsaw citizens and visitors. And what's interesting is that plenty of the events are organized by the citizens themselves, like "Sleep Warsaw, sleep" – an overnight camping on the Parade Square, a performance whose idea was to find a cozy space in the city center.

The key to their success might be that they involve the citizens' opinions in how the space is used. But it also matters that all the events are free of charge, that is possible thanks to a cooperative work of many partners and financing from the city government. The Studio Bar team has managed to encourage people from the whole city, even from the more distant parts, to come to the central plaza and spend time in this space, maybe for the first time in their lives. But what if there isn't any bar, any private or public initiative to bring people together like what has happened in the Ledine district in Belgrade?

HEART OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Ledine translates as *heath* – a nod back to the meadows which used to be here before the settlement had originated. This land around Belgrade has quickly transformed into a quite dense neighborhood characterized by self-sufficient housing. New settlers – inhabitants of a shanty town demolished in the process of city beautification in the 1960s, refugees fleeing from the Yugoslav warzones in the 1990s, internally displaced people from Kosovo in the early 2000s, and many returning from Western Europe – have had to contend with the governments' failure to provide adequate housing, so they have taken it on themselves to build their own homes and create local services.

Today, in Ledine there is an area surrounding an elementary school which has become a laboratory of placemaking, an experiment of how to create shared, public spaces in degraded zones.

With many professionals from the fields of urban studies, architecture, psychology, art, and education, a group was formed called Škograd to lead the process of changes in the area. Their goal is to improve the shared infrastructure around the school, as the only public institution in the area, and to advocate for the preservation of public space in the city. They work with children families and school staff to explore local needs and build trust and a common vision of the shared community space. Through action research, events, communal meetings, and cultural events, they want to learn how to solve public space problems in the non-planned neighborhoods of Belgrade. Ledine is only one of many illegally constructed neighborhoods with poor life conditions in city's suburbs.

We may observe that as a response to urban decay, increased privatization of public space, and social segregation in our cities, inhabitants have decided to take action. They have introduced the idea of "public space" in locations where bottom-up sharing initiatives are somehow ingrained. In fact, local, bottom-up initiatives, shared spaces in-between blocks that dwellers create themselves are often the most vivid examples of public spaces.

What is the main lesson to be learned from all these stories? If we do not yet have enough power to influence the biggest developments in our cities, let's focus on spaces that we can really shape and be part of.

Magdalena Kubecka – a researcher, a placemaker and an educator based in Warsaw.

1 *Fabula, S., D. Horváth and Z. Kovács (2014).* Governance arrangements and initiatives in Budapest, *Hungary. Szeged: University of Szeged.*

Polish Uber's travels

KAMILA SZUBA

The first time I got into a car ordered through the application was on the 14th of March 2015. Since then I have taken 312 rides through Uber. Unfortunately, I don't remember anything from that first ride, but there are a few other rides that I remember perfectly

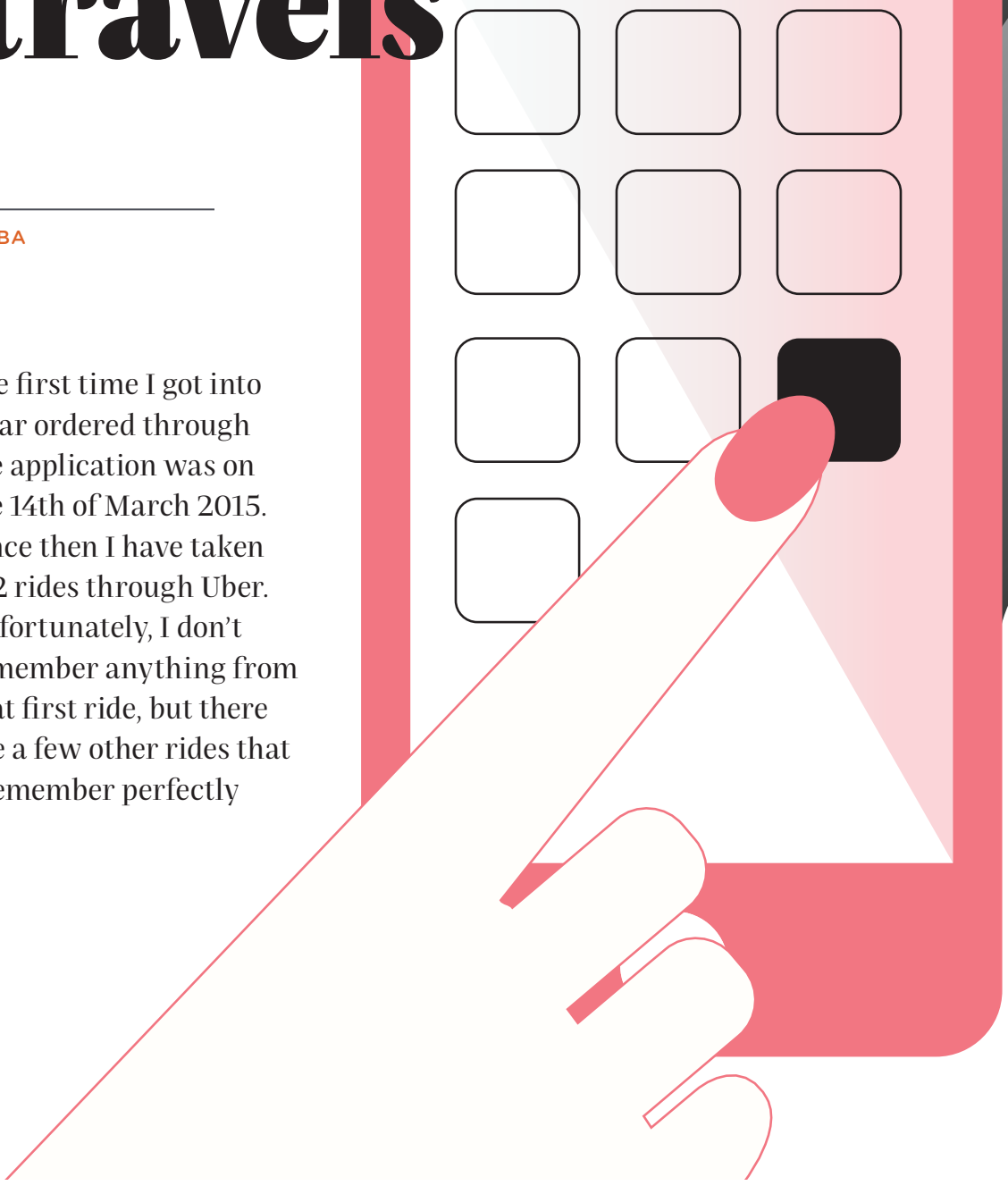


illustration: Kinga Limanowska / rzeczyobrazkowe

There was a time in my life, exactly three years ago, that I would end nearly every Warsaw party or social gathering, which tended to go on into the early hours of the morning, by telling someone about how Uber works. After giving exact instructions on how to use the application I would say: "You get in and you speed off. You don't need to have cash on you. The bank and the application take care of everything. You just get a notification of how much they charged." I had no personal interest in this. I did it because I had really fallen in love with Uber, thanks to how much easier it had made my life. I wanted to praise it and help it make others' lives easier as well.

A UNIVERSAL REMEDY

Ever since I can remember, I have found it difficult calling a taxi on the phone. I hated doing it, especially in the middle of the night, when it would be difficult to get through, and once I did, I would sometimes end up having to convince a stranger over the phone that the intersection at which I was currently standing did in fact really exist.

Uber had also won over my heart with its payment method; I no longer had to carry cash. Since I live on the outskirts of Warsaw, fifteen kilometers away from the city center, every weekend ride with a regular taxi company would cost me a small fortune. To top this off, the price could fluctuate by even 1/3 – it seemed to be dictated merely by the mood the driver might currently be in. I could never quite calculate what a reasonable rate for a kilometer might actually be or understand where one zone ended and the other began.

People who lived a similar distance from the center as me, but in neighborhoods still within the city limits, paid half of what I was being charged. This felt like a great and incomprehensible injustice.

It was also rarely nice. The vast majority of the drivers were glum and weren't very talkative, they would listen to irritatingly loud music, and their cars had that specific stench of aged upholstery. They would make snide remarks about the distance, or my heavy baggage or the flowers I received for my birthday.

After these experiences, I was thrilled when I heard about Uber. It was like a cure for all my problems. It didn't require calling any corporation's headquarters or having any cash on me. It didn't care about zones or city limits. The rates I had to pay went down significantly and didn't depend on what day of the week it was. The impossible became possible. Finally, I felt I was paying a fair price.

THE BEAUTIFUL BEGINNINGS

It was the middle of the summer and the night was nearing its end. I was returning home from one of those hip places by the Wisła river, which I can't quite tell apart. My driver looked like someone I could have met just a second ago at one of these spots. His car was new and well kept, and it smelled nice inside. The radio was playing, not too loudly, one of my favorite songs.

The driver worked in an advertisement agency as an art director, and, in his free time, he organized a small, yearly film festival outside of Warsaw. He explained that he drove Uber at night because he liked to meet people, and he liked when there was a lot going on. It relaxed him. He didn't need to make extra money because he could afford everything. He treated Uber as a hobby.

We rode down a bypass road, off on the horizon the sun was slowly coming up illuminating the gray serpentines of the road.

"I'd drive down to the seaside, since we're already on this road" I joked.

"So would I. Let's go." He said sounding fairly serious.

We sat in silence for a moment, as though both of us were contemplating actually doing this.

"I don't think I can afford it." I said finally.

"We could split the costs fifty-fifty, but I don't think I could, I have some boring but important meeting tomorrow."

A few minutes later, we drove up to my house and discussed life while the engine was still running. A week

later I saw him with his friends at one of the Warsaw clubs. One of my first Uber drivers was someone from "my world". He didn't resemble the taxi drivers I had met up until then in any way. For the next two years, none of the drivers I met resembled those from my now fading memories of uncomfortable taxis. Uber really did bring into my life a new standard, not just because of its technical solutions but, most of all, for its "human" aspect. The drivers were usually about thirty; they were happy; they had something cool to say; they treated driving as side job. It gave them pleasure and was an extra source of income, which no one was forcing on them. They showed no signs of fatigue or anger.

Thanks to these experiences, for a long time I believed that Uber had come close to my understanding of what "sharing economy" means. I trustingly accepted the whole package. I felt no need to further analyze the situation. Everything appeared to be clear, honest, and simple. So you have your own car, you have time, and you want to earn some extra money, then "drive when you want to and as much as you want to"* – as the slogan says on Uber's main web page. Peer-to-peer. That's the deal!

BUSINESS IS BUSINESS

After two calm years, individuals rooted in the old system started seeping in, trying to make money off of the work of others or fix some kind of side deal. I rode with a driver who, right after I closed the door, asked me what I did for a living. I told him that I'm a photographer and asked him the same question. He told me he had a printing business which due to too much competition recently wasn't doing very well, so he started driving through Uber on nights. He would look for new clients this way, and since he seemed to meet so many interesting people he gave them his business card. He already had regular customers. He would regularly drive Agnieszka Holland and Paweł Pawlikowski, the creator of the Oscar winning "Ida". He wanted to write a book about interesting people. He even hired a ghostwriter, who would do it for him. They would meet once a week and he would tell him about how the rides went.

"This book will be a hit. I'll call it "*Uber Life*! Everyone I drive wants to be in it!" he said excitedly.

Next, I discovered drivers drawn in by the "dynamic

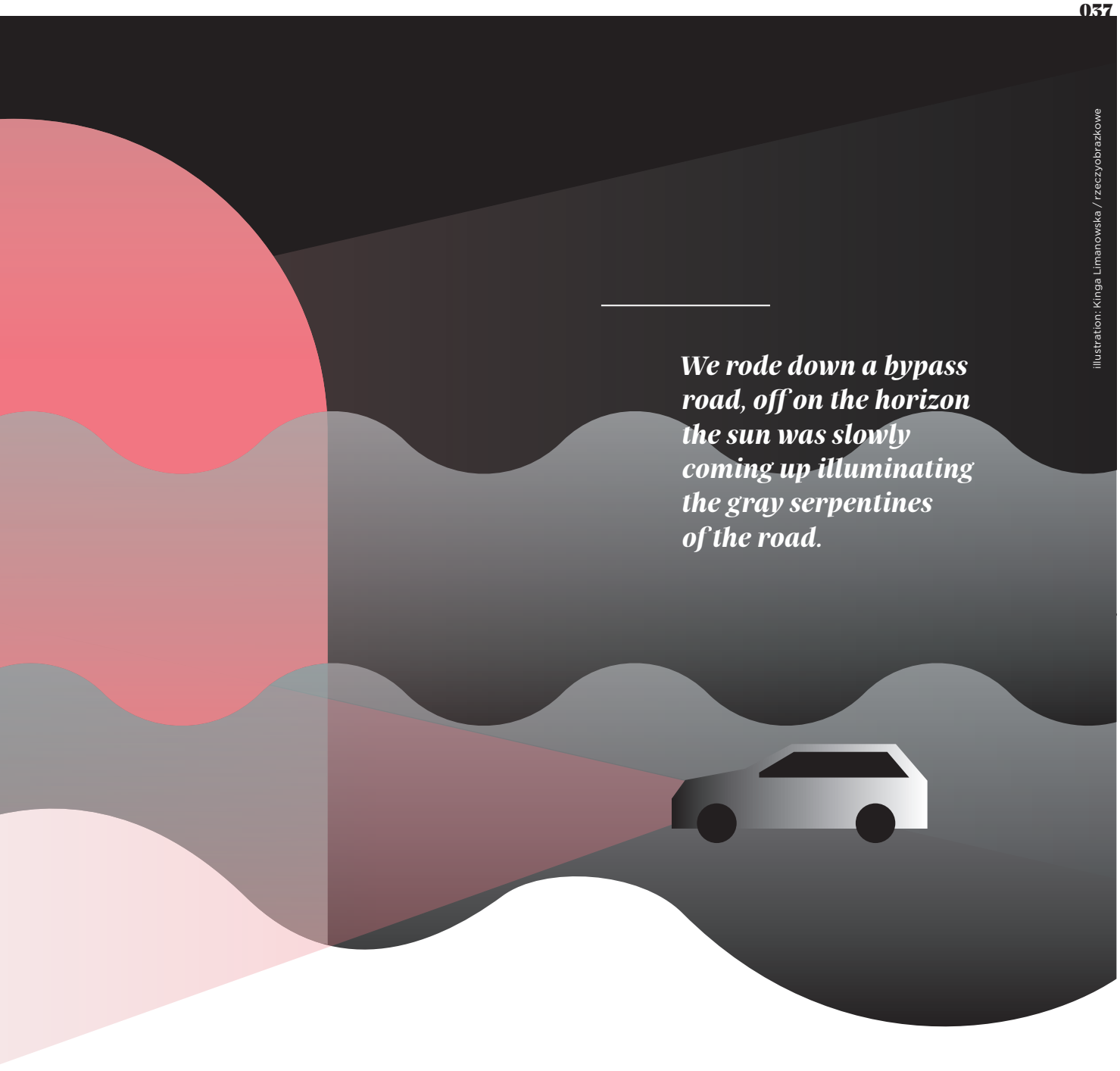


illustration: Kinga Limanowska / rzeczyobrazkowe

We rode down a bypass road, off on the horizon the sun was slowly coming up illuminating the gray serpentines of the road.

price list". They worked on the weekends for 12 hours a day. They would drive to the center from towns tens of kilometers away from Warsaw. They would sleep in their cars and drive out again. On Friday and Saturday nights, when there was the highest demand for drivers, the price would go up several fold usually, so it became profitable for them. Thanks to these rates one could earn in two days a pretty decent monthly salary.

Then came the companies that lent cars to drivers who didn't have their own cars. Back in the first days of Uber's activity in Poland, a driver had to meet strict requirements. Today, you can have a car produced in 1999 and still drive for Uber, in a nineteen-year-old car. To add to this, Uber requires that drivers be self-employed, so pretty soon companies that would deal with this problem started popping up. Companies offering the service of "joining a partner".

Self-proclaimed Uber businessman put advertisements on the internet:

"Work for Uber without being self-employed, only 40 zlotys a week! We are a business offering complex cooperation with Uber, without the necessity of starting your own business. (...) This offer is for drivers who have their own car, or for those who would like to rent a vehicle from our fleet (this offer is only for active Uber drivers).
Working with us you get all the benefits of being an Uber driver – you drive when and how much you would like, you choose your own hours, there is no boss hanging over your head, and we transfer money to your account once a week."

And a little more point-blank:

"We will hire you on a job order contract, take care of your taxes and pay your insurance. We are against "bamboozling", everything we do is 100% in accordance with the current law, so you rest assured that you are not working 'off the books'."

