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Sustainable space development

Sustainable development

Sustainable development, sustainable design, and sustainable space design – involve improvement of quality of life of present and future generations in harmonious coexistence of man with nature [5]. Traditionally, the environmental protection emphasizes the environmental aspect connected with natural resources, however, its correct, holistic meaning comprises a balance of all interdependent sectors of anthroposphere and biosphere. According to sustainable development human environment and natural environment are considered complementary – not competitive. Ultimately, this is about the development of humanity that will assure the maintenance of the conditions of the environment which will enable man to live now and in the future.

The main idea of sustainable development is to integrate the environmental, economic and social order [8]. The principle of dependence of the quality of the natural environment on economic and social situation has been present in literature regarding sustainable development since the 1990s. Achieving a permanent equilibrium in environment is dependent on equilibrium in its individual sectors. The environmental protection is not possible without spatial order which in turn depends on economic as well as social and cultural order.

The global crisis which since 2008 has blown over most world economies has revealed the weakness of the mechanisms of market self-regulation. The conviction that the development of civilization will also automatically adapt to the deteriorating conditions of environment and depletion of resources is an excuse for inactivity which can lead to catastrophe [11]. Humanity needs a deliberate and reasonable prevention of self-destructive trends [13]. The necessary reforms which will encompass all aspects of human development need to be based on changes in mentality, lifestyle, hierarchy of values and adequate level of social and cultural development. Apart from all necessary changes it is important for the top-down actions to have a clearly defined goal – strengthening the natural processes of the environmental protection and development as well as resolving problems and threats – locally along with the growing activity and decision-making authority of local communities. All programs and undertakings developed at international [4 and 5] and governmental levels should aim at constituting local communities as natural and main change centers – this is, among others, what the principle of sustainable development is based on [2].

Sustainable policy

The strength of international programs and political arrangements is necessary for changes. However, top-down management is dangerous for social development – it replaces the natural solidarity between people and consequently strengthens demanding egoistic attitudes [10].

In order to balance the processes of change it will be necessary to develop a common subsidiarity policy instead of top-down management dominance at local level.

The global environmental, economic as well as social and cultural threats require supra-local agreements, strategies and policies [7]. However, all these activities should with their strength support the natural mechanisms of local activities in building social patterns, spatial policy, and culture. The limits of influence of central manage-

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ment practices should be clearly defined to protect what is the most valuable, natural and necessary to balance the processes of development of human environment – capabilities of local communities to self-organization and joint care for the common good. The strategies and policy as well as official procedures which result from them should support the decisions regarding space development and make them more valuable as well as more community-oriented – to increase the participation of local communities and decrease the influence of central management. Public man [12] needs natural environment to develop, and local community is that environment.
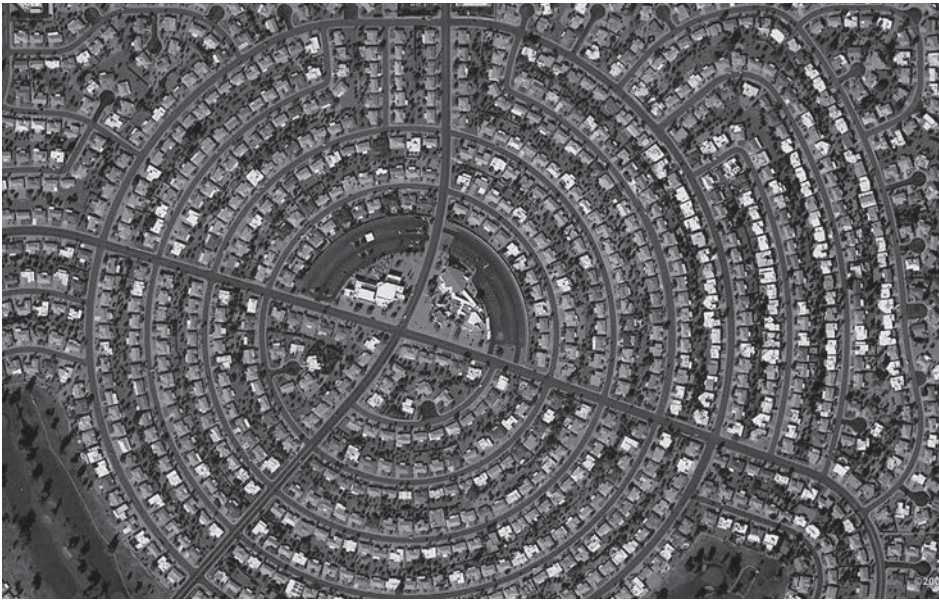
Sustainable social development

Fig. 1. Sun City constructed since the 1960s by Del Webb – Sun City, Arizona, USA. Source: Google Earth

Fig. 2. Breaking off spatial culture topics. The monotony of mass production – San Buenaventura, Mexico. Source: www.imagenesaereasdemexico.com

The level of cultural development is closely connected with social development. The level of social capital is an indicator of social development which is very low in Poland [6].

