

AGNIESZKA JANOWSKA

ORCID: 0000-0001-8762-9810

Poznan University of Technology, Poland

SELF-MADE AVANT-GARDE

SAMODZIELNA AWANGARDA

Abstract

In the 1920s, the avant-garde movement in architecture aimed to reject bourgeois culture by creating new, egalitarian form of society. Leading thinkers of modernity and avant-garde architects such as Walter Benjamin, Walter Gropius or Ernst May, treated architecture as an integral part of the revolution that was to sweep away the “philistine” social order and aesthetics derived from antiquity. Rational approach of architects towards their clients and building users, theoretical works by H.R. Hitchcock, P. Johnson and S. Giedion and replacement of private patronage with state-owned enterprises resulted in architecture founded on the search for aesthetic sensibilities, separated from everyday life social issues. Artistic expression of complex forms became an autonomous domain, detached from the existing human needs. Avant-garde today is the work of artists, local communities and urban activists who incorporate social involvement, urban activism and creative reclamation of residual spaces. It has developed a new architectural language based on ad-hoc created forms and hybrid/temporary functions that can respond flexibly to context in its broad sense.

Keywords: action, event, happening, anarchitecture, humanistic architecture

Streszczenie

W latach 20. XX w. ruch awangardowy w architekturze modernistycznej był wiązany z tendencjami uleczenia chorego społeczeństwa burżuazyjnego przez stworzenie jego nowej, bardziej egalitarnej formy. Twórcy i myśliciele tej epoki, tacy jak Walter Benjamin, Walter Gropius czy Ernst May, traktowali architekturę jako integralną część rewolucji, która miała zmieścić „filisterski” porządek społeczny i estetykę wywiedzioną z antyku. Racjonalna postawa architektów wobec zleceniodawców i odbiorców ich dzieł, prace teoretyczne Henry’ego Russela Hitchcocka, Philipa Johnsona i Sigfrida Giediona oraz zastąpienie po II wojnie światowej prywatnego mecenasa państwowym inwestorem sprawiły, że kwestie społeczne ustąpiły miejsca poszukiwaniom estetycznym. Ekspresja coraz bardziej złożonych form stała się zagadnieniem samym w sobie, ignorując tym samym realne potrzeby człowieka pojmowanego jako jednostka i członek wspólnoty. Współczesna architektoniczna awangarda jest tworzona przez działania artystów, lokalne wspólnoty i aktywistów miejskich, którzy łączą społeczne zaangażowanie i aktywizm miejski z twórczym wykorzystaniem przestrzeni resztkowych. Rezultatem jest rozwój nowego języka architektonicznego opartego na tworzonych *ad hoc* wielowartościowych formach i hybrydowej/tymczasowej funkcji, a tym samym reagujących w płynny sposób na szeroko rozumiany kontekst.

Słowa kluczowe: działanie, wydarzenie, happening, anarchitektura, architektura humanistyczna

1. INTRODUCTION

The terms “avant-garde” and “modernity” have been often used interchangeably, which only strengthens the impression that they are identical. As both Hilde Heyen and Modris Ekstein observed, the term “avant-garde” was used broadly in reference to artists, writers, composers and architects who applied new, experimental means of expression in opposition to the official trends propagated by the “establishment” and in opposition to limits imposed by

tradition. Whereas “modernity” included the “avant-garde” as well as the overall intellectual and artistic movement of destruction and rejection of the old values. In his considerations, Eksteins even extends the terms of “avant-garde” and “modernity” to incorporate social and political factors, attempting to prove that “in our age life has blended with art and [...] existence became ‘aestheticized’”¹ in the negative sense thereof. His views partly converged with the theories of Peter Bürger who, even if seeing the difference between “avant-garde” and “modernity”, defined “avant-garde” as a movement aimed to put an end to the existence of art as something separate from everyday life – that is art as an autonomous domain that has no real impact on the social system. “Manifesto of the Futurist Painters includes the famous words that we need to support and glorify our day-to-day world, a world which is going to be continually and splendidly transformed by victorious Science”². Le Corbusier wrote about *our contemporary life that produces objects*: from clothes and devices, through ships and planes to architecture. The artistic group BLOK³ postulated unity of art and social issues. This alternative art was not to be based on the principles of economy and conventions of the bourgeois society⁴ but on aesthetic sensitivity and creative potential of individuals, supported with scientific innovations. In other words, artistic exploration aimed towards creating new forms of interdisciplinary art, in this architecture, subjected to new social ideals; abstract painting dovetailed with “communal building architecture based on radical engineering solutions developed with the community as a whole in mind”⁵.