The cost of "joining a partner" depends on the company and the range of services they provide. Looking through different websites and posts left by drivers on forums on recruitment sites, I noticed that their range is quite significant, sometimes tenfold. Additionally, once a week the partner will charge a provision of 30-45% of the driver's income. Uber itself takes a 25% provision. Taking

this into account, it is difficult to calculate the average salary a driver makes. There are many factors to be taken into account such as what kind of gasoline the driver might use, and does he have to pay for it on his own.

I'm not going to go into the controversies that Uber has sparked in many countries over the years, such as insisting it's only role is of an intermediary between drivers and clients as opposed to that of employer. It has sparked similar controversies in Poland, and there have been proposals to limit Uber's activity, though among neoliberal politicians this is unlikely to gain support.

THE RISE OF ANIMOSITIES

One night, I got lost in a little-known neighborhood in Warsaw. I ordered an Uber. "Good evening!" I exclaimed getting into the car. Dark eyes merely blinked at me through the driver's rearview mirror. I had seen similar eyes during my short visit in the UK. He was a young man from Iraq or maybe Pakistan. What was he doing out here in the middle of nowhere? We drove for quite a while in silence. I had the impression that he was afraid of me. He'd sometimes just glance at the mirror and then make sure we were going in the right direction because he had never been here.

At some point, I asked him where he was from, and I saw him hesitate. He was from Iraq.... He had been living here six years. He quickly added that he doesn't usually tell people this because their reactions tend to be quite varied, but he had a feeling that he could trust me.

Recently, he's been afraid to leave his house because there isn't a day that someone doesn't insult him or give him a hard time. He didn't like to take public transportation or walk on the street for this reason. If someone asked him where he was from he'd say "from far away". He said this was all television's fault and that the media aren't aware that they are stirring up fear in people, feeding hatred, and raising racists. He said that Poland has changed a lot in these last few years.

This was one of the shades of hatred that I came to know thanks to Uber. The second wave of hatred came to me thanks to taxi drivers waging war on the application. I once met the head of such a gang.

It all happened in Łódz; I left the train station, and after hesitating for a moment whether or not to order an Uber, I decided on taking a taxi instead. In the car, I had to listen to a rant about Uber drivers – my driver had turned out to be the leader of the Taxi Drivers Union. When our ride came to an end he handed me a flier containing tons of false information defaming Uber drivers.

It didn't take long for this hatred to spill out. Not much later in Warsaw and in other Polish cities, there were incidents of "Uber driver hunts" and "civil arrests", which brought to light the truly shameful way the discussion on the legality of work tied to the application. The accusations made by the taxi drivers regarding their new competitors – such as not using a taxi license, cash register, or paying their VAT tax abroad – would have sounded more reasonable had they not reverted to violence. Facebook erupted with fan pages propagating hatred and encouraging "witch hunts", and their followers boasted about their disgusting accomplishments.

Today, we can see that the taxi drivers couldn't stop the changes being brought about by Uber, some corporations even created their own applications for ordering cars. But a certain driver who once came to pick me up, seems to be really making the most of this new reality. He drove up to my house in a taxi cab even though I ordered him on Uber. Noticing my bewilderment, he explained that he uses the application when he doesn't currently have any rides commissioned from his taxi corporation because he doesn't like to waste time.

THE CLASH

It's the middle of the day as I get off a train at the Dworzec Zachodni (Western Train Station). I order an Uber because I don't feel like taking the bus with my heavy suitcase. A few minutes pass and a brand new shiny car rolls up. A young man sits behind the wheel, the "poet" or "pianist" type, complete with a swirl of curly hair, wearing a purple velvet shawl and a stretched out brown sweater. He sat in a seat with a cover made of interfacing, which of course caught my attention.

The driver was from Belarus and had recently come to Warsaw to study. We have a long and interesting conversation about the history and relationship between our countries; we exchange words which sounded similar and looked for those that sounded completely different. He has an incredible knowledge of history and memory for dates, dropping them with ease. He will be doing his Masters in Chemistry. I find out many fascinating things from him about a country that is so close, yet seems so far away. I ask him many questions, but I didn't have the courage to ask him about the covers on the seats, which in my head has crime-film connotations. We arrived at my house, I wished him all the best and got out.

That was I think the only time, that I was certain, that I was riding a rental car, and I felt very uncomfortable in it, even despite the warm feelings that my driver evoked. This episode was one of the first times something didn't feel right, so I decided to look into how indirect people could cooperate with Uber. I looked for information on the internet and found forums where drivers that were used by their partners would cry out a river, and a war waged between the "zloters" and the "uberers". There were no discussions about anything except for money, every conversation revolved around it.

This seemed to correspond with what I saw on Uber's official page. After reading their enticing blurb "Work with specialists from your field – people who care about your development and are eager to help" I clicked on the link that read "Meet people", which lead me to a page which that said "Sorry, this page doesn't exist. Over the years we have moved things, and this must have gotten lost in the process." Indeed, something in Uber's ideals based on the values of a "sharing economy" must have gotten lost somewhere. The application grew so intimidatingly fast, so much so that Uber seems to be living a life of its own, with the associated collection local problems.

After reading dozens of comments on forums, I am under the impression that there is no longer anyone in control of the process of choosing and employing drivers and that the beautiful ideals once boasted by Uber have crashed into reality and shattered.

Unprofessional "partners" are feeding off of the work of immigrants, offering them indecent conditions of work often not paying them their salaries. People work for 70 hours a week and have no real benefits from this, and sometimes (no idea why?) they even end up in debt towards their employers. It happens that dishonest partners pay them their monthly salary and suddenly inform them that they had been earning from three to six zlotys (0.80 – 1.70 USD) an hour.

Unfortunately, this problem most often affects economic immigrants from Ukraine, who, if one is to trust information from forums, make up now 80% of Polish Uber drivers. Amongst the people I have had the pleasure of riding with, there have been citizens of various countries, as well as retired people and those hard of hearing. As a matter of fact, the only issue that came to mind – when considering the question of diversity amongst the drivers – was the fact that throughout my three years of riding with Uber, I have been driven by only six women. Over three hundred rides and just six women. I tell myself that this is because of the late hours I usually order Uber. Maybe women for some reason don't want to work at night. From conversations I've had with friends who often take daytime rides, I know that more women drive during those hours, though the scale still isn't mind blowing.

I order Uber much less recently, but I sometimes still meet interesting personalities who are worth telling another story all together, although they treat Uber as an extra means of making money, contrary to what the creators of the application had in mind. One of them is Janusz, who drove Madonna.

Janusz embodies everything that could be considered a classic example of a positive image of a Warsaw taxi driver with principles – incredible stories, a con-artists twinkle in his eye, and bling on his finger. He's seventy five years old already and is still searching for love. He drives Uber to earn some extra money on top of his retirement pension although he used to drive a cab. He is passionate about gambling, although we'd probably call that an addiction these days. He's won a lot, and he's also lost a lot – supposedly a million dollars in the casino in the Marriott.

I met him in June last year on a day when I was in a big hurry. He showed up and started the conversation himself, talking about the prices of land in the area in the 90s, then the subject changed to Lublin, from which I had just gotten back.

It turned out Janusz really loved visiting that part of country, recalling fond memories. "You know how much I drove there? I had this job, I drove Hassids there, I drove Cabalists. For years I'd drive them around Poland. From New York, from Israel, they'd come to visit graves of important Hassids. I got the job by accident. What happened was, a few days before Martial Law was enforced, I ended up in America and couldn't go back home. So, I stayed until communism in Poland fell. During those years I worked in a grocery store in Greenpoint, I had many friends there. I also had friends in many casinos. When they learned I wanted to go back to Poland, they promised they'd get me a job here. I got back. I lost everything I had, and then the phone rang.

A friend who was a New York rabbi said, that he's got a bunch of Jewish friends that need to be driven around. They pointed out where to go and I started driving them." This sounded on the verge of unbelievable, so I asked him "Have you ever been to Leżajsk?" (because I kind of know Leżajsk). "Of course I've been to Leżajsk, I stayed at the Elimelech hotel!" He said and started describing how everything looks there. It turned out there are many places connected to Cabala in Poland, and at the end I found out that "You know what lady? I once drove Madonna, she sat right next to me, just as you're sitting next to me right now! And the funny part is, that they had to explain to me, who she is. He called me, this guy Michael, and he says "Janusz! Madonna is coming!" And I say to him "Who?" "Madonna!" "Who the hell is she?"

Kamila Szuba – professional photographer, graduate of Polish Philology at University of Warsaw.

*note from translator: this is a translation of the Polish slogan. Uber may have used other slogans in different countries.

photo: Martin Grill, Flickr, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Travelling Beyond Communism

DAVID BÁRTA

What are the mindsets around mobility in Krakow and Brno? The cities function quite differently, but they are also great foils to their urban mobility planning pasts, forged under communism

Air pollution, highly congested roads, induced traffic, infrastructure-oriented thinking and planning – these are the major commonalities among post-communist Central European cities. As ambitions for smart cities grow and their creation openly promoted across the region, sustainable mobility and low-carbon mobility issues can be used to highlight key success stories as well as deficiencies. The progress of smart-city concepts can be assessed by the data driven culture, wise (integrated) investment planning, sustainable urban development, and social cohesion incentives; the clue to each urban shift is if there is any actual progress in the people's mindset living in those cities.

Let's have a closer look at two cities – the Polish city of Krakow (pop. 760k) and the Czech city of Brno (pop. 400k) – which are among the more advanced cities in the CEE region in relation to mobility and the smart city concept. Their strategies are more or less heading to sustainable and low carbon urban mobility based on a long-term perspective, support of public transport, the promotion of cycling and walking, the implementation of unified parking policy, electromobility, and city center access control.

The post-communist CEE cities' progress towards sustainable and low carbon mobility is strongly influenced by the lack of transport infrastructure, knowledge of useful technologies, and consistent urban and traffic planning supported by political commitment expressed in a cohesive long-term vision.

The key step forward lies in the development of a culture that shares successful as well as failed practices among the CEE cities as well as common innovative projects which bring together people with the relevant skills, technological knowledge, and other new tools and procedures. Sharing this knowledge among cities entails the creation of a CEE market for innovations, especially for those primarily developed within the region. This is a key element for supporting sustainable and low carbon mobility based on sharing infrastructure and responsibility for the mobility model's effects in CEE cities.

#1

Main goals

Krakow´s vision is connected with vast investment into fast urban trains, new tram lines and P+R network, means of traffic information provision, and data collection. These are key local instruments for sustainable mobility.

The new Transport Policy in many places includes the SUMP (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan) concept widely promoted by the European Commission, which is a new planning concept that responds in a more sustainable and integrated way to challenges and problems related to transport in urban areas.

The main goal of this approach is to create a sustainable transport system in Krakow through increasing the efficiency of passenger and cargo transport in the city, providing all residents with access to jobs and services, ensuring the comfort and safety of urban transport, increasing the attractiveness and quality of the urban environment as well as reducing pollution, the greenhouse effect, and the level of energy consumption by transporting passengers and loads into the city. The Transport Policy for the City of Krakow for 2016 – 2025's general objective is to *create conditions for efficient and safe movement of people and goods while limiting harmful impact on the natural environment and living conditions of residents and improving communication accessibility within the city, as well as metropolitan area, voivodeship and country in conditions of sustainable mobility in urban transport system*.

The city states that its main goals are to ensure the possibility of convenient movement of users of the transport system in internal and external connections and develop and promote ecological forms of travel as well as to improve the natural environment, reduce transport nuisance for residents and increase their general safety. Krakow also aims to increase the efficiency of spatial planning and transport and improve the city's image in order to build up its prestige.

But all of these targets are set without any specific policy commitments expressed in numbers. This is a common characteristic for post-communist countries cities compared to the continuously evaluated smart city movements, like Vienna's[1]. Comparing this case, Brno is the city with a longer-term vision, Transport 2050, which expresses the shift to sustainable mobility. It empowers urban planners and politicians to make decisions when redesigning urban space; however, it is only oriented towards transport with no energy or ICT concerns.

#2

Infrastructure

The main deficiencies of post-communist cities consist of an insufficient or non-existent infrastructure, so the new transport policy implementation is limited and requires considerable investment as well as time.

Krakow has designed the investments wisely and is focusing on fast public transport covering all the key directions to access the city centre and the related network of P+R facilities (10 existing, 16 more planned). Almost all P+R are situated along the fast rail track so public transport is to become competitive to car traffic regarding travel time, and it enables the city to make further efficient parking policy regulation and support alternative modes of transport (e.g. private car sharing, like Traficar). It looks like the Krakow mindset is reflected in the policy supporting the shift to the low carbon mobility. The municipality prefers car sharing built on electromobility (for ecological reasons), so it plans to launch the first 30 electric BMW i-3 managed by a private company at the end of June 2018 and is currently building a network of chargers for the cars.

While planning new investments, Brno, on the contrary, is still oriented on privately owned cars. In the text of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, the city specifies that the sustainable inner city traffic solution is achievable only after the highway ring around the city is finished. The expected traffic induction is not perceived as a problem. This car-first-mindset of Brno is reflected in the long and unsuccessful preparation of a tender on bike sharing, an almost 10-year preparation for a residential parking scheme (to be introduced in the autumn 2018), and the 100-year debate over the location of the new main train station, which now seems to be coming to an end. A great illustration of Brno's lackluster progress in this field is the withdrawal of an electric car sharing service after 3 years of operation due to the dearth of charging infrastructure and the inability to deploy any new charging charging stations.

#3

Parking policy

One of the major steps for successful sustainable and low carbon mobility implementation is a parking policy based on zoning. Krakow is much more advanced than Brno regarding parking policy and the related tools. As both cities claim a deficiency of parking spaces, Krakow is gradually providing new payment options; in Brno, on the other hand, one can pay just by coins (new payment terminals are just being purchased).

Krakow has also designed parking zones that have proven to be a good measure for traffic policy (several zones, i.e. simple and widely comprehensible) – the city center became a zone without cars which stimulated businesses to return to the center and revived the commerce in the area, enlivening the high streets once again. In contrast, Brno is preparing residential parking which at the first sight seems to be very complex and complicated and does not tackle the issue of cars in the center.

The Paid Parking Zone in Krakow is the area characterized by a considerable deficiency in parking spaces. The paid parking zone works during the weekdays, from Monday to Friday between 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. The payment for parking in the paid parking zone can be done with money inserted into a parking meter; using a mobile phone through a mobile operator: MobiParking-SkyCash, moBILET, Pango; by buying a parking subscription, with the Krakow City Card (option available only in the subzones P1I, P1II, P1III, P1IV, P2 and P3); and with credit cards including PayPass and PayWave (option unavailable in the subzones P2, P4, P5, P6I to P6V, P7, P8).

As mentioned above, Brno has prepared the scheme for parking regulation based on residential parking. The intention to deploy such a system has been postponed several times and should be launched in the autumn of 2018. The prices for residential parking are still not known. The overall concept is based on the "rule of flower blossom" which means that as a resident you can park not only at your street but also at the adjacent streets within a particular zone irrespective of the city district. This is very positive in ignoring administration division of the city (major problem e.g. in Prague with no natural borderlines), but it is harder to understand and the deployment will be difficult. The car traffic mind set is strict – no radical restrictions, no low carbon mobility issues...

#4

Cycling

There are cyclists who advocate bicycling through Krakow or Brno as the best means of transport. But the cities' average resident still considers biking to be a recreational activity and good exercise but few consider it to be a viable alternative to a car and/or public transportation. This is projected in the cycling support but also in the perception of cycling as something uncomfortable and dangerous in both cities.

Krakow, in comparison to Brno, has deployed 9 cycling counters and an additional 5 will be deployed soon, so the necessary data collection is being done. Brno does not have any progressive measures; the bike sharing provider (ca 50 bikes) is an advertisement company that is testing the concept in Brno for a planned deployment in Prague. At the same time, the city has a cycling community, Jezdím pro Brno, that does not have any significant impact on traffic planning.

The other very representative aspect of mobility culture is the local attitude to electromobility. The Polish law now requires Krakow to offer at least 210 electric charger points by the end of 2020 (for cars). At the moment, the city offers six points on two municipal parking lots "P&R", and the rest will probably be delivered by private companies. But Krakow is a leader in the area of electric buses – it is gradually increasing their fleet, and special chargers for them are being built now. Currently, the electric buses sector in Krakow uses 26 and are expecting to have other 160 vehicles. The net of buses chargers is getting bigger too – 28 "plug in" and 3 "pantograph" type already work, other 4 will be ready this year (2018). The future issue of Krakow is electromobility – a big project launched and promoted by the Polish government that, as Krakow hopes, will let the city improve the very bad quality of air. However, this plan will take years to implement.

Brno does not support electromobility though the bus fleet has been upgraded by CNG buses. However, there is already a large fleet of trams and trolleys operating, but there are no direct policies to build an electric-car infrastructure yet.

