

**Athens Institute for Education and Research
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**ATINER's Conference Paper Series
TRA2016-2164**

**Transformation of City Space and Housing
Estates Associated with Changes in Lifestyle of
Inhabitants**

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This paper should be cited as follows:

Skoczylas, O. (2016). "Transformation of City Space and Housing Estates Associated with Changes in Lifestyle of Inhabitants", Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: **TRA2016-2164.**

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www.atiner.gr
URL Conference Papers Series: www.atiner.gr/papers.htm
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ISSN: 2241-2891
17/03/2017

Transformation of City Space and Housing Estates Associated with Changes in Lifestyle of Inhabitants

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Abstract

The article presents the difficulties of the city and its inhabitants related to changes of lifestyle. It also provides the examples of solutions for these problems. Both spontaneous and planned solutions are shown, as well as solutions that are foreign and derived from the Polish "backyard". The article also touches the problem of urban sprawl and encourages to prevent or to reduce this phenomenon through a comprehensive, thoughtful transformation of existing prefabricated housing estates. Such areas constitute an inseparable element of the Polish cities' landscape and there is no perspective that something will change. The underestimation of this part of the city and pushing it to the sidelines of thought by urban planners, architects and scientists can begin the process of social division, which is very difficult to stop, and it also has an impact on reducing the competitiveness of the apartments in the city. This article helps strike a happy medium to satisfy the different and often contradictory needs of the estates and cities' inhabitants.

Keywords: Car parks, Neighborhood spaces, Prefabricated housing estates, Revitalization, Transformation of settlements.

Introduction

In Poland there were 14 million flats, 9.4 million of which were situated in the cities according to the data introduced by the Central Statistical Office in December 2014. This represents over 67% of the total number of housing [1]. The increase in the number of people living in cities can be observed both on a global scale and individual countries. Moreover, considering the forecast for Poland the greater percentage of the urban population is predicted in comparison with general society. This can cause problems with the different needs of inhabitants - e.g. the problem which arises when one wants both an apartment surrounded by greenery and a car park in the vicinity of home.

Over the past 50 - 60 years there have been lots of significant improvements as for technology and industry. This has brought a wide range of changes in the life of an average person. In the article the author tries to answer the question of how these changes have affected both the quality of life in the urban area and the appearance of the city.

The Transformation of Inhabitants' Lifestyles and its Impact on the Surrounding Environment

Nowadays, almost every family possesses a car, and it often happens that they have 2 or more. A car allows independence, quick access to any place, and therefore is considered as a main mean of transport. Due to the future increase of the Polish citizens' affluence, the average family can own more cars. According to the local plans enacted in recent years it is expected that there will be not less than 1 parking space (often 1, 3, 1.5 or even 2) for each apartment if the residential land is given the development function.

At a time when prefabricated estates were built, one car was meant for 2 families and parking spaces were designed considering such numbers of vehicles. The increase in the number of cars is evident in each neighborhood. Residents want to park as close to home [2], as possible in order to be able to quickly transport to another place. This results in the increase in the number of cars in the vicinity of the blocks, destroyed green area, creating new roads within the estate.

Another visible change is observed in the social stratum and it has begun after World War II. Currently, it is most desirable for parents to live together only with their children, without other family members (e.g. parents of one of the spouses or siblings). This increases the demand for new housing, specially equipped with various functional settlements or well-connected with other parts of the city. Still, the primary factor determining the choice of a house is its price, and basically the loan ability established by the bank. Apartments located closer to the city center are more expensive than those located on the outskirts. Most buyers opt for premises located further from the city center, bigger than the property in the same price but smaller and located closer to the center. The average price of

an apartment on the secondary market with an area of 60 m² (+/- 5 m²) located in Skarpa - a residential district of Czuby in Lublin, Poland (11 minutes by car to the center) is 299163 PLN, that is 4986 PLN / m² [3], and the price of a flat bought on primary market, of similar size but located on the outskirts of Lublin (Węglinek, 22 minutes by car to the center, 63 m²) is 292000, or 4619 PLN / m² [4], it constitutes 7.36% more of the surface area for the same value of money. However, not only the house itself should be important, but also the development of settlements in the social infrastructure, the proximity of kindergartens, schools, post offices, shops, clinics, church, or public transport.

Spontaneous Solutions

The above-mentioned changes not only streamline and improve the quality of life, but also cause new problems which are to be faced by architects, urban planners and users.

The increase in the number of cars in the existing settlements is connected with additional parking spaces. Unfortunately, this is achieved often at the expense of recreational and rest areas, sports fields, playgrounds and walking paths. Areas previously used by the people are seized by vehicles, and the biologically active area is covered with concrete. The effects of this situation are observed in the multi-family housing areas.