Another theoretician and also critic, Renato Poggioli, described the avant-garde as characterized by five moments: activism, antagonism, nihilism, agonism and futurism⁶. According to him, avant-garde preferred action (always against established conventions) over passive contemplation, looked for adventure of unknown consequences rather than for stabilization, sought to provoke, oppose and resist, at the same time fighting against balance and harmony, in brief avant-garde preferred revolution over evolution. It, further, negated the future (even the nearest future) and focused on intentional, futuristic vision. Thus, manifestos, artistic statements, credos and declarations played an important role in the development of the avant-garde movement as they spun specific narratives that created – to a lesser or greater extent – the myth of Better New World or New Grand Style (Naum, Gabo) and the image of an architect as a healer of the sick, evil society⁷. Yet, all these narratives were populated with rhetorical figures and types rather than with real people and their factual needs.

¹ M. Eksteins, *Święto wiosny. Wielka Wojna i narodziny Nowego Wieku*, PIW, Warszawa 1996, p. 10. In his book, Eksteins maintains that the Nazi kitsch and religion of art propagated by the ideologists and thinkers of ‘modernity’ could be viewed as linked with *blood bonds*.

² U. Boccioni, L. Russolo, C. Carrà, G. Balla, G. Severini, *Manifest malarzy futurystów* [in:] *Artyści o sztuce. Od van Gogha do Picassa*, eds. E. Grabska, H. Morawska, PWN, Warszawa, 1969, p. 150.

³ Blok, <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/blok> (access: 28.06.2022).

⁴ As George Grosz wrote: *contemporary philistine art will end upon the downfall of bourgeois – a painter – even if against his will – is a factory of banknotes and a printing machine of securities, tools that rich capitalists and pretentious aesthetes use to enjoy gains on their investments, while presenting themselves as promoters of culture in the eyes of the society and their own eyes, whereas such bourgeois culture perfectly suits the money making goals* [own translation]. G. Grosz, *Zamiast biografii* [in:] *Artyści o sztuce, op. cit.*, p. 300.

⁵ W. Gropius, *Teoria i zasady organizacyjne Bauhausu*, [in:] *Artyści o sztuce, op. cit.*, p. 396.

⁶ R. Poggioli, *The theory of avant-garde*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1968.

⁷ Such an approach to architectural profession was on decline in the 1960s, when it was more and more often replaced with the perception of an architect as a freelance professional. Jean Nouvel was probably

Architecture was assigned a special role, on the one hand, to heal the society (both the soul and body) and, on the other hand, to prepare man for a new – more open and egalitarian – way of living, at a further stage. The idyll of domestic comfort was to be replaced with romanticized vision of communal living (in more liberal Le Corbusier's version) or communal apartments postulated by Soviet Constructivists (Boris Arwatow, Naum, Gabo). In the 1920s and 1930s, avant-garde art, architecture and socially and politically progressive tendencies showed alignment, which gradually diverged in confrontation with realities of the new political post-war system⁸.

2. TWO-SPEED ARCHITECTURE

Once social issues were left aside, architecture mainly concentrated on aesthetics and inter-relations and inspirations with other disciplines of fine arts. These, however, were of limited nature, e.g. architecture was inspired only with avant-garde paintings and sculptures in the inter-war period. As long as the inter-war examples of homogeneous language of avant-garde art and architecture can be easily pointed out, then, in the post-war period architects hurried to reconstruct the destroyed cities and artists, leaving social and political issues aside, focused on the artwork highlighting its form and on the process of creation, documentation and popularisation. The latter shows the last major change in the 20th century art, i.e. the perception of experimental art. Wider and wider circles of proponents saw it not in opposition to the philistine culture and the *pretentious aesthete* approach but as part of high culture. At the same time, mass culture, its mechanisms and the paradoxical McLuhan's *medium is the message* statement became a new opponent as well as a source of inspiration for the avant-garde art. Although criticism was leveled against pop art objects such as ready-mades, cartoons, advertising photography, stage performances, films and video clips, they inspired many works of Jasper Johns, Jackson Pollock, Jean Dubuffet, Alexander Calder, Andy Warhol or Allan Karpov. Allan Karpov's legacy deserves particular attention, especially in view of its meaning for the development of happening intended to "enact the truth and completeness of a work of art by the presence of an artist"⁹ [own translation]. His experiments with space, works of art, happening artists and their audience (18 happenings in 6 parts, 1959) were continued among others by Wolf Vostella (*Cityrama*, 1961), Tadeusz Kantor (*Cricotage*, 1965), Włodzimierz Borkowski (*9 pokazów Synkretycznych*, 1968–1969), Marina Abramović (*Rhythm 0*, 1974). Happening, like *action painting* from which it evolved, became one of many trends of modern art. As a form of art it spurred free creative self-expression of the

