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SELECTED PROBLEMS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIALIST METROPOLISES

by

Krzysztof Pawłowski

Chairman of the Polish National Committee

of ICOMOS

Visiting Professor

School of Architecture

and

Paul Valéry University

Montpellier

Discussant

Krzysztof Pawłowski

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The scope of this comment on socialist metropolises results on the one hand from the suggestions of the conference organizers; on the other, from the author's interests and competence. As a town-planning historian, I am going to introduce a retrospective element. As a town-planner specializing in the rehabilitation of towns and historical districts, I am going to emphasize the role of historical city centers in the life of metropolitan areas. Connected with Warsaw for over half a century, I shall primarily focus on her problems.

This is justified inasmuch the example of our capital is in many respects representative of the developmental regularities of socialist metropolises. The opportunities for physical planning resulting from the immense war damage were greater than elsewhere. The opportunities, let us stress at the beginning, have often been overestimated by our foreign colleagues negligent of the country's extremely difficult situation and the need for a maximum possible utilization of the surviving elements of the city's technological infrastructure. Many spatial solutions had to be subordinated to these considerations.

The role of Warsaw is all the more important to our analyses as her example illustrates the effectiveness of the central planning of population development. As a result of administrative steps, the capital's magnitude has been terminated so that its population does not exceed 1.5 million, representing barely 4.5% of the country's entire population. The socio-economic crisis going on in Poland for several years now has not avoided

Warsaw. Spatial planners have been among the participants in the debate on the state of affairs. Their authoritative contributions may significantly enrich our discussion.

The adopted retrospective approach will help us realize that the concept of the socialist city is older than the existence of socialist states. My research on the development of modern town-planning indicates that Tony Garnier's design for "Une cité industrielle" of 1901-1904 may be considered the first complete program of a socialist city. There is no private ownership of land in it, and the satisfaction of the needs of the working classes is of primary importance. An urge to create optimal employment conditions determines the organization of industrial plants, in whose design greenery plays a very important role. Similarly, Garnier's social attitude found expression in the numerous schools, cultural, health and sports facilities. The most significant quality of his design, the social control of land, resulted in the abolishment of all the parcelling divisions so that pedestrians could move freely, unobscured by the street lay-out. The city with a population of thirty-five thousand was intended as an element of the spatial structure of the metropolitan region of Lyon.

"Cité Industrielle" is all the more interesting as it reflects certain qualities characteristic of socialist planning. What I mean here is the underestimation of the social value of land, which is manifested in Garnier's preference for the extensive building up of the city, even in its central parts.

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It is no accident that Garnier's concepts found favourable conditions in the Soviet Union. Milutin's linear city and its numerous replicas are the best proofs of this.

This leads to the obvious conclusion that the concepts of the socialist city could find the fullest expression in the materialization of new urban organisms, which does not imply, however, that attempts at controlling the development of existing cities have not been undertaken.

A good case in point is J.Chmielewski and S.Syrkus's design for Functional Warsaw, worked out in 1934. Their concept of the development of Warsaw was based on the city's close connection with its surroundings and the so-called fixture zones.

According to the design they proposed for so-called maximum Warsaw, the city, whose area went considerably beyond its administrative borders, was based on the run of the major communication routes on a regional and national scale, and the course of the natural waterway, the river Vistula. The major functional centers of the complex included the crossing of the zones the area of the "city" was marked out by the junction of the "capital zone" with the "commercial zone". The authors of the vision of future Warsaw emphasized that they had not lost awareness of the existing situation, of the depression, unemployment and homelessness. "We know that as long as production and consumption are far from settled we can only theoretically prepare a Warsaw of the future." They were convinced that their study "will become useful when social and economic forces finally

regain their balance."

The moment was much forestalled by the dramatic period of World War II. In 1939, the concept of a "maximal Warsaw" was ousted by the mad Nazi vision of "Warschau die Neue Deutsche Stadt". Work on the design was launched in the Würzburg town-planning studio shortly before Hitler's invasion of Poland, and the whole was officially approved by the German authorities in February 1940. According to the so-called Pabst plan, the one million three hundred thousand city of Warsaw was to be transformed into a one hundred twenty thousand German district within the area of the city proper, and an eighty thousand forced labor camp for the Poles on the right bank of the Vistula. NSDAP headquarters were to be erected on the premises of the Royal Castle once the Castle, the symbol of Polish independence, had been pulled down.

