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## CITY: CREATIVITY AND MOBILITY

***Mobility: Media, Urban Practices and Students' Culture*, edited by Marianna Michałowska, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Społecznych Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2017, pp. 246.**

***Artyści w przestrzeni miejskiej Krakowa i Katowic [Artists in Urban Space of Kraków and Katowice]* by Monika Murzyn-Kupisz, Jarosław Działek, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2017, pp. 592.**

The role of a city as a cultural and creative hub has grown in last decades or rather the studies of its specific milieu has been the trend in academia as well as in the practice of managing the cities. Alleged universal and deal changing concepts of creative cities by Charles Landry and creative class by Richard Florida have been on the market for some time, influencing the local and global politics of space and economy.

In those concepts cities act as hubs for modern nomads, who bring all sorts of capabilities in changing the quality of life. The contemporary nomadic lifestyle is possible due to the fast evolving mobile technologies and media. Making it easier to work and live in remote locations but also to find your place in a foreign city making it your own.

Among leaders of the creative class along highly specialised IT professionals are artists and students. Those groups are said to be more prone to be active users of the city and creators of public urban spaces and practices. Furthermore they mobility is supposed to be much higher between cities and inside the urban organism. Students are believed by media scholars<sup>1</sup> to be early users of mobile technologies and new media, which al-

<sup>1</sup> K. Krejtz, P. Molenda, A. Kuberacka, *Mobilność 2010. Raport o wpływie internetu mobilnego na życie Polaków*, Warszawa: SWPS, 2010, quot: A. Skórzyńska, "Student Culture as an Activity: Mobility an Expended Field of Practice", in: *Mobility: Media, Urban Practices and Students' Culture*, ed. by M. Michałowska, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Wydziału Nauk Społecznych Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2017, p. 158.

lows them to perceive and use the urban space in new ways: in some dimensions more broadly in others superficially. Both groups are actively creating and participating in the cultural live of cities. Artists are perceived as a creative catalytic converters for the cities structures both socially, economically and physically. Their lifestyles and artefacts are changing the reality of modern city in a very palpable and countable way. Bohemian urbanism is starting to be a place marketing trend harnessed to recycle degraded parts of cities in the process of revitalisation into attractive developing areas. The social fabric of cities are influenced by creative class also by using artistic work as a tool of social changes, making art and culture parts of the social policy of local governments.

Charles Landry focuses his concept around cultural assets of the cities mostly cultural heritage both material and symbolic.<sup>2</sup> The reality of those concepts in post-soviet countries and societies of Eastern Europe may occur quite different. Polish cities are often constructs of interrupted history—due to the war damages in urban organism and social changes of the citizens as an effect of migration after war from the previously Eastern territories of Poland. They suffer from a lack of local identity and connection with the place only last 10-15 years being the time of rediscovering the history of previous residents of places we now call our homes. The geographical proximity doesn't create community as

highlights polish sociologist Małgorzata Dymnicka.<sup>3</sup> Testing those theories in everyday life of Polish students and artists in their connection with cities is the point of two research studies conducted by Monika Murzyn-Kupisz and Jarosław Działek.

The first focuses on urban practices of students at the cultural studies faculty of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. The book is based on small student projects being the ground material for a wider cultural reflexion about mobility, media and urban culture built around invoking broad variety of sociological and philosophical theories in the field of media and urban studies. This method of work resulted in an interesting book which gives a broader context to particular practices. On the other hand brings a risk of too wide extrapolation of the findings with a certain lack of the awareness of the constraints of used research methods. Especially tools and instructions given to students and the context of projects being a part of faculty curricula may have influenced the results as some of the authors point out in their comments regarding incompatibility of the deductions in individual studies.

Nevertheless the book brings knowledge about contemporary practices of students living in the city—testing concepts on their media competences and looking for a nowadays students culture. The projects are presented alongside with elaborating studies in the fields of media and culture. As some of the projects may

<sup>2</sup> Ch. Landry, *Kreatywne miasto. Zestaw narzędzi dla miejskich innowatorów*, Warszawa: Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2013, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> M. Dymnicka, *Przestrzeń publiczna a przemiany miasta*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2013, p. 51.

seem rather simple and less challenging, the articles based on them are much more interesting and deepening the knowledge coming from projects treated as samples of reality.