Building multi-family premises by developers on the outskirts of cities deprives the residents of these buildings of close access to public kindergartens, community centers, schools, high schools, community centers or churches for at least several years. This results in a quasi-controlled "sprawling" of the city while there is still a lot of unused space inside and drives the spiral of growth in the number of cars, the lack of parking spaces (Figure 4), the creation of new access roads and illusory easy access to more distant places, continuous buildings located further and further from the center, another cars and so on (Figure 1). During the revitalization of the Grotte-Rolland settlement in France and the building of new blocks of flats within existing estate, greenery almost completely disappeared giving the area for parking [5] (Figure 2).

Figure 1. *Schematic City Proliferation*

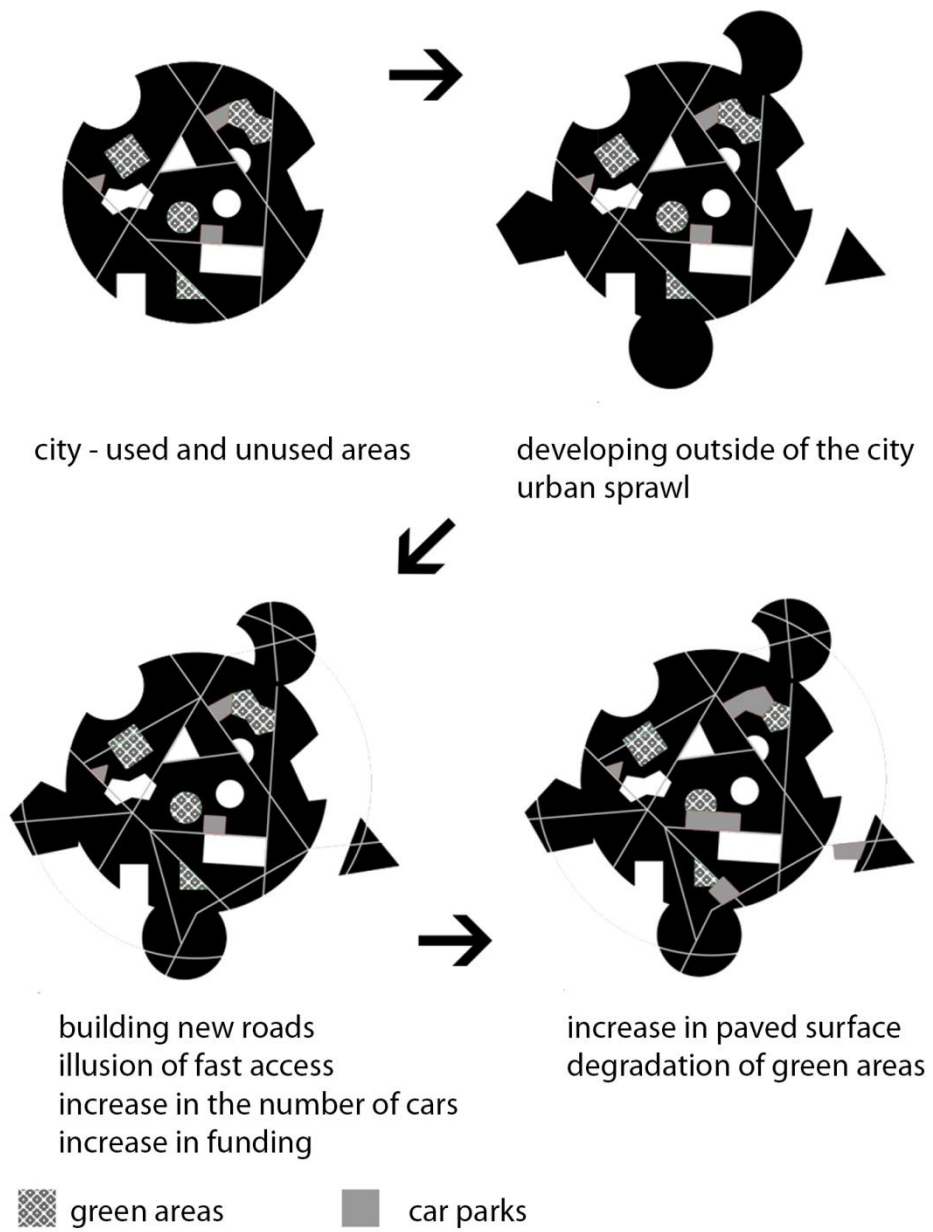


Figure 2. *Grotte-Rolland Housing Estate*



Source: www.maps.google.com. Photos @ 2014 Google Map data @ 2014 Google, Data access. 15/03/2014.

Such unexploited spaces may be perceived as defects in the building downtown such as seals, industrial areas, unused tracks, started and abandoned investments - long-term construction sites, which after having been developed could have a positive impact on the city.