#5

Sharing platforms

Krakow has deployed a system for smart parking which enables access to data about parking occupancy in several places around the city. Another tool, InfoParking, is a free application that easily allows you to locate paid parking meters, rates, and payment options in a particular parking zone. For public transport, the krakow.jakdojade.pl website and the jakdojade app for smartphones works very well.

Brno just provides an app for reporting malfunctions, www.brnaciprobrno.cz. The status of traffic including available parking is provided via www. doprava-brno.cz and allows for the filtering of information on a single map. The real time public transport planner is provided by DPMBinfo app where you can also buy a ticket via sms.

Both cities create city data platforms that provide information about the city. Krakow´s data observatory2 is a first step of opening data to developers. The observatory provides information about urban planning, noise, green spaces etc. but does not provide data on traffic.

In comparison, Brno provides in its new data platform large sets of data 3 for traffic: there are 12 data-set areas, e.g. number of journeys travelled in the region, congestion issues and traffic intensities on the main roads and highways, traffic incidents, and mobile operators' data on commuting etc. Brno prepared the data platform for three years and launched it in March, 2018. The platform is a strong tool for data driven governance of the city. But as the overview above shows, Krakow as a much more advanced city though Brno has shown a surprising amount of progress in different areas of mobility. The two significant projects, Brno ID and Intesmog, give reason to hope.

Brno ID is a platform enabling citizens to buy a long-term ticket for public transport via the website and to choose the means of the ticket (e.g. a bank card can become the ticket). It is a killer application that provided the city with about 60,000 user accounts who can use the service to also pay fees for waste collection, buy tourist cards, or vote for participatory projects. The platform was formed with the intention to extend the services continually; the next service ahead is the provision of the means functionality to city libraries and other city services like swimming pools, theatres, and other cultural events. The platform is also becoming a communication tool informing the citizens about city events – a platform of sharing different aspects of the urban life.

Intesmog (2019 – 2020) is a large project to be co-funded by the State Fund of Environment as a potential showcase of new technologies implemented for decision making when smog or bad air quality occurs. It will also play a role of a proof of concept of technological solutions for launching the planned low emission zone within the city. It is based on the deployment of a vast IoT network within a larger zone (the Traffic Burden Management System, TBMS) enabling the measurement of traffic congestion on every street in the zone. The TBMS should provide data about counting vehicles and providing their length and velocity. The network will be complemented with 12 air quality stations with standard methods of measuring as the low cost IoT stations have been found unreliable and inaccurate. The information on air quality will be displayed on 14 variable message signs (VMS) deployed at the main entrances to the zone. The main goal of the project is to provide data for public discussion on the traffic burden and related air quality through different tools – a website, videos, web cameras interface etc. The data will be open and the subject of several hackathons to provide new innovative services to citizens that can have an impact on the decision making of the citizens (e.g. where I really want to buy a flat) as well as urban and traffic planning (e.g. parking policy support). Every street is to have a website with long term air quality and traffic burden information.

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1 www.wien.gv.at/stadtentwicklung/studien/pdf/b008384b.pdf, page 17
2 www.msip.um.krakow.pl/obserwatorium
3 www.data.brno.cz/data/?query=doprava

Finnish Houses for Warsaw

ANDRZEJ GÓRZ
& DARIUSZ ŚMIECHOWSKI

In 1945, the first post-war residential neighborhood was set up for the employees of the Warsaw Reconstruction Office (BOS) – Górny Ujazdów (Upper Ujazdów). The colony consisted of 90 wooden houses assembled from prefabricated elements. The USSR had received these houses from Finland as a kind of war tribute and had passed on several hundred of them to Poland.

The Jazdów Finnish house neighborhood reaches from Piękna Street up to the Ujazdów Castle. One could say that it is a self-contained urban unit. Within the neighborhood's original layout – or in its close proximity – one could find a well, public baths, a preschool, an elementary school, an after-school club, a small chapel, a grocery store, a kiosk, an ice skating rink, a luge track, and a ski jump. The houses were assembled very quickly and were officially handed over for use on August 1, 1945.

Over the years, the number of houses gradually decreased. They were taken apart, and the land under them was regained for subsequent investments.

In 2012, an additional four houses were taken down under the pretext of "cleaning up" the area, in preparation for a local development plan for the area, which had yet to be drawn up. Today in the Jazdów neighborhood, there are 27 Finnish houses (seven are inhabited, 15 are used by nongovernmental organizations, and five are currently not being used by anyone).

A VILLAGE *in the Center of Town*

ANDRZEJ GÓRZ & EWA ZIELIŃSKA

Warsaw's Jazdów is a micro-scale city, both in the spatial sense and in the social sense. It is also a city experiment in which new means of co-managing public space are tested.

Photo Karolina Bondar

One could say that Jazdów is a diverse, healthy, and multifunctional segment of the city that stands out merely because of its wooden buildings. If that were so, then the new model of management would be just an unnecessary addition, a multiplying of entities, and the neighborhood could be just as well managed as a homeowner's association.

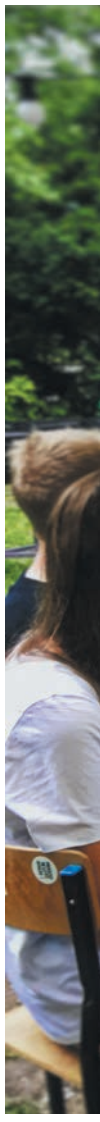
However, the situation is complicated by the fact that the Jazdów "community" is only a small part a larger group of actual residents. In reality, Jazdów is a meeting place of social activists – inhabitants of Warsaw or the surrounding areas – who, however trivial or grandiloquent this may sound, are brought together by a shared devotion to a public mission.

The interest of so many people in the affairs of Jazdów could be connected to the peculiarities of its history that give it its unique identity. Jazdów's history, as one of Warsaw's first two medieval settlements, starts off with a magical element: back then, the location of a settlement was never chosen arbitrarily – it was believed that these kinds of places were characterized by special, esoteric qualities.

No less important is the role Jazdów played in Warsaw's rebirth from its post-war trauma. It was here that the first neighborhood was constructed in the ruined city after the Second World War for the employees of the Warsaw Reconstruction Office (BOS). Equally interesting is the history of the cosmopolitan houses that made their journey from Finland through the USSR to Poland. After being taken down, several of them were sent off to various parts of the country.

Jazdów's most recent history is also set in a curious context: Europe's economic crisis led to an outburst of various "self-help" initiatives (such as cooperatives, systems of moneyless exchange, the use of space free of charge and offering free cultural attractions), which, without the pressing need of working around the failing economic system, came to Poland mostly as trends. At the same time, the conflict over preserving the neighborhood coincided with the dynamic growth of urban movements in 2010-2011, which were fighting for a friendlier, more balanced, and sustainable city.

Photo: Karolina Bondar



It comes as no surprise that the idea of defending the neighborhood quickly found many allies and became an event that mobilized many of Warsaw's social activists to the extent that almost 100 people took part in the public consultations that lasted half a year, all of whom spent from three to 30 hours of their free time in intensive workshops.

The values held by the urban movements which are still valid today – concern for the balanced and sustainable development of the city as well as a sense of responsibility for the common good – are reflected in the physical and social fabric of the neighborhood. That is to say, Jazdów is itself a city on a micro-scale, both in the physical and social sense.

It is the kind of urban space that allows for interaction and gives one the sense of being amongst people, but without the necessity of staying in close contact with everyone. Although from the spatial point of view, Jazdów may appear to be an "un-modern" urban-village; from the social perspective, it is a meeting point where social activities overlap, accumulate, and mutually accelerate each-others' development.

A LABORATORY FOR URBAN SOCIAL INITIATIVES

This kind of space offers an area for urban experiments which can be conducted more quickly and more effectively than in other places. Thanks to the close proximity of groups from various sectors that are in close contact with each other, many projects that are conceived on Friday can be launched on Monday.

This, in turn, makes Jazdów a magnet for people who feel blocked in their institutional environments; they choose Jazdów as an alternative space for self-realization. Thanks to this, Jazdów is becoming more and more innovative in the social dimension – something that is still undervalued in Poland.

To give an example, experimental module classes have been conducted that reach beyond their narrowly understood disciplines: project and research based classes for students of sociology and architectural landscaping, international cooperation between universities, or practical classes for preschoolers in the community gardens. A large chunk of the work that is done within the Open Jazdów project is carried out by scientists, educators, and students representing Warsaw's universities.

The lack of funds for the implementation of various activities has proven to not be much of an obstacle. International cooperation can take place online if need be, and thanks to the commitment of people representing various institutions, the necessary funds can be collected by putting together small sums from various sources. Besides, Jazdów's informal system of exchange allows organizations and institutions to share space, equipment, and tools as well as knowledge and experience.

Despite the fact that most of the initiatives that take place in the Jazdów neighborhood are possible thanks to social work, they have become important events not just for Warsaw, but even for the rest of Poland and Europe. It was here that the founding group of the project *The City – our Common Cause (Miasto Wspólna Sprawa)* – an informal coalition of Warsaw's grassroots social initiatives – first met.

The members of the coalition make considerable efforts to create local community centers, to preserve traces of local history that are meaningful for the inhabitants as well as promote local events and cultural hotspots. A growing network of similar initiatives in Europe re:Kreators has added Open Jazdów to its initiative group. Transition Towns – a network originating in Great Britain and which embraces over a thousand initiatives from all over the world – works using similar tools as Jazdów. such as community gardens, neighborhood meetings, joint ecological undertakings, and creating educational programs.

RURAL SPRAWL

"The Finnish houses are a disgrace" – was the title of an interview with Wojciech Bartelski, the former city representative of Warsaw's downtown Śródmieście district, who didn't exactly have the best opinion of the Jazdów Neighborhood. "The city center cannot be cheap. The center has to make money in order to develop. (...) Skyscrapers mean investors. Although residents don't really like the skyscrapers, it's thanks to them that we have so much money. We're at the forefront of Europe and we are developing rapidly," he said. This wasn't exactly in line with the words of the mayor of the city, who stated that "today the measure of how modern a city is, is the degree to which its inhabitants are involved its governance."

It can be concluded that the community of Open Jazdów took up the challenge set up by both of the representatives of Warsaw's City Council. The community took a stand against a vision of development that relies on privatizing profits and socializing the costs of investments, depriving the inhabitants of their voices and ignoring the historical and environmental heritage of the city. The Jazdów neighborhood has become a source of good practices in the sustainable development of urban space, community co-governance, and even in specific regulations. The village in the center of town had a spirit that began to spread.

THE CO-GOVERNANCE MODEL AS A POLITICAL POSTULATE

The goals which Open Jazdów is striving to achieve – postulating the creation of a co-governance model for the area – have, in a sense, a political dimension. Politics are the influence behind creating a relationship between the occupants and the space and nature of the city.

Political change is also the reaffirmation of a vision of the city in which the inhabitants are not treated as merely purchasing power or as clients of public

The goals which Open Jazdów is striving to achieve – postulating the creation of a co-governance model for the area – have, in a sense, a political dimension.

institutions but are first and foremost a self-governing community, a *polis*. Within the *polis*, they should have an actual (not just opinion-forming) role in the decision-making process.

The goal, therefore, is to create a new tool for participation, within which part of the responsibility for urban space will be transferred to the community. Such a tool would not only allow for changes in public space thanks to micro-projects but would also guarantee its strategic development.

In the long term, the aim is to build a healthy urban quarter based on democratic principles carried out at a level lower than the current municipal system in Poland envisions. This vision means simultaneously, as we mentioned earlier, creating a thriving and living neighborhood, not just a wax museum but a hub for the creative class or even a tourist attraction. The need to create a pleasant living area for communal activities and for the spending of free time is apolitical. Creating a non-commercial offer that allows for this is still rare in the dynamically developing city center of Warsaw. Despite the fact that the beginnings of Open Jazdów were marked with conflict with the City Representative of Śródmieście, the Open Jazdów community has proved throughout its several year history that it is open to dialogue and building mutual trust. During this time, it has cooperated with representatives of the Warsaw Council, working in cooperation on neighborly initiatives and developing post-consultation development plans.

However, the frequent changes in the district's governance, as well as the multitude of subjects involved in managing the Jazdów project, make it difficult to think of the development of the neighborhood in any strategic manner. This is why it is imperative to create a model example of commitment from all sides for a long-term process of cooperation based on clear (transparent) and specified principles where the "weakness" (financial, decision-making) of the community's side is balanced by legal regulations concerning the co-governance of urban space.

Photo Karolina Bondar

RECOMMENDATION.
KEEP PUBLIC SPACE PUBLIC!

We are well aware that Jazdów will continue to be "open" only as long as it remains public property and not a club, accessible to only a specific circle of friends. In this sense, the participation of the City Council is something that can guarantee its public status.

However, this also creates obvious problems. Unlike eco-villages, which in some aspects are similar to Jazdów, it lacks the certainty of being able to survive and the freedom in decision making that private ownership can allow for.

Acquiring this kind of autonomy is attractive, and examples in Europe show that similar groups have chosen to privatize spaces even when it would involve enormous costs. The financial burden would be taken by international funds, such as the Swiss Abendrot, which buy public properties in order to safeguard them from speculation. This allows groups similar to Open Jazdów to work with ease, without fear of being monetized or having their social commitment used to create commercial value. Other examples, such as Chrisitania in Copenhagen, awaken the anarchist spirit. Although today, the creators are fighting a battle to regulate how the area is being used, several decades ago, they started out by spontaneously taking over, in a sense squatting on, an entire quarter of the city.

Thinking of Jazdów as a common good – something that belongs not only to the group which has been engaged in the process of its protection and development but also as something that belongs to all Varsovians – we are ready to take the risk of keeping it in the public sphere. If we treat Jazdów as a place where an urban experiment is taking place, then we are creating a school of democracy, the likes of which neither we, nor anyone before us, has ever experienced.

Photo Karolina Bondar

Bologna – An Inspiration for Jazdów

WOJCIECH MATEJKO
& EWA ZIELIŃSKA

In 2014, a regulation regarding the urban common good that specifies the rules for cooperation between representatives of the city and the inhabitants of Bologna came into effect. Its courageous and unprecedented character made it a model for other cities in Italy and around the world.

The Bologna regulations allow for the active inclusion of the inhabitants so that they can cooperate with the city on projects concerning, for instance, interventions in urban space as well as ideas for improving municipal services.

All it required is that a private person, organization, or group of active citizens fill out a simple form. The citizens proposing the projects do not have to be a legally formalized entity. If the proposal is preliminarily accepted, the initiating side is invited to talk about ways of implementing the idea. After deciding on the range of responsibilities on the part of the city and of the inhabitants, the sides sign an agreement, which specifies all of the basic parameters of the project: its area, target groups, duration, the amount of funds needed for implementation, the parties responsible for various stages, and so on.

In the case of managing large public spaces, 66% of the owners should join a trust, foundation, or cooperative in order for the city to sign an agreement with them.

The passing of the legislation started the application of a new system of operating for the benefit of the urban common good. Soon after it came into effect, tens and later hundreds of propositions started flooding into the municipal offices. Currently, several hundred are being implemented. The inhabitants, with the help of the city, take care of city parks, sports fields, and green areas; they clean graffiti off of historical buildings, manage city squares, and take over buildings and city areas for cultural, social, and educational activities.

At a special ceremony held on the first anniversary of implementing the regulations, the mayor of Bologna gave an emotional speech about the values behind the solutions put in place to care for the common good. He spoke of the freedom to act for the benefit of one's neighborhood and one's neighbors. He also spoke about the enormous meaning of the common good for freedom and equality in practice in contemporary cities. He called for the treatment of the city as an intelligent network as opposed to the neoliberal idea of a smart city.

Photo Karolina Bender

Finnish Houses in the Jazdów Neighborhood

MATEUSZ POTEMPSKI

The concept of producing typical wooden houses on an industrial scale flourished in Finland in the 1930s. It is worth noting that around 1937, A. Ahlström from Varkaus, one of the biggest Finnish companies in the wood industry, employed the already well-known architect Alvar Aalto to develop a catalogue of typical houses of wooden construction.

Aalto's work, which was intermittent and lasted until the end of the war, came to fruition with the creation of a system that used light, prefabricated walls of the multilayered AA system. His main objectives were a modular construction that would be easy to assemble and could potentially expand while maintaining a low price for the consumer.

During the Second World War and its aftermath, these solutions turned out to be extremely valuable because many people had lost their homes and needed a quick, cost-effective solution. Neighborhoods of wooden houses were designed, among others, by the Office of Reconstruction within the Finnish Architects Union, which Alvar Aalto headed.

Puutalo Oy (Fin. Wooden house) was an enterprise started in 1940 by 21 businesses from all over Finland. It created a design office which had the task of preparing drawings for the production of prefabricated houses. Its director was the architect Jorma Järvi, and his team is credited with being the designers of the two models which are in the Jazdów neighborhood: Päiväkoto (day house) and Metsäkoto (forest house).