the last architect propagating the earlier rhetoric: *I am offering you high quality space that is based on the criteria other than those that you know. Radicalism of my architecture may seem shameless. Nonetheless, residents may share its aesthetic ideas if they are ready to break out of the limits imposed by social housing* [own translation], N. Pongi, B. Rautenberg-Célié, *Laissez-vous conter: Nemausus, Ville de Nîmes*, <https://en.calameo.com/read/00015787821ec71df34b1> (access: 10.12.2012).

⁸ Self-reflections of many theoreticians and thinkers of architecture such as Siegfried Giedion, Bruno Zevi or Christian Norberg-Schulz cannot be disregarded in this process. Their texts never discussed any political or social issues; instead, Giedion and Zevi reflected on the new space concept, "space-time", while Norberg-Schulz focused on such important aspects as architectural creation of meaningful places and the *genius loci*.

⁹ T. Pawłowski, *Happening*, Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa 1982, p. 245.

artist and adapted to local traditions; the *Phenomenon*, a happening by Vostell, referred to German expressionism, in particular to George Grosz paintings.

Happening was met with extreme responses of the audience, from polite indifference (e.g. Jean-Jacques Lebel, happening: Funeral Ceremony, 1960) to primitive aggression threatening the life of the artist (e.g. *Rhythm 0* by Marina Abramović). Because neither indifference nor aggression was a response that satisfied the artists and the audience, it's only logical that happening evolved into performance art, a form of art much safer for the artist and other participants of the artistic act, with the traditionally predefined roles of the performer and the participants.

It may be observed that reactions of the audience of the avant-garde art were quite similar to those of the users of modern architecture. The postulate of autonomy from social and political issues also concerned architecture. In their stead, architecture moved to focus on technical aspects, pragmatic forms and functions¹⁰. Those values cherished by modern architecture met either with scepticism of the users, or the users made their best efforts to adapt them to their own functional and aesthetic needs (e.g. Pessac housing estate), or in extreme cases housing environment was vandalised or abandoned.

The dilapidated low-cost modular, brutal housing estates designed by Kenzo Tange, Robin Hood Gardens, Alice and Peter Smithson in Scilly or the brutally changed by the residents Oskar Hansen housing estate in Lublin clearly prove that visionary designs missed to address true needs of the users. Sprawling idyllic suburbs of atomic cities as places of free individual expression merging with local communities effectively obscured the depressing image of a modern metropolis.

Modern architecture sluggishly and sceptically experimented with means of expression created and verified by artists. Even if certain interrelations between designs of the Archigram group (Instant City, Plug in City) and the pop-art of the 1960s can be observed, and so can be the influences in the early works of Zaha Hadid and Rem Koolhaas exerted by constructivism or the impact of *action painting* – as declared by Coop Himmelb(l)au – on the form of a law office building in Vienna or the Funder Werk factory building in St. Veit, they were all as enigmatic as inspirations with the Rolling Stones music.

Like art, architecture rejected any utilitarian subjection to the viewer's/user's needs, reducing their role to that of a passive observer with no real impact on architectural environment. Experiments with social participation of future residents in a design process undertaken by Ralph Erskin and Lucien Kroll, preceded by theoretical works of Christopher Alexander could not outshadow the already created image of the user as a mere onlooker. When designing Byker Wall, Erskine cooperated with the local authorities and allowed the relocated dwellers to choose the location of their residences, their neighbours and the type of housing. He, moreover, retained buildings that served important social functions, i.e. a church and two schools in the urban layout of the project. The freedom to build a trend in architecture (as proposed by John Turner) fostered the long-term relations

¹⁰ Fashion was the third aspect, apart from technological innovations and pragmaticism, in the core of the interests of the avant-garde; combination of the three aspects gave rise to quickly improvised and radically innovative solutions. Rayner Banham, defining the design philosophy, stated that *aesthetics of mass-produced objects is an expression of popular art* and as such is susceptible to changing fashions, as a result it will continue to be replaced by newer and newer models. At present, similar views are voiced by Ben van Berkel, Caroline Bos a Herzog and de Meuron, who openly speak about “fashion design” in reference to buildings.

that earlier formed between the residents and aspired to go beyond a mere set of arbitrary theories and patterns. The entire process was also supported by slow design, tolerant enough towards certain *ad hoc* acts.