In this light, the logic of the successive stage of the destruction of the city becomes more apparent. Thus, the bombing of the Royal Castle in September 1939, the complete destruction of the Ghetto in 1943, finally, the systematic extirpation of what survived the Warsaw Uprising by a special Vernichtungskommando are no accident. As a result, the city was destroyed in 84%, including 90% of its monuments. The entire population of Warsaw was either exterminated or dislodged. The city ceased to live.

The decision of its rebuilding and restoring to the rank of the capital was made soon after the liberation in January 1945. The ambitious initiative could be put into practice thanks

to the centrally controlled modest financial means and the organization of the national fund for the rebuilding of the capital. This was done on the basis of plans worked out before the war and during the Nazi occupation, adapted to the tragic post-war realities.

The reconstruction of the Old Town is particularly important for my argument. After numerous discussions on, among others, plans for leaving the ruins as a memorial to the heroic city, it was decided that the shape of the historical ensemble would be faithfully reconstructed. This was seen as a symbol of the imperishability of a nation condemned to annihilation by Hitler. This being the feeling of the Polish society, the reconstruction of the Old Town may be seen as the satisfaction of a public need.

I am not going to dwell on the extremely complex process of the reconstruction of the Old Town. Its quality was so high that the Old Town has been entered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. What I want to stress is the town-planning aspect of the undertaking.

It should be underlined that the historic development of Warsaw is responsible for the peripheral localization of the Old Town. Thus its function included primarily the satisfaction of the residents' needs, and its furnishings did not differ from those of a normal housing estate. Cultural institutions within its area were of particular importance to the city. The rebuilding of the Old Town was preceded by the

construction of the East-West route which, by passing transit traffic through a tunnel, had taken the burden off the historical complex. The close collaboration of town-planners and conservators of monuments was the peculiar quality of the Warsaw project and later also of the Polish school of the conservation and revalorization of complexes of monuments.

For various reasons, the restitution of the Royal Castle, the second stage of which was completed four days ago, was undertaken with great delay. It plays an important role as a center of the cultural life of the state, and its characteristic silhouette has filled a jarring gap in the panorama of Warsaw. Significantly, the Royal Castle was raised entirely by public subscription, and the public interest in the progress of work was remarkable.

Unlike other projects of the first period of rebuilding that have since lost their public prestige, the Old Town has acquired the rank of the capital's salon as well as a symbolic space, the scene of extremely important events, which applies to the very recent past as well. One has to agree with the thesis of the paper that, as time went on, the protection of monuments was gradually less and less patriotically motivated, while their role in the preservation of the individual character of the environment was brought out. Its anonymity is the result of the monotony of architecture based on industrial methods. I have repeatedly reverted to this reasoning myself in my attempts to secure an effective protection of the relatively less valuable

elements of cultural heritage.

Decisions concerning the best possible utilization of monumental centers in socialist metropolises have been based on various considerations leading to various solutions. The rebuilding of Buda, for instance, was carried out using numerous more modern elements than those employed in Warsaw. The recent erection of a Hilton hotel, for which ruins of a church complex have been used, is the best illustration of the attitude. In Moscow, the Kremlin complex, the seat of the supreme state authorities, and the Red Square, the city's symbolic and actual center, were handled with utmost care. Some solutions were prompted by the concentric, historical lay-out of Moscow. In the framework of a town-planning renovation, the most valuable monumental objects have been selected for conservation, while a larger part of the existing buildings have been replaced by new ones. The ensuing problem is the integration of the new forms with the historical environment. At times, as in the case of the hotel Rossya, functional exigencies are responsible for the introduction of a scale alien to the historical environment. Yet interesting effects have also been created including, for instance, the new Assembly Palace built within the Kremlin complex. Likewise interesting is the contrast between a small, 17th-century orthodox church and Kalinin Avenue.

In undestroyed Prague, the vast 800 ha area of the magnificent historical center is considered en bloc a monumental reserve. It has been divided into eighteen units, and guide-

lines for their protection and revalorization have been worked out. Town-planning studies comprise an analysis of the street network and its possible utilization /dotted sequences/. The prevalence of pedestrian traffic has created the need to surround the area with four arteries adjacent to the city center. The building of the subway has solved a number of communication problems. Areas for further development of functions peculiar to a city center have been selected /lined ones/ outside those of utmost value /within the thin contours/. Complexes of greenery are considered an important element of urban landscape and specially protected.