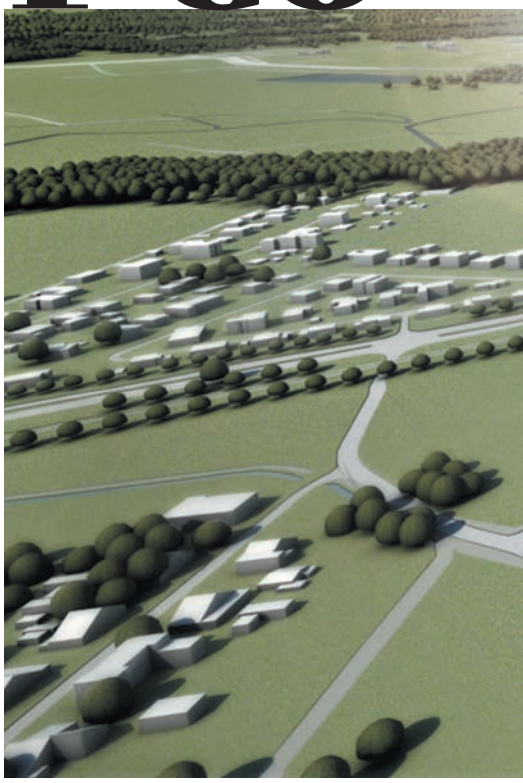
According to the promotional materials of Puutalo Oy, a house with an area of about 60 m² could be assembled similarly to a Lego model by three people within three weeks. In Finland alone, during the war and after it, about 100,000 were assembled. The architectural methods used for the Finnish houses in the Jazdów neighborhood haven't gone out of style. In Finland today, these kinds of wooden houses are considered "the last healthy houses."

The Warsaw neighborhoods from 1945 – upper Jazdów, Pole Mokotowskie, and Lower Jazdów – were designed by the architect Jan Bogusławski. With their characteristic nest arrangement, they have been slowly evolving over the last 73 years. The two types of houses have been restructured, oftentimes without a design, by their inhabitants. Growing families would add rooms and adapt the attics to suit their needs. Twenty-seven of the houses are left standing today, and no two of them are alike. The neighborhood that was saved from being demolished in 2013 is one of the few remaining original witnesses from the times when Warsaw rose from its ruins.

The texts are from the publication *Project Community-management model fo Jazdów Settlement.* The exerpts were prepared by the redaction of Magazyn Miasta / Cities Magazine

A SENSE OF CO —

OLGA SOWA



The structure of social bonds are changing very quickly in Central European cities. Simultaneously, we have more and more elderly people and more and more single households; as a result, loneliness has become an important urban problem. Many people are missing a sense of community and would like to share the different assets of their neighborhoods while looking for new ways of living together. Following is a set of examples on how local architectural investments are starting to address this need.

Prenzlauer Berg

29 adults aged from 26 to 70, 14 children, two cats and two bunnies, these are the residents of a multigenerational house in the lively Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg. In 2009, these people had the idea that they wanted to have a communal, ecological, and self-managed home for the young and old. They exchanged thoughts, drafted plans, found suitable property and financing so that, finally, the cooperative "Lighthouse" was created.

The individual contribution they put into the project resulted in a low rotation of the residents. The geothermal installation and solar panel supported their passive construction model. Movable walls assured a flexible floor plan – the size of the apartments may transform according to the changing needs of a family. A guest flat, laundry room, and garden are all shared. Moreover, the green, outdoor space is where the spontaneous chats and organized parties take place. Every two weeks, the community gathers to discuss who may move in and make decisions about living rules and arrangements. Nursing care was not a part of the project and was to be managed individually.

However, "surrogate" grandmas who take care of their "foster" grandchildren from the neighborhood when a parent was struck ill, got help with shopping or gardening in exchange. For many of them, living in an adoptive patchwork family may be even more comfortable than with a real one – help is not taken for granted and definitely well appreciated.

—LIVING

Nowe Żerniki visualisation

Nowe Żerniki

In 1929, as part of Werkbund exhibition, Wuwa – an innovative modernist residential area, was built in the city Wrocław (then Breslau). The project became an example of good building practice and so, 85 years later, local authorities decided to refer to this success.

WuWa2, best known as Nowe Żerniki, was meant to be a flagship project of Wrocław in 2016 when the city became the European Capital of Culture. The long process of planning the district included lectures, presentations, and consultations; the final concept was prepared by architects in cooperation with ecologists, sociologists, and the eventual dwellers.

The construction of WuWa2 has been divided into three staggered phases. Aside from the low-income multi-family housing, two plots are intended for experimental co-housing. To ensure a generational mix, a kindergarten and nursing home as well as cultural center and many recreational facilities such as tennis courts, playgrounds, and sport fields will complement the area.

The development will also offer small shopping and service points as well as a park. Despite the fact that the project is not as innovative on a European-scale as its predecessor, it is a unique investment on the Polish market. Nowe Żerniki was awarded by ISOCARP congress in 2016 for its "new strategy and approach to planning and building urban housing".


photo: Sona Sadlonova

Bratislava

Stationed around 1914, the oldest seat of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Divine Saviour in the old town of Bratislava used to serve as a hospital where the nuns provided medical and social help. In 2014, they finished a project to transform the sanctuary into a modern, multifunctional spiritual, and social center.

The former hospital became a nursing home for the elderly sisters and hotel rooms for temporary accommodation. The oldest building currently houses a seat of the provincial superior, home of religious community members, and, in the attic – a library with more hotel rooms. There is a dining room, but eating outside is also available, but it is the Chapel of St. Joseph which acts as a meeting point and the social center of the entire complex.

Supplementary facilities include a kindergarten, hydro-massage room, several common spaces, fitness areas, and bike rental. Most notably, the entire complex is adapted for people with disabilities. The architects have successfully adapted the new building to the historical surroundings. The modern walls – coated in a universal, timeless grey – harmonize with the neo-Romanesque elevations. The current institution in charge of running the facilities – the Centre Salvator - invites all who long for an oasis in the metropolitan desert.

photo UM w Stargardzie

Stargard Szczeciński

Wise housing politics usually becomes a solution for many other social problems. This is what happened in Stargard Szczeciński – a town with around 70,000 residents in south-western Poland.

The Stargard Society of Social Housing (Stargardzkie Towarzystwo Budownictwa Społecznego) decided to invest in a home for people over 55 years old and aged-out foster children supported by volunteers and other employees. The young dwellers live in a separate building in private rooms with a shared kitchen while the elderly occupy the two-story building equipped with elevators and a common space where anyone can play table tennis, talk, or use computers. Senior residents and their partners own one- or two-room apartments ranging from 25 m² to 55 m², and the flats on the ground floor have private gardens which are adapted to the needs of people with physical disabilities.

The Stargard Society of Social Housing, which is responsible for the project, knew the advantages derived from living in such a community would be mutual beneficial for both age groups. The young people help the elderly with gardening and familiarize them with technical innovations while the older generation join in German classes, gymnastics and even dance parties.

The senior residents help the 18-year-olds to enter adulthood – show them how to cook, pay the bills, organise different administrational things and even sew on buttons. What's interesting is the fact that the elders are required to contribute 25% of the value of the flat and pay the rent well-lower than on the commercial market. This successful experiment shows the need of housing and community projects for different age-groups of dwellers who are in many, if not most, housing policies otherwise excluded due to their age and earning potential.


photo Lebensort Vielfalt

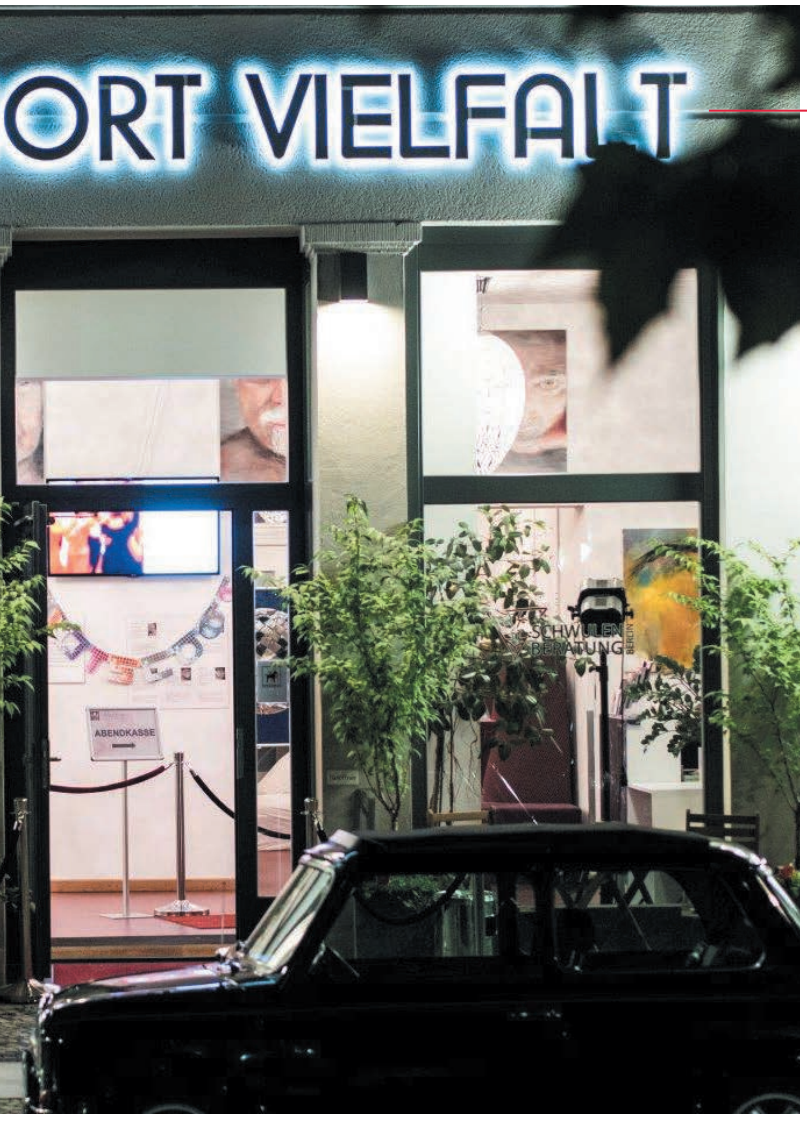
photo Lebensort Vielfalt

Western Berlin

The late 1960s brought a decriminalization of homosexual activity in both East and West Germany. Those who remember the time before it was legal to be gay wanted to make it to old age in a friendly environment.

Founded more than ten years ago, Lebensort Vielfalt – the first European housing devoted to the LGBTQ – community was developed on the western-side of Berlin. Most of the funds come from philanthropic foundations which contribute to various social and ecological projects while the rest comes from private and public loans as well as donations and sponsorship.

The process of building this place took six years, including seventeen months of construction. 60% of the tenants are gay and over 55 years old, 20% are younger than this threshold and 20% are lesbians. In addition to the 25 apartments, there is also a place for eight residents with dementia. They share a flat and have full care provided by a nurse and a member of an organization supporting LGBTQ people. The residents have a concierge at their disposal, access to a library and a common garden. On the ground floor, there is a restaurant called Wilde Oscar open to the public and where occasional events such as theatre, cabaret, or even fashion shows take place. Not every tenant was seeking to build a uniform community so some challenges occur, but for everyone it is a place where they can be wholly open about their sexuality.



Lebensort Vielfalt – the first European housing devoted to the LGBTQ / Western Berlin

Blansko

After 20 years, the school in a small Czech town of Blansko had to close its doors after it no longer fit with the new zoning plan . The town authorities, aware of the local need for affordable housing, decided to adapt the school building for social flats to assists those who could not afford a home on the commercial market, or who required assisted living.

Ten small flats in one wing were to be set aside for the elderly, with an elevator added. A courtyard pavilion was also planned, with six apartments ranging in size from 50 to 70 square metres, to provide a safe place to start a new life for young families, individuals just entering adulthood , or newly single divorced adults. There was a possibility of increasing the number of flats, should the need arise, by expanding the planned facilities. The project was aligned with the town development plans and was accepted by the town council.

Had it materialized, it would have been a good example of "recycling" abandoned or dilapidated buildings. This is a growing trend , as it increases living or commercial space that is in such short supply changes in Central European cities because of the rapid demographic. Unfortunately, the Blansko project never took off.

Olga Sowa – intern at "Magazyn Miasta: Cities Magazine", studied architecture at Politechnika Warszawska, and now studies Daily Life and Public Space at Human Geography Department in University of Utrecht.

Sharing? It should be obvious nowadays

Interview with Harmen van Sprang, Co-founder of shareNL and Sharing Cities Alliance

by MARTA ŻAKOWSKA

Consumption is changing and an increasing number of people want to have access to something instead of owning something. It is our aim to open up cities and companies to this kind of activity, and we also hope to cooperate with Central and Eastern European cities

What is so sexy about the sharing economy? Is it efficient? Useful? Moral?

It's a bit of a mix and it's up to the individual to see what the sharing economy can bring to them. In my neighborhood in Amsterdam, for example, I really appreciate the social effect of the local sharing economy. My local relationships have become deeper because we have it.

At the same time, someone else from the neighborhood might think that the social factor is less important than for example sustainable development that a sharing economy promotes and is a part of. Sharing a car lets you produce less pollution and lower carbon footprints.

For a lot of us, this might be the main reason that a sharing economy is worth investment. But for others around the world, a great reason for practicing sharing economy is also to save money. So, you might save or even earn money, develop, and deepen your local relationships and take responsibility for local and global sustainable development thanks to a sharing economy.

I would say these are three of the main reasons one might be encouraged to undertake actions and an approach based on the sharing economy. Even if you are only interested in the sharing economy because you want to make some money, you still undertake an action that is sustainable, so it's also beneficial for everyone. The answer is multi-faceted!

How does the sharing economy and culture influence your life in Amsterdam now?

It does so on different levels. Let's look more closely at a small example first. We have a large doll's house that my two daughters had in our home. When they got bored with it, we put it on our street and filled it with books and other things that we don't need any more. The idea was picked up during the last few years by the entire neighborhood. Everyone now takes something from it and puts other things back – it's a local exchange hub.

In Amsterdam, the sharing economy is intense and based online. For instance, someone from my neighborhood can rent and use my car using online tools. There are also international platforms which let us exchange our home with someone else who lives in another part of the planet. I can also borrow a drill from someone living in my city, or books, or I can cook a meal and share it with someone in the neighborhood. Thanks to this, there is quite a rich sharing online ecosystem working in Amsterdam and it's becoming global.

Thanks to you, the sharing economy also works at the city-level in Amsterdam.

Pieter van de Glind, also co-founder of shareNL, and I initiated *"Amsterdam Sharing City"* a few years ago when we declared that Amsterdam should become an urban laboratory for the sharing economy. We mapped opportunities and challenges and the city wrote an action plan describing why it wanted to become a sharing city and what this plan implied.

So, Amsterdam became one of the first cities in the world regulating Airbnb, but through regulations Amsterdam stated that it also sees loads of opportunities and wanted to create a space for the development of local sharing systems. This action plan shows the benefits the city can gain thanks to a focus on sustainability, sharing businesses, cultural practices, and politics; all of which empower the citizenry.

At the same time, you promoted knowledge about the benefits of sharing economy, which prepared the ground for this shift in business, correct?

We bring everybody to the table –from small businesses to big players like insurance and logistics companies; looking at how they can implement sharing practices in their business model. We are also running a large number of public-private partnerships on car sharing, the so-called "Green Deal".

We have more than forty organizations in the Netherlands in this partnership and the group consists of large cities, ministries, insurance companies, big car leasing companies, and car sharing platforms. We have worked with them for three years on objectives to bring more shared cars on to our roads, and there we have had considerable impact.

I drive a private lease car and my leasing company now states in the agreement that I have the right to rent out the car on a car sharing platform. And this is a way for a city to have one more shared car on the road. Of course, normally you could not do this – a leased car can be used only by you and maybe your partner. We managed to change the tradition of this company and their business model!

And it's all quite reasonable, we really need it. Consumption models are changing and more people want to have access to something – not only own something. We aim to open the minds of many more companies to this kind of work.

What has changed during the few years that you and your team have worked in this field?

A few years ago, when we started working with these companies, we were mainly teaching them about the sharing economy and the advantages and challenges, explaining it. Nowadays, more companies are stepping into the sharing economy and coming up with products and services that are based on sharing values and providing access to something instead of only owning it.

We have also observed that more companies are aware of the role of online platforms and the fact that they have to adjust their offer to these new developments. Future generations will be much more sharing-oriented than we are currently. More people will look at borrowing different things in their neighborhood thanks to online tools, and the Dutch companies have already started to see the benefits.