Kroll turned to similar design methods involving students of the Louvain University in the creation of pluralistic and open architecture that “favours no place over another, that individually approaches a resident and his/her neighbour and that wants to demonstrate the diversity”¹¹ [own translation]. Several groups of students worked on a mock-up of the entire student campus. Kroll reorganised their work only when any of the groups tended to schematically approach problems and their solutions. Owing to such a design model, respective groups of students could identify all the problems and then brainstorm the best solutions. Architecture created in such collaborative design process is not only complex and diverse but also adapted to the user’s needs while free of any excessively decorative elements, as such it can be, moreover, implemented via simple construction techniques and with the use of low-cost materials. Kroll and his students introduced the ethos of taking matters in your own hands and the *do-it-yourself* aesthetics into architecture, reverberating ideas of the student protests of May 1968 in Paris and those of Atelier Populaire. Arbitrary decisions of a designer gave way to a collaborative decision-making process. The designer could no longer monopolise his/her designs. Buildings gained a multi-dimensional perspective: ethical (collectiveness counts), political (democracy of the users) and social (community-oriented). It was not by a coincidence that Rudofsky published his book *Architecture without Architects* (1964) which introduces the reader to “communal architecture – architecture produced not by specialists but by the spontaneous and continuing activity of a whole people with a common heritage, acting within a community of experience”¹².

3. FIRST THINGS FIRST

Resistance strategies, such as models of fundamental combativeness demonstrated in public space, returned in the 1990s, this time not in opposition to the bourgeois culture but to consumerism, alongside the alter-globalization movement and anti-corporate activism, and above all, alongside the bottom-up initiatives of local communities, urban movements and activists. They are all aimed at claiming – as David Harvey observed – “the right to the city” which means “some kind of shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and re-made”¹³. And cities are made and re-made in the best interests of the local authorities and entrepreneurs (developers) because they enjoy the causative and supervisory powers which they can exercise via a number of means whenever an opportunity of financial gains arises¹⁴. There is only a relatively small space left for

¹¹ A. Lewicka-Morawska, M. Machowski, J. Mrozek et al., *Sztuka Świata*, t. 10, Wydawnictwo Arkady, 1996, p. 290.

¹² Pietr Belluschi’s definition in: B. Rudofsky, *Architecture without Architects*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 1964, pp. 3–4.

¹³ D. Harvey, *Bunt miast. Prawo do miasta i miejska rewolucja*, Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, Warszawa 2012, p. 23.

¹⁴ Financial gains shall be understood in the broadest sense: both as returns on investments and as political gains attained due to public spending on specific investments oriented on defined target groups of electorate.

the residents of a city where they are in control and where they can freely re-make space in response to their needs and not necessarily in-line with the top imposed rules.

There are three types of spaces. The first type comprises common spaces such as public squares, parks or green areas. It shall be observed that the latter have become the subject of bitter disputes bordering on environmental and political issues¹⁵. Then, we also have private spaces of various degrees of privacy (those belonging to individuals and housing communities). The last, third type are residual spaces – urban areas that due to unfortunate location or neighbourhood, difficult area topography or complex plot geometry or size have become unattractive for the users or even impossible to use in any conventional way.

Like any other parts of the city, the three types of spaces change but each has its own rhythm, pace and hierarchy of needs as put forward in Ken Garland's manifesto *First Things First*¹⁶. Residents often act spontaneously, thus, design acts (reduced to the essential minimum) and construction processes that they undertake are oriented towards the satisfaction of those needs which they view as important: safety, relaxation, education and culture. Such an approach increases the feeling of belonging to a place and the sense of collective spirit.

It is the users or residents that factually change the spaces they use or occupy. Only a marginal contribution thereto of professional architects stems partly from the specific (ephemeral and dispersed) structure of space concerned and partly from their inability to act *ad hoc*, to undertake tasks without any prior defined plan or to manage the construction site based on voluntary work and non-conventional materials. As was the case of an abandoned square in the Miravalle district, which, owing to the efforts of mainly women and young people supported by the teachers from the local primary school, the local University staff and NGOs, was successfully changed into a community centre. In effect of their long-term cooperation (2006–2012), local community gained a clinic and a library with a playground for children, a workshop hall, a lunchroom serving meals for about 300 people and two leisure zones with rainwater retention system. This allowed the residents to plant trees and start a community garden, which in turn contributed to the lunchroom food supplies. Human scale of such architectural forms directly derives from functions and materials used (mainly recyclables). Here, architecture reclaims ready parts, easy to assemble without engagement of any heavy machines. These specific *ready-mades*, products of contemporary construction industry, find new life, sometimes even serve functions completely different than their original purpose. El Campo de Cebada in Madrid – a square remaining after the demolition of a sports hall – was arranged using furniture and systems from recovered materials, containers, pallets and scaffolds into an “open community infrastructure assuring access to water and electricity, storage zone, space, tools and facilities”¹⁷. Open form and non-formalised nature of the square