The first chapter by Marianna Michałowska describes the ways of using visual methods in the mobility studies. The lecture of it leaves a reader slightly unsatisfied in the exploration of relation between visuality and mobility. Focusing separately on the visual and mobility studies and role of photography and techniques such as, photo-essay somehow the paper does not deepen the correspondence between those two cultural spheres or the symbolic and emotional side of the praxis. The second chapter is devoted to various perspectives on studying the mobile media and provides comprehensive presentation of mobile media studies and basic concept of affordances and characteristics on mobile media by various academics such as: Andrew R. Schrock, Taina Bucher and Anne Helmond, Katarzyna Kopiecka-Piech, Anna Nacher, alongside with description of evolving media practices of users. This part serves as a rich source of theoretical background rather than enrichment of the field of interest.

The next article by Jacek Zygorowicz shows how certain concepts and methods of visual studies can be adapted do cultural studies and give them different perspectives not only as tools but also ways of perceiving and communicating the cultural reality. Starting from the pictorial turn presents abundant but yet short history of the academic movement towards visuality. The interpretative material is provided by case study project

“Student Culture in the Lens” an output of one-semester film workshop for students of Cultural Studies. Short etudes are more a kind of opportunity to consider the role of media and methods in the process of cultural research, especially the responsibility of the researcher for their words and images. Most interesting part of the case study is the question of the influence which accessible new technologies have on visual competences contrasted with visual erudition. The author critically overviews types of images and conventions popularised by social media and their impact on abilities to create, use and interpret visual reality. The effect of this reflection in a vital voice on including the audio-visual tools and competences in the cultural scholar toolbox with deep understanding of their consequences.

The further paper is a commentary to a “Self-surveillance” project in which students were asked to join the creation of shared Instagram account in attempt to compose an album about students life in Poznań. Author, Tomasz Żaglewski, uses a concept of intimization of mobility as a critical interpretative tool to study the results of the project. His idea derives from Raymond Williams’ term mobile privatisation. The role of media in this case evolved from opening private spaces to outside experiences to privatising the experience of common, especially urban space. This way the city becomes more a kind of semi-private place. The urban space according to this concept can be enriched by personal meanings and symbols via using of the media. As it is undoubtedly true that new media play a vibrant role in changing every-

day use of urban space it's core feature of being a mix of public/private experiences and senses isn't something started or developed with the presence of media. Their most significant role could be seen more as an external memory storage for individual experiences as in case of the students' project documenting everyday life in the city by "cropping out" private fragments of public spaces. The individual feeling of the city has always been a part of its mental mapping of places. Memories—private or shared are immanent sphere of urban environment.

The further part of the book covers the project from more the perspective of sociology and anthropology of culture in the urban context of students practices. The chapter by Agata Skórzyńska looks for a new definition of student culture as an activity based on the findings from different projects included in the report. Social, spatial and technological mobility provides a context for the reflection on changing (or maybe dissolving) phenomenon of student culture. According to Skórzyńska the movement and cultural circulation specific to polish culture during communist era<sup>4</sup> hasn't find its succession in nowadays praxis of students life due to vast changes in social structure, university management and popularization of higher education resulting in both democratisation and commercialisation. The paper provides a deeper insight into urban practices of students looking for their diverse and yet specific ways and means in contest of ur-

ban reality. Students are still highly mobile city users, multitasking and always "in touch", transforming oneself experiences, places and cultural activities. The core paradox identified by participants and described by author is the tension between high mobility within the city, temporary nature of their presence in the city and on the other hand tendency to domesticate places.

Commentary to a project "Mapping student places in the city" by Jadwiga Zimpel focuses on the core concept of the place in everyday use of the city as a living space. Bringing in theories of movement and place by Yi Fu Tuan, John Urry, Maria Lewicka, Doreen Massey, singular places of Manuel Castells and relation of place and mobile technology by Gerard Wilken and Rowan Goggin. Again the very wide summary of theoretical approach is a basis for interpreting empirical material gathered by participants of the project in individual catalogues of student places in Poznań. Unfortunately the connection between is superficial although practical findings of the projects are interesting, especially considering various ways of presentation chosen by students (which probably tells more about art of cultural research than exact places). The personal and external perspective in narratives of the places may show differences in domestication of the city as well as may be consequence of imitation of what is supposed to be the correct "catalogue" style. The mapping shows a variety of places and practices that aren't perceived as strictly student from the outside, most of them are places of leisure, being together, semi-public

<sup>4</sup> E. Chudziński, ed., *Kultura studencka. Zjawisko – twórcy – instytucje*, Kraków: Fundacja STU, 2011.

places, and hybridised spaces serving more than one purpose and need.