Figure 3. *Parking at the Kindergarden and Blocks of Flats Set in the Place of the Existing Lawn until Recently. There are Visible Garages, and at the top of the Figure the Next Parking. Also, on the Right Side you can See Garages and Maneuvering Area. Lipsko, Poland, December 2015*



Figure 4. *The Part of a Sports Field in the Middle of the Estate Converted into a Parking Lot. Lublin, Poland, January 2016*



Complex Transformation

There are also some good examples of architectural solutions. In contrast to the spontaneous examples mentioned above, they are deliberately thought in a comprehensive and long-term way.

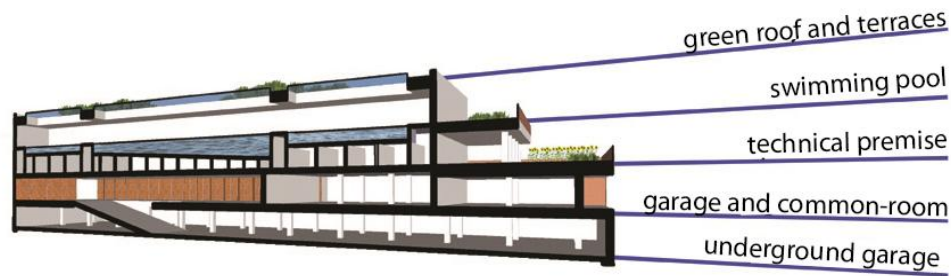
Berlin Markisches Viertel settlement which was created in 1963-1974, covers the area of 280 hectares and was designed for 50 000 people. The society living in the area of the estate, in the 80s began to feel the problems of an extremely high intensity of development and too much paved surface.

As part of the revitalization process a lot of activities as well as social and political changes were carried out. Solutions were not limited only to satisfy the most visible needs - symptoms of a "disease", but eliminated its cause. In order to improve the communication between the settlement and the rest of the city an underground railway line was built, parking spaces were removed from the neighborhood, the amount of streets was reduced and a new network of streets was rebuilt. Seemingly a multi-lane road should be constructed to let the residents quickly get to the center of Berlin. In the place of the old concreted surfaces parks and recreational areas were created, children's playgrounds were organized, giving residents space for spontaneous meetings and improving neighborly relations [5].

The conceptual design of the development of settlements in Lipsko, Poland (reality is Figure 3, the example of green spaces turned in car parks) was created after local zoning plan passing and based on the provisions of a plan created for this part of the town. According to the author, planners downplayed the social needs of residents and planned the area of the estate as developers, who are primarily interested in the greatest rate of investment return. The cultural function and planned central part of the expanded settlement that has been allocated for roads, parking lots, garages and car

wash station was not taken into account. Fulfilling the imposed and enacted local plan, while trying to establish the main part of the estate (Figure 6), the author suggested creating a multifunctional building with a parking space, a multi-level swimming pool and a common room for the residents (Figure 5) [6]. The number of parking spaces in the parking lot would meet the needs of new residents, but could also eliminate part of the metal garages which would definitely improve the aesthetics of the housing estate

Figure 5. *The Functional Cross-section over the Designed Multi-functional Building*



Source: [6].

Figure 6. *The Suggested Expansion of the Estate and Location in the Center the Multi-purpose Building with Multi-level Parking*



The positive example of the reinstating of the unused space to the inhabitants of the city is the Centre for the Meeting of Cultures in Lublin (Figure 7). Originally this place supposedly served as the opera theater, whose development started in 1974 [7]. In the 80s they stopped construction and for many years the area located in the city center, close to the university, adjacent to the Saski Garden was surrounded by a wall and excluded from the functioning. The Lublin residents used to refer to it as "The theatre under the construction".

Figure 7. *The Centre for the Meeting of Cultures, the Square in front of the Building and the Area, Both Open and Returned to Lublin Residents March 2016*



The design of the building created by Lublin architectural studio Stelmach and Partners Architectural Office Sp. z o.o. was chosen during the international competition in 2009. Architects and investors, seeing the long-term separation of the area by the wall staged the play "The fall of the Lublin wall." Currently, the square in front of the building is open, giving someone the ability to freely pass through it, but also to stop and to admire sculptures in front of the building. The square is also used for cultural events. The synergy effect was achieved, because the fulfilled function is considered to fill the gaps in the city.

Summary

The changes in technology and industry have significantly influenced the shape and functioning of the modern city. However, this is not always considered to be a proper transformation. The change in the appearance of the city has an impact on the lifestyle of its inhabitants.

Prefabricated housing estates constitute an integral part of Polish cities. This part of the city should not be underestimated but on the contrary we should take advantage of its potential. "If the process of social division has started, it is very difficult to stop even at high financial expenditures, which influence private investors and reduces the competitiveness of the apartments on the global level of the city" [8]. One should now start thinking about the future of these settlements, where the level of life quality is still satisfactory [2, 3], because the revitalization of large slab estates is equal with the return to social inclusion, the revival of life in the area of different estates, the process of responsibility returning in relations and "good neighborly relations" [9].

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