¹⁵ Similarly to protests in Epping Forest (1871) which were something more than just a fight between the police and those opposing the fencing of precious forests so far accessible to the public, the protesters (*looters*) contesting the urban development plan for Taksim Gezi Park struggled against a much wider range of concerns (2013). The Epping Forest dispute concerned two different ways of perception of space/landscape and public or limited access thereto. *Looters from Taksim* protested against the limitation of freedom of the press and against policies of the Islamist government by means comparable to those used in the May 1968 events.

¹⁶ K. Garland, *First Things First*, <https://www.readingdesign.org/first-things-first> (access: 10.06.2022).

¹⁷ Fragment of El Campo de Cebada manifesto which contains 20 points intended to *explain the nature* of the square and which can be *reproduced and improved*. Source: <https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/02-281490/el-campo-de-cebada-la-ciudad-situada> (access: 27.05.2021).

allowed its transformation through events organised by the bottom-up, often spontaneous, initiatives of the residents. This is an example of the ephemeral urban tissue formed by means of murals, graffiti, subsequent layers of posters, temporary furniture and sports facilities, plant boxes, makeshift roofing, audio and lighting systems – in brief, those characteristic of the Archigram designers and aesthetics of pop architecture.

Reclaimed residual spaces, incomplete forms or their informal nature make such places as Campo de Cebada perfect grounds for staging a wide range of diverse cultural activities, elevating them to the rank of Social Activators. Residents, by sharing the aforementioned elements of fit-out create specific situations and take part in them. We are, thus, witnessing here a specific type of social happening orchestrated by the Campo de Cebada square itself and objects recovered therein (collective author).

Similar spontaneously undertaken activities accompany the regularly organised event in Ghent – Die Leefstraat (Living Street), an experiment that enables residents to transform their street into their dream place by solving relevant problems such as: lack of meeting places and greenery, vehicle traffic, gentrification, loneliness, etc.¹⁸. Cooperation with local authorities, essential once several dozen streets were included in the experiment, brought about unexpected and non-conventional results¹⁹: using artificial or natural lawns, flower pots, picnic benches, inflatable pools and parklets, residents successfully transformed their streets into walking avenues, cross-roads into squares, car parks into temporary bars, and cul-de-sacs into green zones. All these activities, on the one hand, resemble spontaneous street art – squatters guerilla fight, in this case, however, in-line with the law and created by means of the “picnic sets”. Yet, they are an embodiment of factual, not just a procedural, participation of the residents in the traditional urban design. As a result, places gained new life and the residents could test the solutions that they themselves proposed, e.g. beta version of their city.

Spontaneous acts, pioneered by Erskine and Kroll, should enter the domain of architectural works, architects, however, relatively rarely aspire to see the perspective of the users of architecture, preferring conventional, and above all effective, design methods. Such methods limit contacts with the users to the essential minimum. Whereas acts undertaken within such initiatives as Die Leefstraat aspire to foster critical opposition with respect to current solutions and to test alternative methods, should the current solutions prove insufficient. The applicable procedural methods (including the procedures of architectural design) may turn out largely unsatisfactory at some breakthrough moments. As an example, we may refer to Rwanda (1994) when building materials, mainly tarpaulin and aluminium profile frames, donated by UNHCR for the refugees, entered the black market and were sold by profiteers at high prices, whereas tree branches were cut on a massive scale to make up for the missing

¹⁸ A similar experiment, though on a smaller scale, (*City in trial*) was carried out in Salbke district of Magdeburg, with over a thousand beer crates the residents constructed and tested a 1:1 scale model of the open-air library. Despite it being a community initiative, the completed facility designed by Karo Architekten has been regularly vandalised. Even the community event held therein, i.e. a two-day reading and poetry festival, could not permanently change this long depressed neighbourhood.