The choice of the second book may seem random after taking look into students culture but it shares similar observations of urban practices such as choosing place to live and most important perceiving and “using” the city. *Artists in Urban Space of Kraków and Katowice* is a form of expanded research report about artists relation to the city in many aspects of personal biography or rather biogeography.<sup>5</sup> Authors conducted a multidimensional quantitative and qualitative comparative studies of two Polish cities: Kraków—well known for its historical and cultural traditions; and Katowice—smaller post-industrial city developed mostly in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century now aspiring creative city. Both of them are situated in the south of Poland not far from each other, are academic and cultural centres for their regions. Urban structures of both cities are quite different and influence the mobility inside the city alongside the atmosphere and *genius loci*.

Along data form public statistics authors conducted surveys among students from artistic faculties and individual interviews with practicing professional artists. All the sources were used in quest for the answers: about residence preferences in choosing both between cities and within it, situation of places of work and leisure: motivation factors that stand behind those decisions on individual level influenced by social imagination

of the role of artist and local politics of creativity. As a theoretical background serves the concepts of creative milieu/class/cities. Among the most important advantages of the book is rising up the topic of Polish context of implementing these theories in policies, economy and social life. Undermining mostly stereotypical beliefs about bohemian artists, artistic residences, districts and lifestyles that formed the ground under creative “revolution” in the city.

Due to a report style of the book most of it contains detailed descriptions and visualisations of the results which often lacks reflective consideration of the findings in a cultural perspective. But on the other hand makes a great source of empirical data to cultural studies scholars interested in developing deeper understanding of the relation between artists and the city. The findings of the research can be from other perspective influential to policymakers not only in Kraków and Katowice but also other Polish cities, preventing unreflectively copying concepts of creative class or places without local context.

The first two chapters introduces the definitional background of artists as a social group and theories of their impact on the city. Presenting rather well known in the field concepts at this point authors start the discussion between common imagination and the artistic reality of living in the city. The types and evolution of cultural/art districts are part of the background study<sup>6</sup> as they are both spontaneous and planned settlements of creative activities and residents in urban

<sup>5</sup> M. Murzyn-Kupisz, J. Działek, *Artyści w przestrzeni miejskiej Krakowa i Katowic*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2017, p. 161.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 105.

space. According to the creative milieu theory artists are supposed to prefer living close to each other in search for a authentic life of a urban village, yet close to the city centre. Placing creative residencies in revitalising areas is a trend adapted in Poland from the practice of western cities. The role of an artist in the process may be ambiguous often perceived as agents of gentrification as the pioneer role of spontaneous inhabiting and accommodating abandoned spaces is lessening, giving the initiative to the commercial investors using temporary bohemian aura as a marketing strategy. In their early concepts both Landry and Florida perceive gentrification as a positive outcome of the creative class drives revitalisation.<sup>7</sup> They lack in the broader social condition of those changes. After years of implementing those theories in city management practices even they admit to the negative influence on the social fabric of the neighbourhoods and lean towards more community driven revitalisation and creativity not perceived to be a n individualistic feature but something that occurs in cooperation.<sup>8</sup> The role of artist as a voice of local community is also becoming superficial in the process of participatory urban planning. Artistic projects are financed by municipal grants, forming a kind of coverage and positive image but the true beneficiary of the processes are commercial developers.

Choosing a city to live for an artist has been a part of he study. Students of

art asked about their choices pointed mostly prestige and closeness to home and attractive image of the city (in case of Kraków). Mature artist remember similar motivations in choosing their places of study. Mostly the social capital holds them at the place—family, friends and professional connections and general feeling of familiarity of the city. The mobility of Polish society is lower than in western countries and artists are no exception. Both younger and older artists are more sensitive to economic reasons to leave their current residencies—losing job, having no professional perspective are most commonly mentioned. At the same time in the qualitative data there is a visible aspect of character of the city. Kraków can be perceived as too conservative for experimenting artists, local art world too narrow and competitive at the same time too commercialised in recent years. Whereas Katowice from one hand seem too small for a serious artistic career, on the other hand fast development of recent years in the creative sector can be promising, bringing more interesting atmosphere, but at the same time losing the familiar and quiet character.

Places chosen by artists as their home in both cities are situated closer to the centre, being: prestigious surroundings of the core, historical areas undergoing changes, housing estates from communist time but closer to the centre and prestigious suburban parts of the city. Moreover as the researchers outline there's still an important role of the communist era housing policy in Poland: both cheaper residences in block of flats farther from the centre and also accommodation assignments from the PRL.