In Berlin, the D.D.R. capital, Unter den Linden Avenue is treated with special care, but the divided city is a special case. In Sofia, relics of Roman walls have been preserved and thrown into relief in an underground passage, which illustrates the reverence with which monuments are treated. Thus the values of cultural heritage are brought out everywhere and acquire the character of center-creating elements, though this is achieved using different methods.

To return to the development of the Warsaw metropolis: it must be stressed that the successive plans have undergone characteristic transformations. A few elements of this extremely complex process have to be emphasized for our purposes.

The first plan for the rebuilding of the capital reserved vast areas for its recreation functions. The park complex along the western border of the city center is quite evident. The city was to develop up to a population of six hundred - eight hundred thousand. Most of the ground within the borders of the city became municipally owned, which facilitated planning on a larger scale.

In 1951, the area of the city was tripled, but the above did not apply to the new territories. As a result of political decisions, a metallurgic complex was launched in the north-western part of the city. As in Cracow, in the vicinity of which Nowa Huta had been built, this was done with a view of giving a working-class character to the main urban centers. Pollution, among other things, accounts for this being one of the basic town-planning errors.

The 1950s also were the years of "social realism" in architecture yielding bulky edifices including the Palace of Culture and Science situated in Europe's largest, and as yet spatially and functionally unmanageable square. Constitution Square, another relic of the period, is among the few squares based on premeditated design. 1956 and the well-known political events brought a reversal from the principles of social realism in favour of functional solutions. Many new elements including a complex of sky-scrapers and the shopping center of the so-called Eastern Wall sprang up after that date.

The 1960s brought a basic change of opinions regarding the capital's further development. The views that it is more expensive than that of average-sized cities came into prominence with the result that attempts at the deglomeration of Warsaw were undertaken. Employment dropped considerably, primarily in industry. Expenditure on municipal facilities including housing reached one fourth of the former magnitude, which proved to be particularly dangerous. The intended shifting of some of the workers to the services proved a failure as the sector was not sufficiently developed. The latter, the shortage of services was going to become

Warsaw's another weak point, and one of the harassments of daily life. Areas allotted for the building of service centers often disintegrate the spatial and functional consistency of town-planning complexes. A recent opinion has it that it would be more appropriate to erect provisional buildings and pull them down as soon as the project proper is materialized. Yet the same mechanisms that prompt the residents to view all erections as publicly owned, counteract the removal of even small objects built at public expense.

The strategy of accelerated development adopted after 1970, brought new trends. Special stress was laid on certain branches of industry, e.g. television equipment. Numerous departures from plan were enforced, primarily through the curtailment of cultivated land. The existing system of communication, with no subway railway, was additionally overstrained. The new situation prompted town-planners to work out variant plans for the development of the Warsaw agglomeration. From among the four basic variants, the one assuming the development of the northern zone, with a huge international airport near Modlin, was chosen. The institution of the Warsaw metropolitan voivodeship was conducive to the comprehensive treatment of the metropolitan area. In a private conversation, Professor Helena Syrkus, a co-author of "Functional Warsaw", told me that it was a particularly satisfactory confirmation of the aptness of a forty-year-old concept of the Warsaw urban complex.

At that time, the building of the Warsaw West Center was also launched. The coordination of undertakings in the third dimension turned out to be particularly difficult, as this was

linked with the historical silhouette of Warsaw. The controversy comprised a sky-scraper whose importance lay in its closing the city's main artery, Marszałkowska Street, but which overlapped with the mass of the Royal Castle in the panorama of Warsaw. It is very encouraging that the latest version of the plan for the city center for 1983 contains "architectural areas crystallizing the landscape of the city center" included in the sheet entitled "Principles of Physical Planning", and dominants colliding with the panorama due to their height /indicated with red points/. The program of further design includes the most important issues that will be dealt with in competitions or variant approaches /the relevant areas are encircled with a red line/. There are grounds for believing that similar errors will be avoided in the future.