¹⁹ In the period from 2014–2016, Die Leefstraat experiment covered with its range 5 routes in 30 streets. The test period for new solutions usually lasted for 2–3 months. Even if the experiment was initiated by architects from Lab van Troje, it was the residents who made relevant decisions as to the arrangement of their living environment. The *ad hoc* implemented solutions often took the residents themselves by surprise: <https://www.leefstraat.be/over-leefstraat/nieuwe-manier-van-co-creatie/> (access: 8.04.2017).

materials. Designed by Shigeru Bana paper tube structures that could be produced on site by means of simple machines proved an efficient solution to the problem. Shigeru Bana is one of few architects that select recycled or construction waste materials – rubble, bottle crates, sandbags, paper tubes, containers, etc. and combine them with local crafts, this way anyone can construct a temporary shelter for themselves²⁰.

Such initiatives have already been successfully tested before; residents of French bidonvilles used for their construction discarded oil drums, founders of *barriadas* in Peru – pleated mats, and creators of Drop City in Trinidad in Colorado built domes and zonohedra to house themselves, using metal of car bodies and other inexpensive demolition materials, inspired with the works of Buckminster Fuller and the “happenings” of Allan Kaprow. The scale of mass production today and significant rise in consumerism in the area of new technologies has significantly increased the number of waste that can be recycled in architecture, from entire cars, fixtures, cisterns, tanks to solar panels.

Entire buildings may degenerate into waste and be recycled in a variety of artistic activities – for example the site in the former railway depot in Berlin-Moabit. The building and the area around it was taken over by Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik [Center for Art and Urbanistics] and has been gradually transformed through a series of unplanned, temporary and permanent activities undertaken by artists and architects. It shall be noted that in such cases we are facing an on-going transformation process, where a certain work comes up with an idea next further continued by other works/initiatives, rather than a typical time limited investment project rendering a final product. Silo Haus designed by Jan K rbes must be probably the most famous example of upcycling in architecture. The architect recycled a silo into a (tiny) house, where he lived with his daughter for 3 years experiencing “vertical life on minimalist space, mobility and dynamics” resulting from locating a private house in public space²¹. K rbes experiment found many other followers, e.g. a municipal igloo was constructed from waste containers and suspended to the roof of the old train platform which houses an art studio for artists (residents) of the Zentrum f r Kunst und Urbanistik designed in the form of parasitic architecture. Boards acquired from nearby schools and respectively trimmed make the finishing of its architrave surface. Visitors can enjoy absolute freedom in their artistic creation: from chalk graffiti via messages to Xs and Os game. Two other facilities were erected near the building – V.I.P. Box, a mobile stage for hip-hop singers and at the same time space shared by all participants, and the Municipal Stage constructed from containers, plastic boxes and scaffolds, additionally provided with plant watering system. Solar panels make up integral parts of the Stage designed to support the sound system and lighting; thus, the facility represents a piece of architecture as well as a part of the installation offering a high potential for creating ephemeral spaces for staging concerts, festivals and street performances. Its non-specific form may be perceived as a whole, yet it may also (and will) become part of a larger whole. Always ready for changes, the multi-functional Municipal Stage houses a variety of community (Moabit people) integrating events but it is also a habitat of plants and insects – the founders of the Zentrum f r Kunst und Urbanistik intentionally wanted it to expand and naturally blend with the neighbouring garden and park.

²⁰ P. Jodidio, *Shigeru Ban. Complete works 1985–2015*, Taschen, K ln 2015.

²¹ F. Prins, *Das Silohaus als Tiny House – Architekt Jan K rbes im Interview*, <https://www.lilligreen.de/das-silohaus-als-tiny-house-architekt-jan-koerbes-im-interview/> (access: 6.12.2020).

The issue totally disregarded by the 19th century avant-garde art, i.e. ecology and co-habitation of man and nature, is now more and more often incorporated and exposed in spaces created by residents who view it as a vital factor underlying improvement of quality of their lives. Ecology and co-habitation as well as building proper community relations rank high on the list of the first things first.

4. CONCLUSIONS

It was Zygmunt Bauman who, in reference to architecture and urban planning, observed that “there were no local solutions to global problems”. Thus, no reformatory acts at the scale of the entire city can solve its problems²². Since these problems stem from global issues, no independent acts undertaken by local or even national authorities are able to find effective solutions thereto. Such problems also go beyond capacities of imagination of architects, especially that their imagination is mainly preoccupied with forms (with the elimination of any human interaction) subordinated at large to economic factors.