Community is the bonding agent for such qualities as sensitivity, desire to achieve harmony or to admire beauty, a need to grow roots and community which take permanent shape in local culture. A community condition has a direct influence on economic and spatial development as well as on the level and quality of culture. As a result of disintegration of social bonds, extinction of behavioral patterns and absence of values in public life, the activities taken in order to create common principles fall on barren ground because the most fundamental frame of reference, namely community, is missing.

Spatial culture: patterns of spatial behaviors, continuity of tradition of residence, set of rules applied in a residential space – are all inextricably connected with community [14]. Culture without reference to community becomes a manner and dead formalism (Fig. 1). Without support in local community, architecture becomes a monolog detached from local culture. It does not bond people through common understanding of culture. It does not enter into dialog or exchange of sensitivity; it does not evoke common emotions which can build, develop or revive local culture.

Architecture treated as a mass product which is governed only by the rules of the commercial market results in a social disintegration because it is addressed to an anonymous group of customers; it does not draw on any existing patterns of spatial culture, it does not provide an opportunity for inclusion into the community of place (Fig. 2).

Architecture should reply to the basic need of social development and create places which will be filled with interpersonal bonds. When assessing values, the social aspect of an enterprise must be taken into account. The

calculation of costs should include the extent of impact of planned investments on the existing social structure and introduction of new inhabitants into the place. The way this is conducted determines whether the existing community will be enriched or conflicted and destroyed.

Sustainable, permanent and social order is possible only if the stability of the natural grass-roots processes of consolidation of social groups is secured. Social eco-system will really work out when the top-down assistance from outside is no longer needed.

Sustainable culture

Culture is reflected in the way in which human space is organized. The appearance of human settlements allows for determining the spatial behaviors of their inhabitants, social structure, hierarchy of values or level of culture. Sustainable space development is inextricably connected with the protection and development of the spatial culture of the community residing there[1]. The condition of our landscape demonstrates how huge threats we face. Spatial chaos, environmental degradation and waste of resources indicate a low level or even disappearance of culture.

The more and more unequal economic development, deeper and deeper process of social disintegration and growing cultural conflicts translate specifically and directly into the environmental degradation and cause concerns about the future. Changes are necessary, and it is possible that in order to make them and for their results to be permanent it is necessary to redefine the interpersonal relations and establish the cultural patterns which express the identity of local communities. When defining what is common in culture, it is not possible to exclude local community. However, in many cases it is still necessary to enable and prepare it for that participation. In order for the process to be successful it must take into account the activity of the community from the very beginning. Only then will it be possible to be sure that the effects to be achieved will be accepted by the community as their own and they will be permanent.

The principle of subsidiarity is the best vehicle to transfer the sustainable approach to culture which is an expression, and at the same time one of the most important pillars, of the identity of local communities. Culture cannot be regulated by top-down decrees, however, it can and it should be protected against the dominance of foreign, external patterns or solutions which can disintegrate and destroy local culture.

The centralized model is one of the reasons of the crisis which affects culture. It is evident in space development. No clear boundaries, no special places, loss of local identity, destruction of structures by express transit roads, supra-local shopping and office centers – these are just a few of many examples of negative consequences of centralized indifference to local communities. In the system of centrally assigned procedures and decisions, community is no longer a subject, a decision maker, a host of the place. The top-down imposition of patterns is based on the basic principle of equality to established rules. Unfortunately, these patterns are often developed for large areas, without recognizing or paying any attention to the differences between neighboring communities existing there and without knowledge of their local culture of residence, without their participation in decision making processes, without respect for social and cultural continuity of the place. This leads the whole urban areas to depravation of their original cultural diversity. All this contributes to social disintegration, loss of identity and generates cultural crisis.