We founded shareNL five years ago as an independent agency. We were looking at it from two angles: opportunities and challenges of the sharing economy.

And, you started working on the 'Sharing Cities Alliance'...

In 2017, we set up a second organization, the Sharing Cities Alliance. When we initiated the Amsterdam Sharing City program a lot of cities from around the world wanted to talk about it with us and asked how and why we did this.

We were traveling all around the world to give presentations and decided at some point that a sharing economy is quite a new phenomenon for everyone. Even Airbnb is less than 10 years old. We set the Sharing Cities Alliance as a separate organization to create a space – online and off – where cities can safely collaborate and learn from each other without any private organizations looking over their shoulder.

The Alliance only involves city officials. Last year, we co-organized the "Sharing Cities Alliance Summit" in New York, and now we have cities from all around the world involved in the Alliance, such as Barcelona, Toronto, Tel Aviv, Singapore, New York, and Seoul. Different cities from all over the world join the Alliance to work on developing the sharing economy and, it works well! So, we're organizing the next summit this autumn in close collaboration with Barcelona and will also invite new cities to attend with the goal of working and sharing knowledge with all of us.

Is there any city from Central or Eastern Europe in the Alliance?

Not yet, but it doesn't indicate anything because we only started the international network last year and it has grown organically. The cities we have worked with up to now are the cities we got involved due to Amsterdam and New York connections. The 2018 summit is an invitation for cities in your region to look at the sharing economy in depth and check if it's a good opportunity for them. And we believe and know that it is.

Why?

The main reason is citizens – every citizen is becoming increasingly technologically aware and everybody sees they are gaining access to new assets through digital tools, and they can see the impact of having connections on a local level.

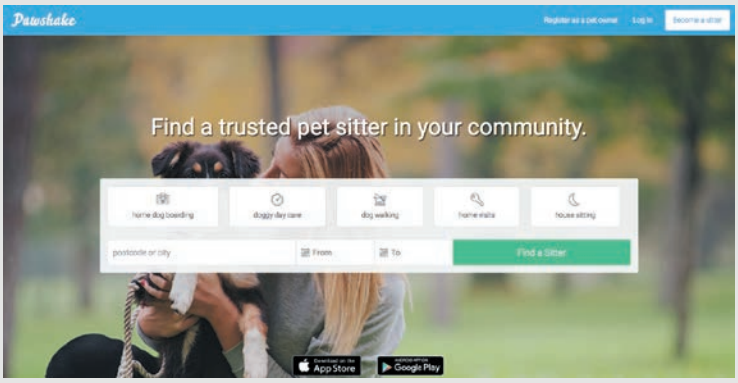
The other reason is the sustainability factor – more people are aware of a fact that we cannot consume in the same way as we have been. People are looking for opportunities for sharing and opportunities to borrow things. We also want to save money and unlock the value of homes, cars; we can, for example, rent them out occasionally and make some money off them. We can look at issues like housing, transportation, and health care – but also challenges like the aging population – and we see a lot of opportunities in terms of the sharing economy, the exchange of goods and services. One can address a lot of social and environmental challenges more easily with it and make it a more accessible and livable city using sharing economy initiatives.

Harmen van Sprang – Harmen van Sprang and Pieter van de Glind co-founded shareNL in 2013. They advise governments, businesses, and platforms worldwide through their social enterprise shareNL and their foundation, *Sharing Cities Alliance*. In the past few years, Harmen and Pieter have given 300+ presentations in cities such as Paris, Singapore, New York, and Tokyo. They are also the authors of a business book called "Share". With new technologies emerging, Harmen and Pieter and their team guide the ecosystem of businesses and governments to continually maintain the balance between humans and machines. Their purpose: "reshaping the way we live, work, and play."

Netherlands is one of the pioneers of sharing economy and culture. Let's have a look at some of the new, inspirational Dutch models.

www.pawshake.com

Pawshake



Pawshake was created in 2013 by a private company to meet a problem common for many pet owners: you are away on a business trip or holidays and you need a back-up care for your beloved cat or dog. The platform connects pet owners and pet sitters in 19 countries in Europe, Australia, Canada and New Zealand through the Pawshake website or the app. It offers services like dog walking, home boarding, or home visits (mainly for cats) . Using the platform, you can either find a pet sitter, or you can register to be a pet sitter yourself.

The use of Pawshake is free, but it charges a 19% fee per booking. Pet sitters registered on the platform determine their own prices. Pawshake takes care of payments, ensures the quality and trustworthiness of services provided, and offers 24/7 customer support. There are no other, hidden costs. Pet owners can send messages, book and pay the sitter, share photo-updates etc. Pet sitters can post and update their profile, inform of their availability, price, and other details. After a booking, the pet owner can rate the sitter's services on their profile. On every booking, the pet is insured.

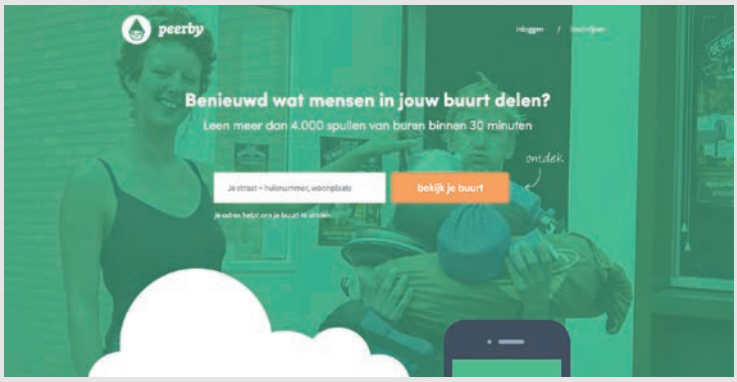
www.thuisafgehaald.nl

Thuisafgehaald

At Thuisafgehaald you can share your home-cooked meals with your neighbours. You go to the website, fill in your address in Netherlands and see on the screen what meals are available in your neighbourhood. If you can't pick up the food, because of a disability, for example, the platform can search for a cook nearby who can bring it to you. Thuisafgehaald is a for-profit, socially engaged enterprise that brings sustainable added value to society. Every day hundreds of people share their food using the platform.

www.peerby.com

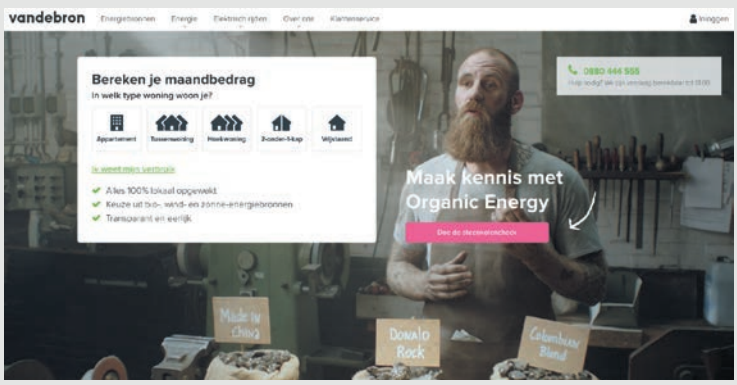
Peerby



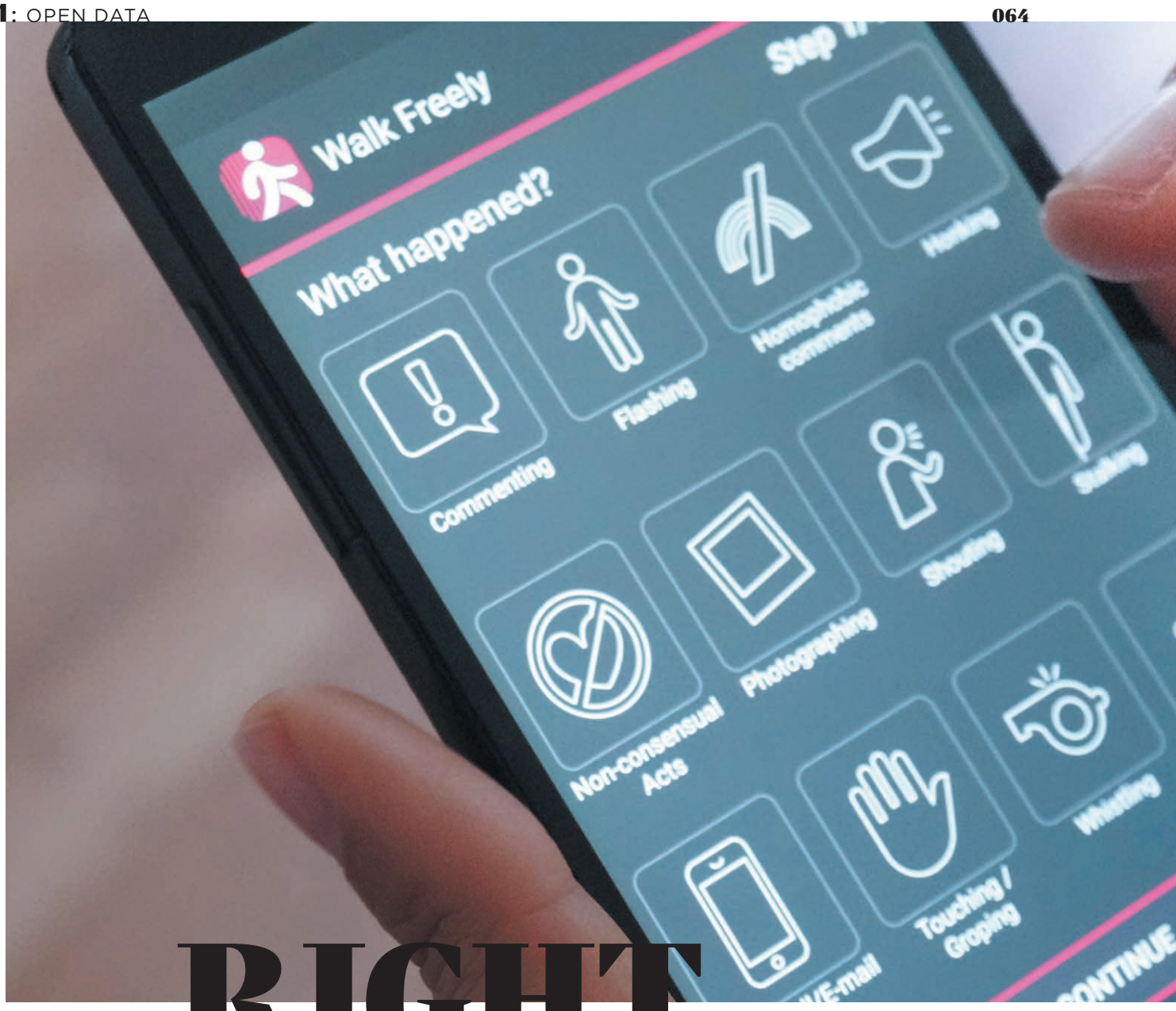
Peerby is a Dutch website that allows you to borrow the things you need from others living nearby. Peerby was launched in the summer of 2012 after its founder, Daan Weddepohl, who had lost his house in a fire, realized that somewhere in the neighbourhood someone had everything he needed, usually collecting dust in cupboards and attics. Initially a lot of people thought that nobody would want to share, but Weddepohl soon discovered just the opposite. He launched Peerby as a business with a social mission that is as important as building a successful company. Today people of all ages in the whole country use the platform on a daily basis.

www.vandebron.nl

Vandebron



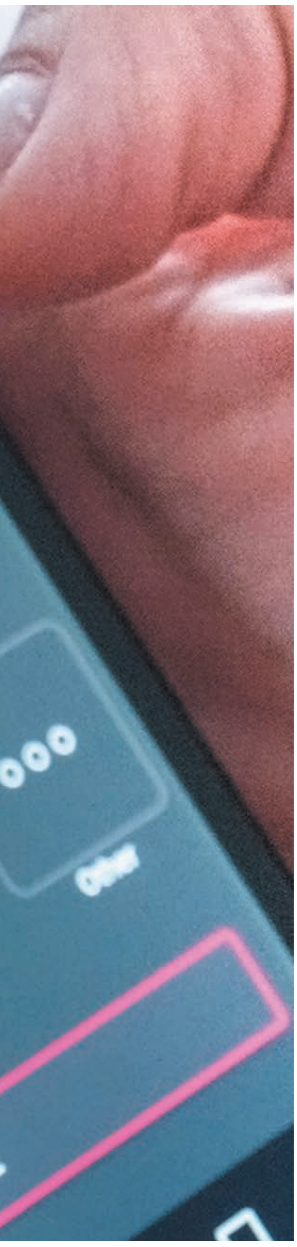
Vandebron is an online peer-to-peer marketplace for renewable energy set up in 2014. It connects 130.000 customers with about 120 local energy producers, bypassing the middleman, i.e. large energy corporations. Vandebron operates a subscription-based online platform, charging a flat fee . You can describe it as an Airbnb-style site for electricity, cutting utilities out of the transaction entirely. With this concept, Vandebron was the first to enable consumers to personally choose from which source they get their energy. The sources are local independent producers of wind, solar, water or biomass energy, such as for example farmers with wind turbines in their fields. Today Vandebron is a knowledgeable, fast-growing and sustainable company, and it is shaking up the traditional markets. Its mission is to remodel the energy market and work towards a 100% green and local energy in the Netherlands. The company believes that in the future, everyone will be both the energy producer and the energy consumer ,while the traditional energy supplier will change from a trader into a service supplier.



RIGHT *to* KNOW

NADIIA BABYNSKA & ALICJA PESZKOWSKA

Technology is not just an invention that people employ, but the means by which we reinvent our relationship with the world and thus – ourselves



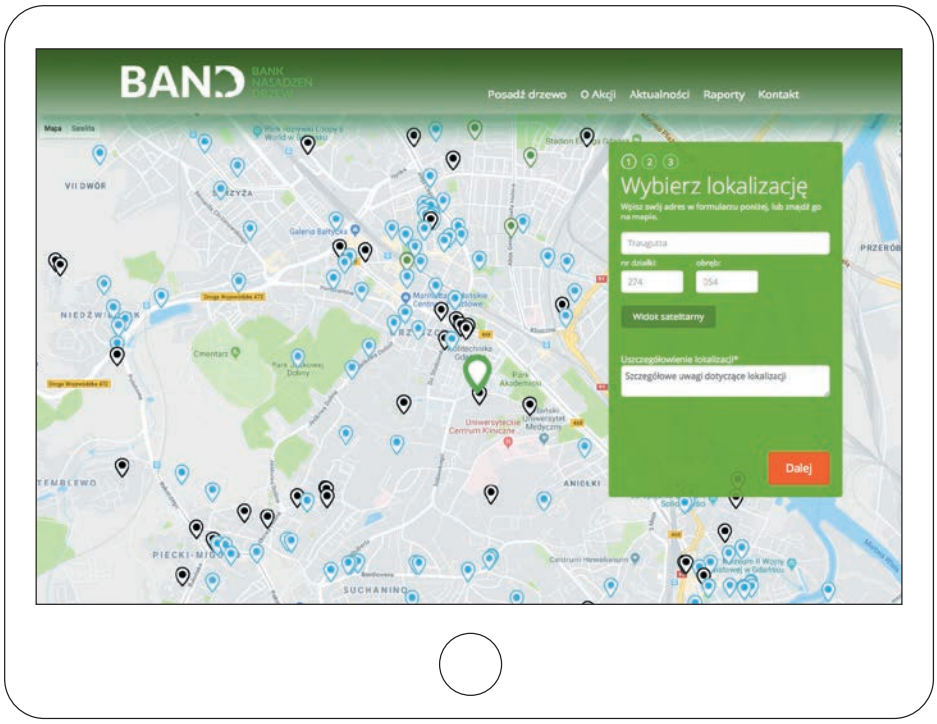
Data is a notoriously broad concept and its meaning is often highly ambiguous. Therefore, some clarifications are in order as they will lay the groundwork for the story that follows. A structural base for information is essentially data. As such, it is nothing but new. Its functional relationship can be described well by the DIKW pyramid, where data forms the base for information, which in turn forms the base for knowledge that leads to wisdom. Thanks to the variety of different media available today, people can share much more data and form new relationships with information. That is the main premise of open data as a concept – making and keeping it open creates the condition in which citizens can get informed and are, therefore, engaged in the governance of their communities.

The notion that public information should be easily and widely available is hardly news. Over 100 countries around the world have implemented some form of *Freedom of Information* (FOI) legislation. The right to access public information, also known as the "right to know" builds upon the principle that – at least in a democratic system – people should be able to access a wide range of information in order to effectively participate in public life as well as on matters affecting them as private citizens.

OPEN DATA IN CEE-TIES

As many already know, we have passed the point where half of the world's population lives in cities. There are numerous reasons for these urban migrations, but among the advantages of life in cities is their density. It helps structure and regulate the lives of large numbers of people. That itself is possible because of their ability to organize and process large amounts of data in effective ways.