Changes of urban space must be triggered with changes of existential space initiated by residents themselves. It is the residents who actively undertake local acts of global impact (owing to the widespread Internet access) – the phenomenon that requires separate studies. Events organised by local communities, NGOs or individual activists – street makers – highlight the values of a square or yard, clearly reject the typical for the 20th century avant-garde logic of destruction and hermeticism, which they have successfully outshadowed. For the same reason, the embodiment of artistic events such as a happening or performance has been preserved only in the open festival formula, whereas the event as such no longer aspires to create any specific artistic experiences but to achieve a meaningful purpose for a given place or community. Even if such achievement shall be of temporary nature – like Die Leefstraat and El Campo de Cebada projects – it is met with full approval of the participants aware of prevailing and widespread uncertainty and provisional nature of any type of engagement in today’s world.

Short term, emotional engagement and excitation with innovations affect forms and materials of respective pieces of work. What today’s projects share with avant-garde is the ad hoc method of acting with the final effect always unpredictable and susceptible to change. In such case, it is hard to talk about any prospective copyrights; an open work can be transformed by anyone by any means (inserts, graffiti, murals, street furniture, video art installations, etc.) Democracy of the process blurs any borderlines between various styles in art and architecture.

Moreover, architectural matter created by the users and residents also changes. Conventional materials have been replaced with spontaneously arranged *ready-mades*. Moreover, the range of *ready-mades* has been extended with technologically advanced products such as previous generation computers, loudspeakers, solar panels, etc. Jan Körbes saw “IT waste as resources which got lost on their way”²³ and which find new life in such places as refugee camps or Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik.

²² Z. Bauman, *Razem osobno*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2003, p. 239.

²³ F. Prins, *Das Silohaus als Tiny House – Architekt Jan Körbes im Interview*, op. cit.

Active participation of the residents combined with recycling²⁴, on the one hand popularises the bottom-up initiatives of space arrangement, and on the other hand, makes space susceptible to corrections or improvements. Such organic development²⁵ and vitality place these types of projects in opposition to the mainstream architecture by harnessing positive aspects of innovation and experiment rather than by adopting any fixed and frozen form. The most avant-garde type of critic is that embodied in an experiment and creation, in independent initiatives undertaken by communities of residents and users, where access to objects, tools, technologies and abandoned places translates into a new quality of urban space.



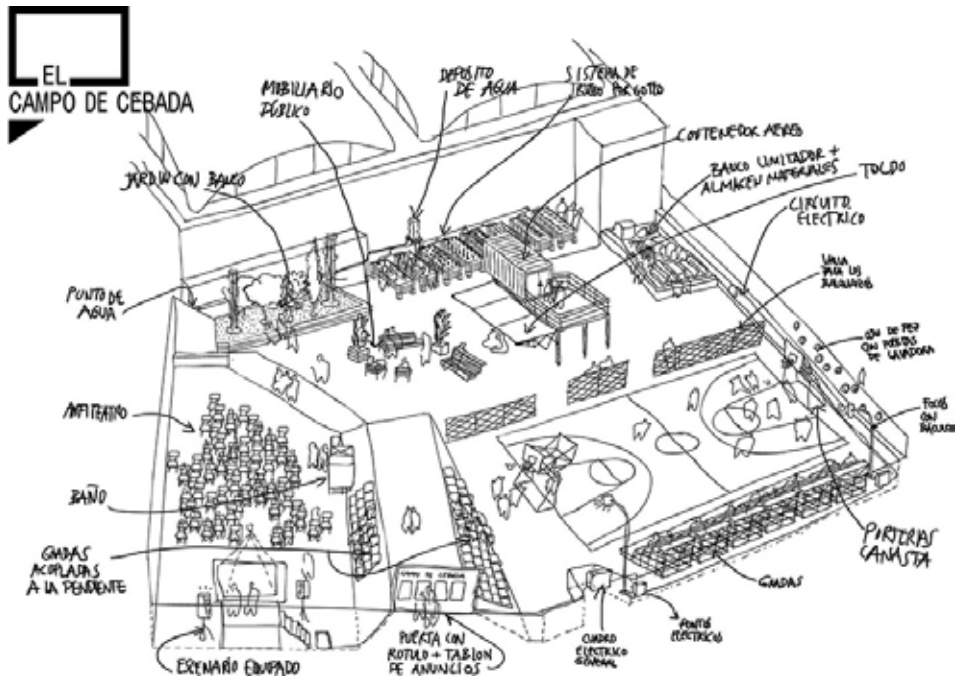
Ill. 1. Gerrit Rietveld, Schroder House, Utrecht, 1924. Example of the new language of forms in opposition to conventional architecture, which at the same time nicely goes with fine arts, in this case with Piet Mondrian paintings. Source: photo of the author.