The popular artistic happenings negate previous patterns and become discussion for discussion's sake; they do not add much, or they add little, to common cultural assets, and often they weaken or even harm culture. The rejection of the existing culture is a dangerous manner which, in the name of search for new values, questions the existing values, offering no valuable alternative instead. Search only for search sake often does not add any real values, and instead it reaffirms contempt or aversion to the traditional cultural patterns. Architecture more and more often divides, inflames, stuns, shocks, breaks, ridicules and loses... its connection with culture which is experienced communally. Contesting and going to extremes does not contribute to improving or developing the culture of residence – on the contrary – it deepens the spatial chaos, diminishes the prospect of culture shared with others, disturbs the common cultural heritage, degrades architecture to a commodity whose sale depends not on its actual usefulness for the inhabitants but on the brand built according to market rules.

Such developments cease to be a means of conveying shared culture. Instead of becoming an object of common care and an appeal to build and develop, culture is transformed into formal deformations to draw attention of the anonymous viewer for a moment. Single and individualistic treatment of culture, no respect for the existing communities and local cultural patterns result in breaking the continuity, loss of local identity as well as destruction of natural legacy and potential of local communities, exposing them to threats of global universalization and shallowness of culture-like mass products.

In the times of growing influence of globalization when culture is especially threatened – the aspect of protection and development of cultural heritage, continuity of tradition of residence as well as patterns of spatial behaviors – becomes especially significant in our care for the quality of life of present and future generations. The extensive literature documenting the regional cultural values of architecture is not applied in architectural policy, development strategies or spatial planning and in design practice. This is not a result of the lack of specific research or insufficient knowledge. This is rather the effect of the complex process of uniformization of needs,

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[1] The Polish Policy Architectural assumes that: *Understanding the work of an architect as an obligation to cultural heritage, contemporary human needs and the future of next generations, the participants of the Congress of Polish Architecture in Poznań encourage all those who understand the mission of an architect in public life in a similar way to cooperate in order to develop architecture and create spatial order which determine the quality of life of all citizens* [3].

tastes and opinions subjected to marketing treatment by sales experts [9]. The basic problem is agreeing which cultural values should be protected and how to develop them.

Agreement at community level is the key to solving the basic problems of the environment and sustainable development.

Sustainable architecture

Architecture is a language which expresses human spatial culture [1]. Architecture – which individually can demonstrate positive qualities – holistically, socially and culturally can generate a dissonance. This is the difference between human capital and social capital. Both are needed but only when they are balanced is optimal development assured. The difference between culture and a culture-like product is the same as between theater and digital television – the point is community experience – which, if it exists, greatly contributes to building a common culture or, if it does not exist, it may develop some internal sensitivity, however, it is more

a form of entertainment controlled by viewing ratings and political situation. A designed building, even if it is a single-family house, is a political act in the sense in which it is perceived from outside by users of common space.

We need architecture which develops a permanent order not only in respect of space but also in respect of social and cultural development. This can be achieved only if the design process involves community participation [15]. The spatial development is achieving long-term objectives which are impossible to achieve without relying on permanent local communities.

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Zrównoważone kształtowanie przestrzeni

Proces kształtowania przestrzeni odbywa się w wielowymiarowej sferze dynamicznych współzależności. Kształtowanie środowiska odwzorowuje wspólne dla lokalnej społeczności wzorce kulturowe, zachowania przestrzenne, struktury społeczne, styl życia i kondycję ekonomiczną. Architektura jest tych wartości zapisem w przestrzeni.

Trudność polega na tym, że wraz z coraz szybszym postępem cywilizacyjnym pogłębia się kryzys kulturowy i społeczny, co odbija się w otaczającym nas krajobrazie. Decyzje projektowe – nawet te w mikroskali, podejmowane pod wpływem doraźnych, partykularnych, jednostkowych interesów – skutkują negatywnymi konsekwencjami na długie lata. Czy dezintegracja okaże się pozytywna? Czy na gruzach

dotychczasowych porządków kulturowych, społecznych i gospodarczych powstaną nowe porządki?

Zrównoważone projektowanie zakłada poprawę jakości zarówno życia obecnego, jak i przyszłych pokoleń – a to niemożliwe jest bez wypracowania wzajemnego porozumienia opartego na wspólnie akceptowanych wzorcach uznanych w danej społeczności. Dlatego tak ważne jest pozyskanie akceptacji, zaangażowania i współodpowiedzialności za kształtowanie przestrzeni zamieszkania przez lokalne społeczności. Znalezienie wspólnego języka staje się zatem palącą koniecznością dla wszystkich użytkowników tej przestrzeni.

Key words: community participation, spatial order, common good

Słowa kluczowe: partycypacja społeczna, ład przestrzenny, dobro wspólne