When we talk about open data in the context of a city or of a country, we usually refer to the information collected by *public institutions* on how a place – the people who live there and the institutions that support this ecosystem – functions. According to the European Data Portal – the European Union platform which gives access to open data published by the EU institutions, agencies, and other bodies – European cities publish large amounts of data on topics such as urban planning, tourism, and - increasingly - real-time data on transport and mobility, such as datasets on available parking spots and traffic congestion. Moreover, cities also benefit from the use of open data to tackle typical urban challenges such as pollution and to improve the quality of urban public services and the interactivity between the local government and citizens.



How it will function in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is challenging to assess as what unifies CEE – a grouping of tangentially linked countries, some within the EU others not – has always been elusive, but we can look to Milan Kundera's observance, in his famous essay *The Tragedy of Central Europe*, that "it would be senseless to draw the borders exactly. Central Europe is not a state, it is a culture or a fate." Despite the differences that shape their modern history and political struggles, there are issues that Gdańsk (Poland), Lviv (Ukraine), Pristina (Kosovo) and Saint Petersburg (Russia) among others have in common.

THE MEANING OF OPEN

Nowadays, allowing access to public data is just the first step on the way to *openness*. But the road there is bumpy and full of obstacles. The huge amounts and different formats that characterize open data (from scanned documents, through recordings to machine-readable data) make turning it into useful information more difficult than ever. According to the Open Knowledge Foundation, an international non-profit committed to promoting openness, for data to be considered *open*, it has to be:

Available online so as to accommodate the widest practical range of users and uses

Open-licensed so that anyone has permission to use and reuse the data

Machine-readable so that large datasets can be analyzed efficiently

Available in bulk so that it can be downloaded as one dataset and easily analyzed by a machine

Free of charge so that anyone can access it no matter their budget

Open data commonly is presented and accessed through web portals, apps and/or APIs (a set of functions and procedures that allow automated access to the features or data of an operating system). This means the user can filter the specific data relevant to their purposes. The World Wide Web Foundation's Open Data Barometer provides a measure of how successful different countries are engaging with open data. It is important to note that their elaborate research method includes a careful examination of the open data initiatives across different governmental levels, including municipal and city administrations. The current edition estimates that only 7% of global government data is open, and only half of this is machine-readable, making the rest effectively unsearchable and largely useless. However, the issues with Open Data are not only of technical nature. Most importantly, in order for the data to become useful information, one needs first to ask the right questions.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

The most common domains where open data is used – and where the benefits are easy to observe and measure – are improving governance, creating business opportunities and citizen engagement. The benefits for citizen engagement mostly come as a result of better governance, which entails greater transparency and integrity for the public sector. When concerning business growth, open data provides deeper market insights, illuminating current and historical trends, which can be correlated with information on the social, political, and environmental climates. All of these benefits could lead to economic savings, with the potential to generate new and increased economic revenue. Because of these possibilities, open data has often been considered a *game-changer*, something to profoundly impact power structures and spur community focused initiatives.

However, open data alone won't change the situation. The way we produce, share, and use information is

much more a reflection of social structures than anything else. In this article, we share four stories of cities in Central Europe; four stories of open data. But really, they are the stories about these cities. Each one has unique cultural, economic, social, and political environment which lead to very different ways to request, process, and make use of data. This diverse state of affairs has led to generalizations about *open data and cities* in CEE which are implausible and, frankly, oversimplified. The truth is, as it stubbornly tends to be, more complicated.

GDAŃSK: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

In this city of Northern Poland, the open data strategy came as a top-down effect of the efforts of the mayor, Paweł Adamowicz. Since 2014, all public information, except for sensitive data, should be made available. Gdańsk is one of the few Polish cities that run an open data program.

After social consultations, the City of Gdańsk came up with the Open Data Portal where 28 data sets were made available, most of them in machine readable formats. Thanks to the collaboration with Orange Polska, the national communications provider, the portal can handle both static (through CKAN) and dynamic, real-time data.

When I talked to the mayor's former proxy for innovation, Tomasz Nadolny (now Civic Hub Gdańsk), he expressed disappointment in how the open data program turned out overall, despite the city's clear success in its implementation. All the apps which praised it in international publications have slowly died out, though this is not the fault of the data itself or the result of a lack of enthusiasm or tech savviness of those behind it. Only 10% of start-ups survive and it is no different in the social startup scene. Most of the open-data based apps test the grounds for the idea, but often there are no resources in place to carry on the effort such as Eco-Gdańsk – an app measuring and visualizing air quality – or Zdążuś – an app collecting real-time city transport data. Eco-Gdańsk has faced serious competition, such as Airly, which places air quality sensors in the city for more accurate estimations and successfully collaborates with a local NGO, FRAG. Zdążuś is competing with apps such as Google Maps, which has recently added live city traffic information.

Mr Nadolny's main concern is that the current political situation in Poland is taking the attention away from innovation and cross-sector collaboration, something that Gdańsk has succeeded in. Hackathons, meet-ups, and social consultations were organized in order to encourage the public to make use of the data provided. However, without proper education including new media literacy, the general public will not simply grab the data and use it to improve their lives. People mostly interact with Facebook and Google, not alternative, niche, social apps. If the public sector and the authorities can't incentivize people to access and utilize data for their city, interest may just evaporate and Gdańsk's brand as an open data hub may very well not amount to much.

PRISTINA: CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT FIRST

One of the best success stories from Gdańsk was that the City Council published all of its expenses; the public expenditure list is updated daily and has proven to be one of the most popular datasets people interact with. The decision to make this data public has actually impacted the institutions themselves; public officials feel pressure to better justify their expenses, now that everyone can see them. That brings me to another pillar of the open data movement – better governance, often understood in the terms of transparency and accountability.

In Central and Eastern Europe and especially in the south, the quest for information is mainly understood as a tool to expose and fight corruption. Kosovo, Europe's youngest country, struggles with corruption and the Transparency International's 2017 Corruption Perception Index ranked it on the 85th place

out of 180 countries. Transparency is not just about corruption though. The manifesto of the #IWantToKnow (#Podumedite) campaign run by Kosovo 2.0 – a web-platform, a print magazine, and a grass-roots activity organizer – states that "asking questions and pressuring governments and institutions is something too often left in the hands of journalists and civil society organizations". The aim of the campaign is to encourage citizens to demand and ask questions directly from political representatives and organizations through social media. The magazine even provided people with the full list of their social media accounts.

This little example shows in a nutshell the struggles that the Kosovar Open Data movement experiences. With 53% of its people under the age of 25, Kosovo also has the youngest population in Europe. The average age in Pristina is 28, and while youth unemployment is high, the country is also supported by a dense network of organizations and NGOs such as Open Data Kosovo, PEN, Unicef Innovation Labs, Kosovo 2.0, and the Kosovar Youth Council. The new generation is channeling its desire for change into many digital based projects that seeks to build new trust between citizens and institutions.

While Pristina, or Kosovo, doesn't have an official openness policy, a young NGO led by two women has built the open data engine for the government, and you can currently find over 62 data sets there. Dafina Olluri and Blerta Thaci – the Deputy and Executive Directors of Open Data Kosovo – were featured in last year's Forbes 30 under 30 list. The organization they currently lead started four years ago, and the number of open data projects run by the organization and the level of their complexity is impressive and reflects the vividness, the liveliness and – we dare say – hipness of Kosovo's capital.

A wide portfolio of the projects run by the organization include digital skills building workshops, data storytelling for journalists' trainings, and transparency-focused initiatives such as the fully easy to navigate Kosovar business directory.

One of my favourite projects, Walk Freely, is an app with built-in collaboration with Girls Coding Kosova – an organization founded by Blerta. The app enables users to report sexual harassment and provides them with data analysis tools in order to highlight trends and patterns of harassment. The app has been downloaded more than 1,000 times to date and has collected nearly 400 reports – all of them anonymous and openly available online.

ST. PETERSBURG: BETWEEN THE THEORY AND PRACTICE

St. Petersburg, Russia's second largest city with a population of almost 5.5 million people is among the country leaders when it comes to open data. Since 2014, St. Petersburg's city administration has published 180 sets of open data. First, they created a specialized portal for the publication of Open Data and organized popular hackathons joined by the leading universities based in the city. The activists' interest in open data was developing both with the use of open state data as well as in the formation and popularization of their own data sets. Two organizations were particularly active in this process: „Beautiful Petersburg" which dealt with the issues of public planning and a watchdog „Observers of Petersburg".

As Viacheslav Romanov, the Director of Analytics at Infometer Project Center told us, St. Petersburg is an example where just ticking off the boxes necessary to say the central and local governments are opening up data is not enough to tackle complex social issues. Despite a high number of open data sets made available, the stats reflecting answers to the FOI request are very low. The datasets published are of low-quality, some of them are provided only on an exclusive basis to large commercial companies (which has also been a case of JakDojadę, a popular Polish app). Sensitive data (detailed criminal and environmental statistics) is of course not provided at all for formal reasons and the anonymization process was too complicated for the city to complete.

A frequent issue can also be the sudden termination of support for the actualization of datasets. As a result, the applications created on the basis of open data also cease to work, and the results can be dire, such as the sudden termination of support for data-centers working with "smooth.io" service, a map of urban routes for people with disabilities. Alexey Sidorenko, the head of Teplitsa of Social Technologies and a specialist in open data says that the government is not yet prepared to go any further than just publishing what is safe for them. This situation is often called "open-washing" – meaning data publishers that are claiming their data is open, even when it's not – but rather just available under limiting terms.

Although, according to the ratings, the city formally remains the country leader in the publication of open data, the consumer community rarely resorts to their use. What those dealing with open data in St. Petersburg invariably hope is that, with „Smart City" projects, open data and the development of APIs from state information systems will become a trend again.

LVIV: BUILDING AN OPEN DATA ECOSYSTEM

Lviv is one of the biggest cities in Ukraine with a population around 720,000 people, and is considered one of the main cultural centres of the country. The Lviv City Council was the first Ukrainian city to adopt the International Open Data Charter, and together with the local community, developed a city open data action plan for 2017 – 2018. Currently, there are 542 datasets in a machine readable format published on the 2nd version of the Lviv city open data portal. What seems to be the issue is not access nor any technological barrier, but a lack of private and public interest.

In December 2015, the Lviv City Council – in cooperation with two Polish NGOs: TechSoup Poland and the ePaństwo Foundation – launched an open data project focused on community engagement. It started as seminars for public servants and continued as development for the Lviv open data portal and the Open Data Challenge: code for Lviv hackathon in spring 2016. Computer science students from the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv organized a similar event for students in 2017. Ten teams developed their ideas of how to use open city data.

However, no viable products or services developed as the result of these events have survived. What did happen was that the project kicked off a process of building the local community around open data and stated the impetus of city council to open up data. Lviv City Council then decided to hire an open data team that has now four specialists working with the city full time. Meanwhile, because of a lack of public demand and use of open data, there are almost no open data use cases in Lviv. It could be explained by lack of really good data (esp. big data) for developing services and products, a similar lack of trust among developers that open city data will be updated and accurate as well as the low level of data literacy among civic activists and educational institutions. So, in this case, it is the local government which is trying to activate the ecosystem.

The city itself developed or supported the development of three products and services which rely on open data. These include the City Panel (a portal including more than 800 city characteristics, being developed since 2010) and the Lviv Geoportal (a service with geospatial data about Lviv with more than 50 cartographic layers, combined in 15 thematic collections about addresses, social infrastructure, educational and budget indicators). Now, the Lviv City Council is working on the integration of the City Panel and Lviv Geoportal with the Open Data Portal to develop new analytical products using the city's open data as a base for internal and external uses. Another service is being developed by Civil Network OPORA, a Ukrainian watchdog NGO, which will be based on the city's open data, Lviv Rada4You. It provides information about voting records and the consistency of the political position of Lviv City Council members.

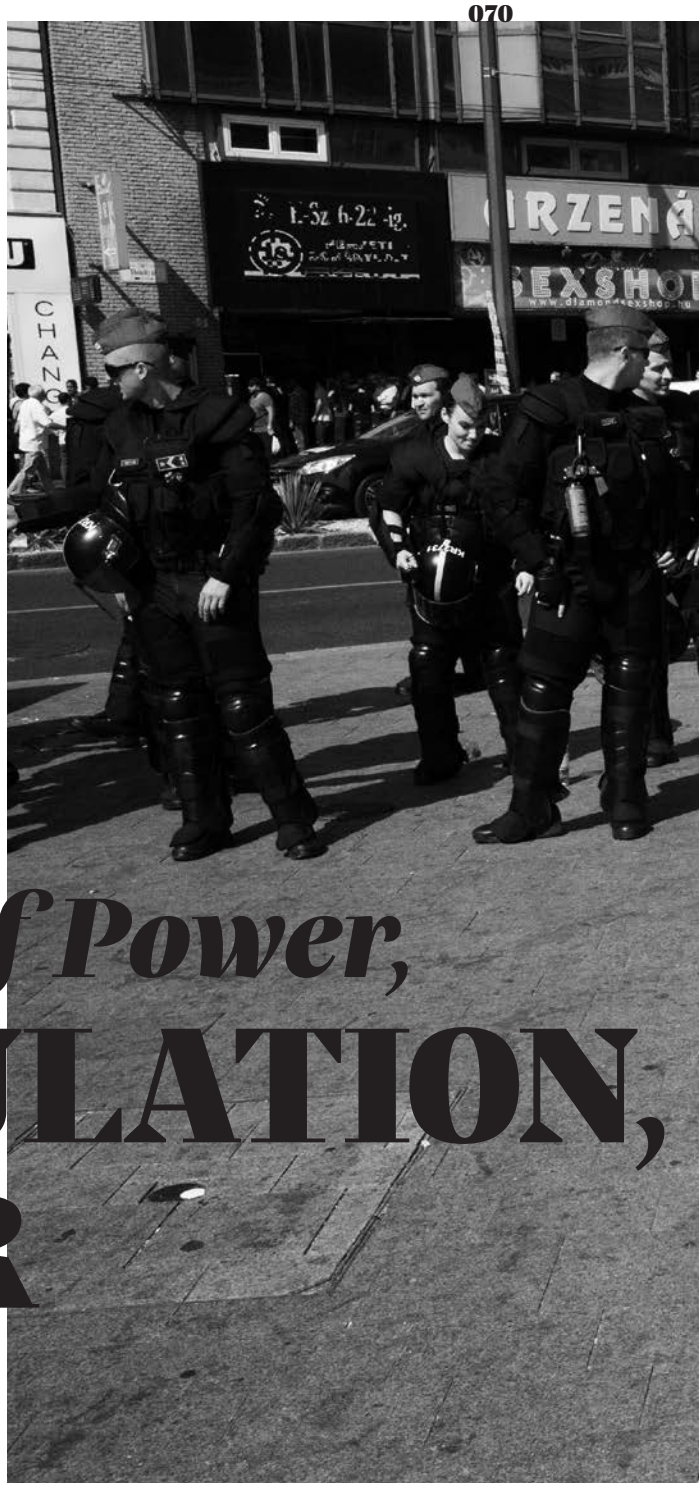
As Olena Gunko, open data team lead in Lviv city council, told us they are aware about this usage problem. That is why the Lviv City Council is working now on the next "Open Data Challenge: code for Lviv" set for 2018 as a way to sustain the open-data ecosystem in the city. Another challenge is to convince data holders in the city council that open data can and will benefit both residents of the city, who will use services based on open data, and the public servants themselves, who will be able to make better decisions. An integral part of this challenge is to give managers the appropriate knowledge and skills to work with the data so they can convert it into the appropriate (most useful) format.

These cities are a snapshot of how open data is being (mis)used in CEE; their stories share some similarities, but it is also their differences which can paint a picture for the most effective application of this potentially valuable, public tool. As Feda Kulenovic – a Bosnian Internet Librarian and a Civic Tech activist – recently observed, ever since Bill O'Reilly and Dale Dougherty coined the term Web 2.0 to describe "the web as a platform" the world has been living in an increased mode of optimism and trust that democratized technology along with open data will bring us to a better future. This optimism has lasted after we all analyzed results of the Arab Spring attributing its initial success more to technology than to a community of people.

Open data is just an instrument. The impact it can have on a community depends both on the technical, legislative, professional background of a given city, and on how open data can serve as a tool to create new products, services. The latter is an issue of citizen engagement, data infrastructure (in terms of both hardware and software), tech literacy, access to the internet, and the general level of tech savviness. Whether or not the data, once available, will be turned into something of value for the community is not clear even though it can and should be facilitated. The value of data, like all knowledge, is not in having it; it is in using it

Nadiia Babynska – works with open data, freedom of information as a media expert, project coordinator, and trainer. She was a project manager of the Open Data Portal of Ukrainian Parliament project (UNDP, OPORA), an expert of Apps4Cities (open city data) in Ukraine (TechSoup, OPORA), and is an expert of the open data project in TAPAS (USAID, UKAID), coordinator for the youth innovation challenge for human right and democracy U-inn (UNDP) and volunteers and coordinates the Technovation Challenge in Ukraine.