²⁴ Progress in advanced technologies will continue, quality of waste will improve and its accessibility will be on the rise. This shall entail better quality of space and allow the introduction of education facilitating digital inclusion. For example, second-hand solar panel market generates 0.5 GW per year, as compared to about 150 GW of power generated from new systems. Solar panel recovering trend will be increasing, especially that 95% of the panels can be recycled. Solar panels perform a significant function in bottom-up initiatives: charge the batteries of electrical appliances, smartphones and laptops or support the sound system and lighting.

²⁵ Nonetheless, such places may also fall in decay. This happened in case of Wilda Garden in Poznan, created by the residents and Generator Malta in 2014. Despite efforts of the creators, the place was abandoned and devastated. Works undertaken in 2018 to reclaim it for communal purposes again proved unsuccessful.



III. 2. Archigram, Instant City, Typical Night-time View. Source: Peter Cook, Archigram 1968 (© ARCHIGRAM ARCHIVES).



III. 3. El Campo de Cebada, sketch showing a variety of forms created by the residents and hybrid nature of the square functions.



Ill. 4. El Campo de Cebada, general view of the square; designs of all the furniture pieces used for the arrangement of respective functional zones were published on the Internet on the open access basis. Source: <https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/02-281490/el-campo-de-cebada-la-ciudad-situada> (access: 27.05.2021).



Ill. 5. Shigeru Ban, Paper Log Houses II, Cebu, Philippines, 2014. Temporary shelter made from cheap and generally accessible materials and construction waste. Ban combines such materials with local crafts, here with pleated bamboo mats and the nipa palm leaf roofs. Source: Jodidio P. *Shigeru Ban. Complete works 1985–2015*, Taschen, Köln 2015.



III. 6. Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik, Berlin: a) Jan Körbes, Silo Haus, author's photo; b) workshop hall – “parasitic architecture” from school boards suspended to the roof of the old platform, author's photo; c) Municipal Stage, source: <https://www.zku-berlin.org/projects/construction-explained-urban-stage/> (access: 10.05.2022).

References:

- [1] Bauman Z., *Razem osobno*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2003.
- [2] Blok, <https://culture.pl/pl/tworca/blok> (access: 28.06.2022).
- [3] Eksteins M., *Święto wiosny. Wielka Wojna i narodziny Nowego Wieku*, PIW, Warszawa 1996.
- [4] Garland K., *First Things First*, <https://www.readingdesign.org/first-things-first> (access: 10.06.2022).
- [5] Grabska E., Morawska H., (eds.) *Artyści o sztuce. Od van Gogha do Picassa*, PWN, Warszawa 1969.
- [6] Harvey D., *Bunt miast. Prawo do miasta i miejska rewolucja*, Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana, Warszawa 2012.
- [7] Jodidio P., *Shigeru Ban. Complete works 1985–2015*, Taschen, Köln 2015.
- [8] Lewicka-Morawska A., Machowski M., Mrozek J. et al., *Sztuka Świata*, t. 10, Wydawnictwo Arkady, 1996, p. 290.
- [9] Pawłowski T., *Happening*, Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa 1982, p. 245.
- [10] Poggioli R., *The theory of avant-garde*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1968.
- [11] Pongi N., Rautenberg-Célie B., *Laissez-vous conter: Nemausus, Ville de Nîmes*, <https://en.calameo.com/read/00015787821ec71df34b1> (access: 10.12.2012).
- [12] Prins F., *Das Silohaus als Tiny House – Architekt Jan Körbes im Interview*, <https://www.lilli-green.de/das-silohaus-als-tiny-house-architekt-jan-koerbes-im-interview/> (access: 6.12.2020).
- [13] Rudofsky B., *Architecture without Architects*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York 1964.

Internet Sources

- [14] <https://www.archpaper.com/2019/06/archigram-the-book-review/> (access: 25.06.2022).
- [15] <https://www.leefstraat.be/over-leefstraat/nieuwe-manier-van-co-creatie/> (access: 6.12.2020).
- [16] <https://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/cl/02-281490/el-campo-de-cebada-la-ciudad-situada> (access: 27.05.2021).
- [17] <https://www.zku-berlin.org/projects/construction-explained-urban-stage/> (access: 10.05.2022).

Author's Note:

Agnieszka Janowska, PhD, Arch.

Architect and urban planner, assistant professor at the Faculty of Architecture of the Poznan University of Technology. Author of numerous articles about relations between architectural forms and residual spaces, the impact of applicable law on the quality of a space and influence of features of semi-private space on positive social relations. Runs her own architectural practice.

agnieszka.janowska@put.poznan.pl