It is a well-known fact that 1980 brought a serious socio-economic crisis in Poland. It is natural to ask about its effect on the plan accepted shortly before that. With the exception of the precise time scheme, all its elements have been preserved, which seems justified considering that the construction of an underground railway has been launched. The authors of the plan of the development of Warsaw have made an attempt to describe the flaws of the current model of spatial planning. In their opinion, it has shaped under the influence of the same detrimental phenomena that are responsible for the acute socio-economic crisis in Poland. These include, in the first place, the excessive concentration of power in the hands of a narrow group of people evading social control, extreme centralism in the management of economy, the negligence of social and professional

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criteria in decision-making processes." The model proved very useful during the rebuilding of the war-damaged country. It lay stress primarily on the re-accumulation of wealth, and the creation of new values and materialization of new concepts, whereas the exploitation, preservation and modernization of possessions were pushed to the background. Consequently, a model effective during the creation of new values ceased to function as soon as the problems of re-shaping and modernization had come to the foreground."

The authors of the plans for the development of Warsaw have also drawn certain conclusions concerning the methodology of planning:

"Town-planning methodology must also be adjusted to the existing economic situation. The present form of preparing spatial development plans, the lack of tested and reliable methods of task planning, incorrect methods of formulating socio-provisions and insufficient level of social planning constitute the main problems which must be solved.

"First of all, it is necessary to formulate realistic development prognoses, particularly in the field of investments and the implementation of social goals. Analysis of the successive plans of Warsaw shows that the 'realism' of town-planners usually surpasses the actual possibilities. It is necessary to introduce more variant solutions in the field of spatial planning.

"Unrealistic postulates contained in a plan deprive it of authority, multiply departures from it, which is followed by a collapse of the accepted developmental concepts. It is indispensable to resume economic analyses on the cost of the functioning of the city, the policy of siting major projects, variant solutions, analyses of the costs of the development of sites and overcoming technological and economic barriers.

"We observe an increasing involvement of society in the problems of spatial planning, regional planning and architecture. Society should be our ally, not just a critic. Several conditions

must be fulfilled, however: the organizational platform for dialogue must be formed, urban development plans in a form intelligible for non-professionals must be worked out, the mass media must be prepared to present plans and programs as they are being elaborated."

The metropolitan area has been exposed to particular pressure from various sections of economy enforcing localization decisions incompatible with the premises of relevant plans. We may now ask about the role that the private sector of economy has played in the process. It is relatively strong in Poland, notably in the sphere of agriculture, which is of lesser interest to us here. In the metropolitan area of Warsaw, the private sector plays a certain role as regards employment /ca. 8%/, but it concentrates in the areas outside the center. Although the private sector does not exceed 1% of production, it has an important meaning because of its complementary character in commerce, handicrafts and services. As has been pointed out by French geographers, a great number of small shops of trade and services vests certain areas within the city center with a special character. Characteristically, these are grouped either among the buildings of old standing or among new buildings of a provisional character /pavilions/ so that their effect on the city's spatial shape is rather insignificant.

The vast deficiencies in the field of municipally sponsored housing might act as a stimulus for individual initiative. Yet a lack of fittings, a shortage of building materials, and the insufficient development of motor transport constitute a major hindrance. Complexes of one-family houses securing 15% of homes cannot be viewed as a deformation of the city's spatial arrangement.

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Finally, I am not going to abstain from answering whether the socialist-type metropolis is a more appropriate model for the cities of third world countries than the Western-style city. My opinion results from my experience gathered during the attempts at shaping the process of rehabilitation of historical urban centers in Algeria, Iran, Mozambique and Senegal. In all these cases, my stipulation has been that the problems should be considered in the framework of spatial planning. The materialization of complex endeavours of this type requires appropriate means and, which is important, the elimination of the speculative factor. At the same time, the public's active participation must be secured, for which the Polish ICOMOS Committee is striving so strenuously.

Thus, as I said, the problems must be tackled in the framework of spatial economy and obey the rigours of spatial planning. In this field, the experience of socialist countries may be very useful. Yet, on the basis of our self-criticism, the role of the social factor must be increased in the process of planning; certain desiderata of the public must be obeyed, yet in a range dictated by the programmatic and spatial premises.

This is going to be the main point of my paper prepared for a colloquy dedicated to the problems of heritage and planning, that opens in Tunis in two weeks' time. The preservation of the heritage is probably not going to be treated as the chief issue as regards the development of metropolises. Yet it is our duty to indicate that these ^{in fact,} are the absolute values in the new Cultural Revolution.