Alicja Peszkowska – Communications Specialist and a Socio-Cultural animator. She has been engaged with the topic of openness in the context of culture, society, and technology for the past 7 years. Alicja helped organize 3 editions of the Personal Democracy Forum CEE Conference as well as worked on the process of opening data and encouraging people to use it in the Western Balkans, Ukraine and Poland (TransparenCEE). She spoke about community building and openness at many international events including Open Knowledge Festival in Helsinki and Berlin, and Creative Commons Summit in Toronto. At the moment, Alicja is working as a Network Director for Outriders, an innovative journalist project.



A Sad Tale of Power, MANIPULATION, *and* FEAR

MONIKA PROŃCZUK

Following is a convincing story, stylistically told, about how our need for sharing in general as well as specific ideas for cooperatives and co-housing clashes drastically with the reality of today's Central and Eastern Europe.

It was October 2015, and the three of us were driving from Poland to Croatia in a van filled with the clothes and sleeping bags we had gathered from our friends to give to the refugees. Suddenly, something caught our eye: a new symbol of Europe, divided once again. It was at the same time terrifying and magnificent. It was something we recognized only from old movies: a barbed wire fence at the Hungarian border, protecting Central-Eastern European people from the "refugee threat"

A CAMPAIGN OF HATE BEGINS

Around the same time, Jaroslaw Kaczyński, leader of PiS (the ruling party in Poland) made the soon-to-be-famous speech in which he talked about "migrants carrying very dangerous diseases, which haven't been seen in Europe for a very long time" and about "parasites, protozoans, which might not be threatening for *those people* but might be for us."

photo Lubomír Smek

Viktor Orbán did not lag far behind. Shortly after Kaczyński's remarks, Orbán said that the relocation policy of the European Union was threatening the "sovereignty and cultural identity of Hungary". In an interview for the German newspaper *Bild*, he said: "We don't see *those people* as refugees. We see them as Muslim invaders."

Until then, contemporary Poland and Hungary did not have that much in common. We have shared two kings and a dynasty, but that was a very long time ago. Finally, however, the current Polish-Hungarian alliance had a concrete policy to build on. Not long after, Slovakia and Czechia both joined the anti-immigrant axis, and the Visegrad countries found a cause that could unite them once more.

The truth is, we probably borrowed my parents' van and packed it with clothes for refugees for the same reason that people felt the need to vote for Kaczyński and Orbán. Faced with the so-called "refugee crisis", we were feeling helpless; the actions of the international organizations and governments left us feeling ashamed. And – even though I don't like to admit it – when I looked at the pictures in the press and listened to Polish politicians, there was this tiny voice inside my head, whispering: "And what if they are right about *those people*? After all, I have not met them in person." The difference was we choose not to build a wall, but instead to go to the Balkans and confront our fear, our shame, and our prejudice.

Since 2015, PiS and Orbán have managed the seemingly impossible: they convinced their respective societies, where foreigners comprise less than 1% of the population, that "the other" is a mortal danger for them. They incited xenophobia, islamophobia, and more recently even anti-Semitism. They also presented themselves as the only protectors of collective security, and of "the European values and the European way of living".

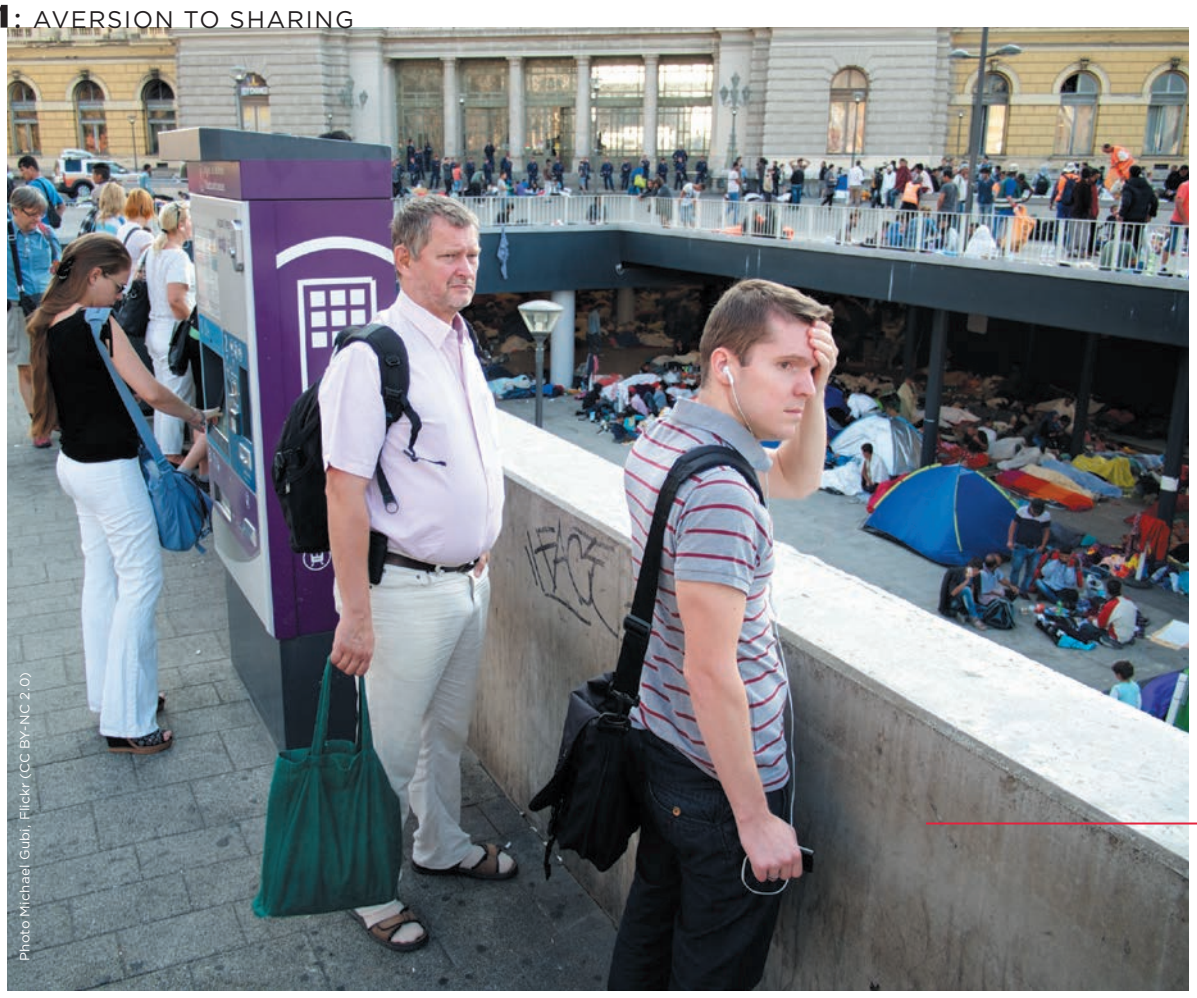


Photo Michael Gubi, Flickr (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Budapest Keleti Station

How did they do this? Easy – they implemented the same method which has been used for centuries. First, create an atmosphere of fear and insecurity. Second, dehumanize "the other". Third, even if all the facts prove the contrary, just stick to your version of reality, and repeat it until everybody (or at least a voting majority) believes that it is true.

STEP ONE: FEAR AND INSECURITY

In July 2017, Kaczyński stated during a party convention: "If *those people* are let in, a huge security problem would appear – and I don't refer only to terrorism. I mean everyday, ordinary security. There is no reason to radically decrease the quality of life of the Polish people." By that time, the majority of Poles already believed him.

When asked in May 2015, 58% of Polish people said that we should "allow refugees to stay in Poland until they can go back to their own countries," and 14% said that we should allow them to come and stay indefinitely. Only 21% said that we shouldn't allow them to come at all. In October 2017, after over two years of an aggressive and repetitive hate campaign, the proportions were reversed: 63% of Poles were decisively against letting refugees into Poland, and only 29% think we should let them in for a short period of time. It is the highest percentage of Poles opposing letting in refugees in the history of opinion polls.

One of the turning points has been the Paris terrorist attacks in November 2015. At that time, I was still in the Balkans, managing an small aid center for refugees. When the news about Paris reached our tiny village of Miratovac, all of the refugees held their breath. They knew what was going to happen: how the attack would be manipulated to put the blame on them. It didn't matter that the attack had been claimed by ISIS, from whom the majority of refugees were running away from. It was a strange, surreal sensation; for weeks I had been listening to their stories of death and despair, of running away from ISIS, the Taliban, war, torture, and military conscription. At the same time, I was following the discourse of Central-Eastern European politicians, who were putting all the blame on refugees, and on Germany opening their doors and inviting *them* in.

Of course, faced with such a tragedy, it is natural to look for someone to blame. But Kaczyński and Orbán were blaming the victims, people who – just like the Parisians – had their houses and favorite bars blown up, and their loved ones killed by bullets as well as bombs. But unlike the Parisians, they didn't have governments strong enough to protect them from the danger and death which followed. A responsible politician would try to calm the situation by rationalizing the events and avoiding collective hysteria. But instead, the political leaders of Visegrad countries chose to do exactly what the terrorists wanted: to spread fear, hatred, and radicalization.

I was conscious of all of this because I had met *those people* – or at least enough of them to realize that *those people* is an artificial category, used to simplistically gather all sorts of human beings. But how could Polish people know that if the politicians were constantly telling them that Poland will never accept refugees – even though since the 1990s we have had consistently helped refugees, mostly from ex-Soviet countries (including Muslims from Chechnya)? How could they make the connection between their nice Chechen neighbors and *those people*, often described in overgeneralized and degrading terms?

photo Michael Gubi, Budapest Kelet

STEP TWO: DEHUMANIZE "THE OTHER"

Well, the bad thing is that after a while some of them did – and the number of hate crimes in Poland started to rise. Ahmed Salujew came to Poland in early 2016 with this wife, daughter, and three sons. Not long after they moved from the reception center to a rented flat in Łódź, somebody threw a pig's head on their balcony, and wrote on their car vulgar, offensive statements, telling them to go home. A group of students from Berlin were harassed, offended, and attacked on the streets of Lublin because some of them were wearing hijabs. A man forbade a dark-skinned woman and her daughter to enter a church. A Polish university professor was beaten up in a tram because he was speaking German. A Ukrainian couple was attacked with tear gas for speaking Ukrainian in a shop.

It turns out – surprise, surprise – that implementing a hate campaign is a gamble. And that the effects have started to be visible not only in the opinion polls, but also in the acts of physical and verbal violence. The Polish Interior Minister Mariusz Blaszczak kept claiming that "this kind of violence is a margin of the margins" – but according to the official statistics of the Public Prosecutor's office, there has been a record number of hate crimes in the first half-year of 2017 (the statistics for the whole year have not been released yet). On top of this, the Public Prosecutor's office decided to discontinue the proceedings of 76% of these cases (data from 2016).

STEP THREE: DENY THE OBVIOUS, AND KEEP DENYING, UNTIL IT BECOMES TRUE

None of the political leaders of Central-Eastern Europe are willing to start a genuine, honest debate about the refugee crisis. Not after they so carefully constructed a narrative filled with terrorism, threats, and diseases. What has been the result? Politicians are ignoring the reality as well as the tangible problems that need to be addressed. Those problems have nothing to do with the threat of terrorism, and everything to do with the refugees that already are in Central-Eastern Europe – mostly from ex-Soviet republics – and who have been abandoned and forgotten by the state. The integration policies are non-existent; the benefits are miniscule and hard to attain. Migrants and refugees in Poland can only rely on help provided by NGOs, which have been severely hit, when in 2015 the Polish government sealed off European funds intended for migration and integration policies. Since then, instead of going to NGOs, the funds have been given to the heads of local administration.

In the beginning of 2018, the regional media were shocked by the Hungarian statistics; despite their rhetoric, Orbán's government had granted asylum to 1300 people, a number that was the highest in over a decade.

Another story is the current situation in Poland. PiS is doing whatever they can not to accept refugees, willing to break Polish and international law, and to risk trial in the European Court of Justice. Partially, they succeeded: the number of asylum application in 2017 decreased over 60%, compared with the previous year. But in 2017, the Polish government granted different forms of asylum to 742 people, including Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans.

This makes the main argument opposing the European procedure of relocation – threat to national security – utterly absurd. Refugees arriving in Poland and Hungary on the basis of relocation procedure are verified twice, first by European authorities, and then by the national government. Refugees, who have been

After all, we have reached the border of Europe, haven't we? So why is Europe not following the rules?

accepted on the basis of Geneva Convention – applying for asylum directly to national authorities – have been verified only once.

The stubbornness of Orbán and Kaczyński might turn out very costly for Polish and Hungarian taxpayers. While Slovakia and Czechia took in a handful of refugees from the relocation procedure to avoid the so-called infringement procedure for breaking European law, Hungary and Poland resisted until the end. They were sued before the European Court of Justice, which has the power to impose high financial fines for refusing to participate in the relocation procedure.

COLLATERAL DAMAGE

This story ends the same way it has begun: with me feeling ashamed and helpless. Recently I went to the Polish-Belarusian border, the main entry point into Europe for refugees from the ex-Soviet republics. The Polish government has not built a barbed wire fence, but it has given a very explicit order to the border guards: do not let *those people* in.

So, in breach of the Geneva Convention and Polish law, Polish authorities are not allowing desperate people fleeing Chechnya, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan (to name just a few) to even apply for asylum. Border guards call them economic immigrants and terrorists; those with financial means stay in Brest, on the Belarusian side of the border, and try as many times as they can to cross the border. Even if the Polish government suspects *those people* of being a security threat, there are rules and procedures to follow. The point is, if we start to pick and choose which laws to apply and which to ignore, we cannot claim anymore we live in a democracy governed by the rule of law.

Asylum-seekers in Brest had the same look in their eyes that I have already seen in the eyes of Syrians in the Balkans: disbelief and disappointment. *After all, we have reached the border of Europe, haven't we? So why is Europe not following the rules?* I couldn't find an answer.

Not long ago in London, I met an Iranian man married to a Polish woman. They live together in the UK, but they often come back to her native town in Poland. He asked me how I could be Polish and yet so nice to him.

photo Stephen Ryan IFRC, Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Explaining, he said that whenever he goes to Poland, he cannot even ride a tram without being harassed by young men trying to pick a fight. I couldn't find an answer to that either.

But now, a couple of weeks later, here is my attempt at an answer. All of you are the collateral damage of the hate campaign that has been waged against "the other". Appeasing Central-Eastern European governments' stance on relocation or admitting that there already are refugees amongst us – and have been for many years – would be too risky. It would be a signal that not all refugees are terrorists.

What's even worse, it could mean that the term "refugee" describes merely a legal category, which contains people of different religions, different nationalities, and different values. People who have nothing in common with each other – except for the legal predicament they find themselves in. But that would mean that they, too, are human. And this is too much of a political risk for Orbán and Kaczyński.

Monika Prończuk – a member of OKO.press, a Polish independent journalist platform where she writes about health care and migrants. A co-founder of Dobrowolki, a Polish bottom-up initiative helping refugees in the Balkans and Refugees Welcome, an integrational program for refugees in Poland.

Review by MARTYNA OBARSKA, *Photos* MAREK M. BEREZOWSKI

Citymorphosis */ photography*

From Berlin to Beijing, the ever-present gray post-communist apartment buildings extend to the horizon like a monument to the past. Do you live in Kiev, Warsaw, Chongqing, or Moscow? Then such landscapes are surely familiar to you. The only thing that differentiates these cities from one another is the content and the language of the advertising and billboards. If you photoshop them out from an urban photograph, you can no longer tell the cities apart.

This is the idea behind the work of the award-winning Polish photographer Marek M. Berezowski, who for four years photographed city streets in post-communist European countries as well as China. The result, published last year in the form of a photobook, is a story about the common experiences of the people living in these urban spaces. Interestingly, Berezowski focused on the similarities, not the differences, between the places he visited.

Is the replicability of the cityscapes of Eastern Europe and China a curse or – on the contrary – an asset, one that gives residents of these cities a sense of familiarity, a feeling of home? The legacy of the post-communist urban environment could be the architectural equivalent of comfort food. Nothing fancy or overtly ornate, but like a sandwich with cottage cheese and honey followed by a mug of hot cocoa in Poland or a classic wok dish in China, it tastes like home and reminds us of our childhood, and it is this familiarity which is so comforting for the soul.

Similarly, the gray apartment buildings are hardly sophisticated, but for the millions of people who grew up in them in these parts of the world, they are familiar and -possibly - oddly comforting. Could it be that the populations of post-communist countries are deep down contented with the ethos of apartment blocks, as THE BLOK documentary series that aired this spring on Polish public television implied?

Berezowsky, who began his trip in China, doesn't think so. He does not see the concrete towers as a source of reassurance or as a place for communities to thrive. While he acknowledges a common social experience bred and born in the indistinguishable spaces between the buildings, for him it is an experience of abandonment and alienation, not familiarity and comfort. His apartment complexes are anonymous, alien spaces that just happen to contain people.

According to Berezowski what shapes the development of the cities in the region the most is the neoliberal market. He shows the new apartment towers,

03-Citymorphosis_MM_Berezowski-male

03-Citymorphosis_MM_Berezowski-male

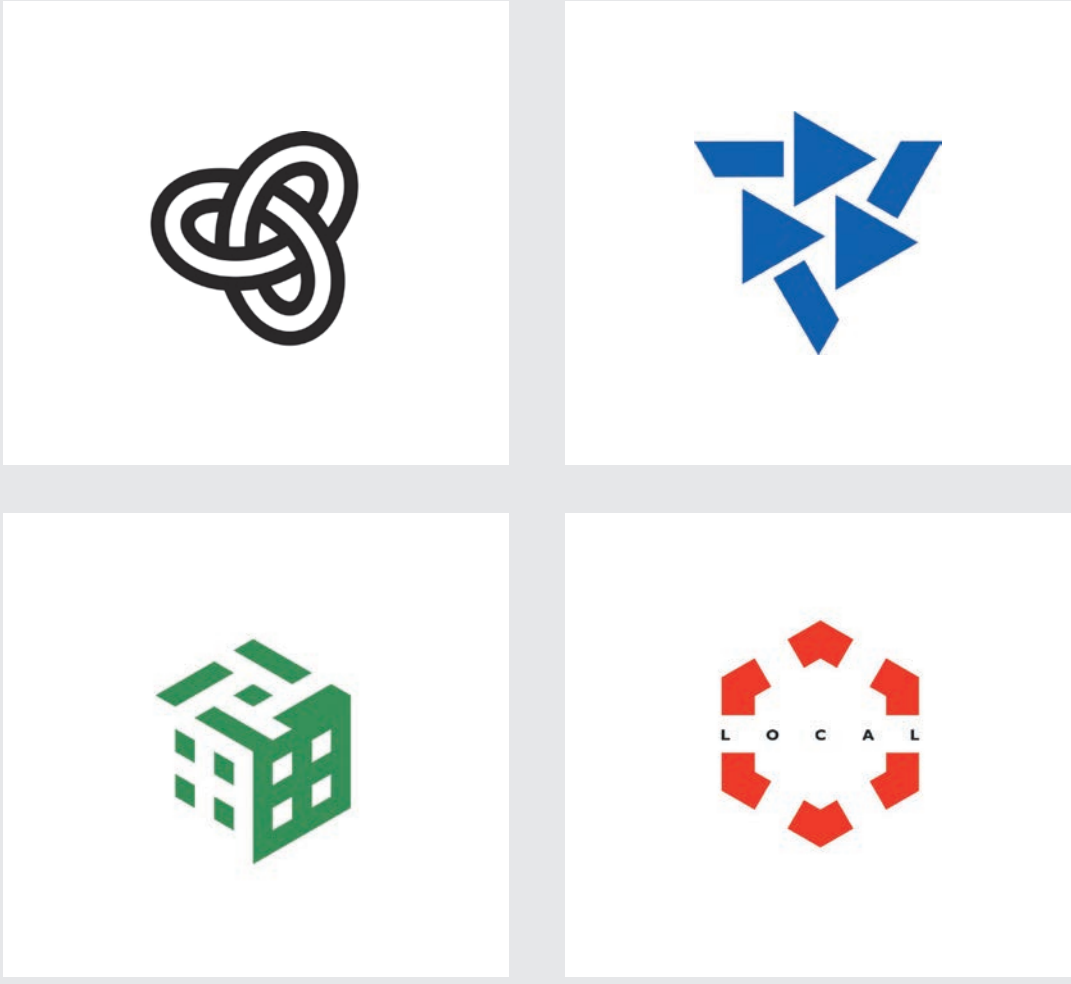
all looking - yet again - alike, springing up around, and within, the old apartment blocks. While the old model was to build vast apartment buildings, the modern approach is to construct – with equal fervour – giant commercial and residential complexes using all available space in and around the old residential districts. And to squeeze as much money as you can from each square meter; you build wherever you can find available land - the higher and more grandiose your project, the better.

Interestingly, in an essay accompanying the photobook, Berezowski draws upon the ideas of Saskia Sassen. The Dutch-American sociologists advocates against globalization showing that it opens the doors not just for the dissemination of good ideas, but also for the carbon-copying of even the worst possible ones. Through his photographs, Berezowski describes for us an urban world in which the cultural differences experienced deeply at the individual levels prevent us from seeing the uniformity of the directions that urban development has taken. The photographer attempts to illustrate the role of the modern financial sector replacing the state as the main engine creating the post-communist cities, and shows that yet again, someone else is pulling the strings.

Citymorphosis, First Edition, Warsaw 2017
Book concept, photographs and text:
Marek M. Berezowski
Photo edition: Joanna Kinowska
Design: Kasia Kubicka
Photographs taken in 2013 – 2017
Hard cover, 99 pages, 64 colour pictures, essay about urbanism in Eastern Bloc (in English and Polish), available:
www.marekmberezowski.com/books-citymorphosis.html

Review by MARTYNA OBARSKA

A Sustainist Lexicon / book



"Sustainism is the New Modernism!", declared Michiel Schwarz and Joost Elffers with the title of their 2010 manifesto.

Not only were they announcing the creation of a neologism but, more significantly, an entire new paradigm of thinking and construction of reality fit for the 21st century – one that was attractive enough to compete with the heritage of modernism.

They saw sustainism as a reflection of different modern phenomena, such as the growing popularity of associating, the birth of urban and neighborhood movements, greater care placed on the common good and public space, the popularity of DIY housing schemes, the circular economy, and the emergence of new models of the sharing economy. But what is sustainism?

According to Schwarz and Elffers, sustainism is a new era in which citizens and communities play a significant role in the creation of urban space. In contrast with the modernist movement, in which experts (architects and urban planners often mapped out cities literally from a bird's eye view) and institutions had the deciding role, today people are themselves responsible for creating or reshaping their surroundings. Yet, these new influencers are not ignorant to the needs of their cities and neighborhoods, their actions are influenced by a greater respect for natural resources and local values.

Schwarz points out that this new approach to the city is characterized by such concepts and values as place-making, connectedness, local, commons, circularity, proportionality, and co-design. These seven words are explored by him in detail in a book published two years ago, entitled *A Sustainist Lexicon*. This small, pocket-size publication is an introduction to the differing worlds of sustainist culture already in practice in urban areas.

Every concept is described in a concise and accessible way. Each entry is accompanied by a different

pictogram, created by Joose Elffiers, and a short overview of specific actions implemented in cities which was written by Riemer Knoop.

How these elements coalesce is where the book truly succeeds in its goal. When reading about the theory behind the sustainist's idea of the commons – its origin and significance in modern cities – we are given the tangible example of how this concept was realized by an organization created in 2008 in one of the most colorful districts in Naples – Rione Sanità. This is the birthplace of *The Catacombs of Naples* – a project that gathers local residents, urban activists, and NGO representatives in a collective effort to make the underground system of historical catacombs accessible to the people.

The organization worked simultaneously on creating local jobs, preserving the catacombs, and transforming them into a popular tourist attraction. In the end, the catacombs became the center of a complex interconnected system that brought benefits to the entire community of Rione Sanità.

From the perspective of an Eastern European reader, many of the projects discussed by Schwarz (e.g. repair cafes) seem like tales from another planet. Naturally, similar initiatives are beginning to appear in Prague, Warsaw, and Budapest although they are still small-scale projects which cannot yet be considered as part of a bigger social movement.

Some of the processes described by Schwarz are indeed taking place in our region, but with specific intensity depending on the country. The urban activist movement is quite developed and visible in Poland while, at the same time, it is lagging behind in Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Serbia. However, many of the concepts presented in the lexicon are becoming more and more influential, shaping the way we think about cities – there are even hints and advice for pioneers of urban change, which have yet to be embraced by the mainstream.

Michiel Schwarz, *A sustainist lexicon. Seven entries to recast the future – rethinkig design and heritage*, with field notes by Riemer Knoop & sustainist symbols by Joos Elffiers, Architektura & Natura Press, 2016. www.sustainism.com

Review by JĘDRZEJ BURSZTA

Citizen Jane: A Battle for the City / *movie*

"The city is a community of people." Today this may sound like a banal observation, but when Jane Jacobs published her breakthrough book in 1961, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, a modern cult classic of urban activism, she was fighting a battle for cities which seemed to be already lost.

Her book was intended as a critique of the urban planning policies that were gradually destroying the spirit of American cities. Combining her talent for precise and persuasive writing with a gift for social observation, Jacobs would come to inspire a new generation of urban thinkers and activists. Her books were translated into many languages, becoming bibles for the urban movements and experts working on contemporary urban development across the globe but also in Central Europe (CE) – a very specific region dealing with a particular set of issues stemming from its post-communist heritage and local attitudes which stressed that urban public spaces and other resources should be shared. Jacobs saw cities as chaotic organisms, living and breathing entities that needed to be preserved against the destructive force of the bulldozer. This perspective of perseveration was critically important for CE cities during the 90's and 2000's, after the collapse of communism and the beginning of the new urban era in the region.

The documentary, *Citizen Jane: A Battle for the City*, presents the story of Jacobs' struggles for the city of New York. Matt Tyrnauer's film is not a chronicle about the entire life story of the journalist-turned-activist. Instead, it focuses on the period of her political engagement in New York during the 1960s and 1970s. The filmmakers frame the story as a fight between the charismatic Jacobs, who inspired a burgeoning movement of urban activists, and Robert Moses, the powerful city planner who wanted to "clean up" New York City.

Dubbed as the "czar of urban renewal", Moses is presented as the villain, a figure of power representing everything that was wrong with how authorities would approach the problem of urban development. A city construction coordinator with almost absolute power and little oversight, he became the embodiment of the post-war Modernist crusade for a better city – one that would be free from the "cancer" spreading among its poorer districts.

His mission to "clean up" New York City, in reality, meant giving power to automobile producers and highway construction corporations, as was the case

Courtesy of IFC Films

in his infamous plan to build an expressway that would go through Washington Square Park. This became the primarily site of his battle with Jacobs, who would take her ideas to the streets and organize successful protests against the all-powerful city planner.

The documentary meticulously reconstructs the conflicting perspectives on urban renewal represented by Moses and Jacobs. While the central story line mainly follows Jacobs' opposition to Moses' construction projects that were planned for Greenwich Village, the filmmakers do not hide where their sympathies lie since their chosen narrative form feels reminiscent of David vs. Goliath. Citizen Jane is built primarily around archival footage: media depictions of the highly-publicized clash, both on television and on the streets, as well as fragments of interviews with Jacobs herself. Images from the past are intertwined with commentaries from her friends, collaborators or contemporary architects and urban activists reflecting on the influence of Jacobs' particular vision of the city.

In the end, Citizen Jane should be viewed not only as an interesting piece of documentary filmmaking about one of the most famous icons of 20th century urban activism, but, perhaps more importantly, as a call to arms for today's city dwellers. Jane Jacobs is posited as a symbol of defiance against the modernist affinity towards automobiles, highways, and construction projects that enforce mass resettlements of the population.

Her idea of the city was simple – but at the same time provocative: it was a shared space that belonged to the people and could only thrive because of the countless everyday interactions between its inhabitants. This street-view of how our modern vibrant cityscapes are shaped proved to be Jane Jacobs' ultimate testament, one that is still inspiring urban activists all around the globe to join "the struggle for the city."

Citizen Jane: Battle for the City, directed by Matt Tyrnauer, produced by Altimeter Films, USA 2017

SHARED CITIES: Creative Momentum (SCCM)

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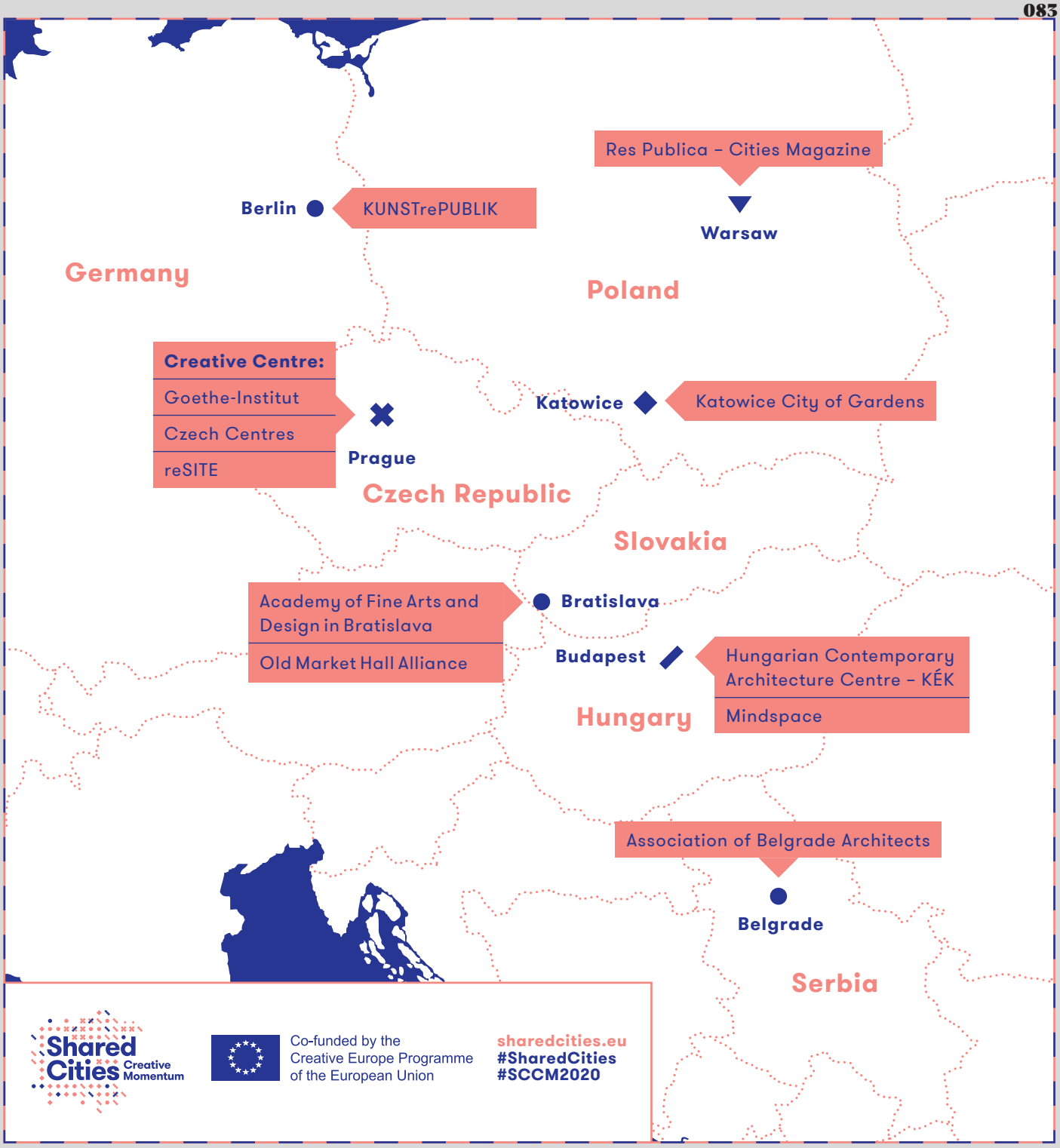

Shared Cities: Creative Momentum (SCCM) is a European cultural platform addressing the contemporary urban challenges of European cities. SCCM is a joint project of Goethe-Institut (DE), Czech Centres (CZ), reSITE (CZ), Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (SK), Association of Belgrade Architects (RS), Hungarian Contemporary Architecture Centre – KÉK (HU), Katowice City of Gardens (PL), KUNSTrePUBLIK (DE), Mindspace (HU), Old Market Hall Alliance (SK), Res Publica – Cities Magazine (PL). Co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union.

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Shared Cities Creative Momentum

Living in the city, we're used to sharing – green spaces, bus seats, even the air we breathe. We know that sharing a car or a flat can make it worthwhile. Instead of owning a bike we can rent one, too. Sharing has become a part of urban life.

Shared Cities: Creative Momentum is on a mission to improve the quality of life in European cities. By exploring aspects of sharing and urban design we are creating new ways of living in our cities. Together.

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