<sup>7</sup> Ch. Landry, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>8</sup> M. Żakowska, "Florida: Do diabła z klasą kreatywną", *Magazyn Miasta* 2015, no. 2(10).

Authors of the concept of creative class often paint a clichéd image of artistic life and career. Referring to it as a journey to unknown territories using this metaphor to describe artists' role in discovering new urban spaces with unknown potential<sup>9</sup>. Fighting the stereotypical assumptions about artists as a homogenic social group authors find differences in most the aspects of the study according to the type of art/creative work as a field of profession of their respondents. Architects prefer to live in more central and prestigious areas, as performative artists most often live close to the venues and theatres. Visual artists value more distant, quiet places to work and live. All makes perfect, practical sense. Where is the bohemian spirit then?

According to concepts of creative class, they should be looking for either bohemian romantic surroundings of slightly run down but characteristic architecture or modern spectacular, theatrical big city life. The findings of the project show that only around 1/3 of artists all together is prone to decide to live in an artistic/bohemian environment. Polish artists living in both cities are more interested in the firm aspects of living and working such as location, safety, public transport, green leisure areas and their choices are middle-ground between what they like and what they can afford. Similar findings are a result of ACRE's Accommodating Creative Knowledge project that suggest replacing 3T: technology, talent, tolerance from Florida's concept with 3P: pathways, places and personal networks.

In the light of the research findings the bohemian lifestyle of active social and cultural life in the city is characteristic to 1/3 of the respondents.<sup>10</sup> They're actively participating in institutional culture as well as using the public spaces in the urban reality. The city as a bohemian space of living is a generational experience—sharing the same pubs and places on the map of cultural life. For most of the artists that lifestyle is long gone in the past of their own experience (in case of older artists) or in the mythical past of artist kingdom (19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century) or their parents' generation of vivid and important artistic life of underground culture as an opposition to communist regime. More lively scene in Krakow provides a long history of places constantly gaining and losing importance as social hubs for young artists.

Researchers have also gathered information about location of workplaces (such as institutions, schools, art academies) and cultural/artistic/creative companies in the urban space of Kraków and Katowice using public register of entrepreneurs and conducting a field study of visibility of artistic and creative work in certain districts—described in detail one by one. Despite the tremendous work put in this research it lacks the important symbolic and cultural insight to the relation between artists/creatives and the city fabric. Authors are always closer to quantitative description which also brings a valuable insight into the preferences of work spaces. For both groups the financial and practical aspects of a workplace are most important—whether they

<sup>9</sup> Ch. Landry, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>10</sup> M. Murzyn-Kupisz, J. Działek, op. cit., p. 262.

can afford it and if it is big enough for their kind of job.

The approach to mapping out the artistic life of the city in the eyes of the artists lacks again the interpretative insight in the light of theoretical conceptions mentioned by the authors. Artist themselves have sometimes problems in naming potential artistic interventions in the urban space, more often they see such initiatives as commercial “hipster” ventures. It is worth noticing that artists as actors in the urban system don’t perceive themselves as influential. Despite assigning them crucial role in the creative economy artists see themselves rather as suppliers of aesthetic experiences to other citizens than active social actors. Only a smaller group with certain preferences see themselves as local activists using community arts to empower citizens.<sup>11</sup>

As a result of the research the report offers a detailed classification of districts both in Kraków and Katowice in context of artistic life and work. The book is a broad descriptive work of the issue that can be a great material to study cultural aspects not included in the perspective of the authors, showing directions in the findings of the report.

The common issues shared by both works are centred around mobility and

creativity in Polish cities; first—from perspective of media studies, cultural studies and second—social and urban studies. How students and artists use the city, how they choose and make their own places by everyday practices of work and leisure, what is their impact on the city as a creative hub.

The rise of the concept of creativity as tool for economic and social change has been studied by Jakub Piotr Barszczewski in his book *Przymus kreatywności jako źródło cierpień*<sup>12</sup> [*Creativity and its Discontents*<sup>13</sup>]. He also spotlights the symbolic role of artist used as a core metaphor for human creativity in modern economy. The influence of this concept despite being far from artistic reality of nowadays artists has a vast influence on the shape of the economic life of society. Despite ascribing both groups important roles in shaping the creative cities in local policies, most of them live life very similar to other social groups and professions. Artists don’t find themselves influential, don’t seek a potential spaces to change into creative clusters they rather react as others to economic changes and negotiate their expectations with reality. Students don’t form a coherent shape of cultural life as defined by the student culture of the communist time, artists mostly dissociate themselves from the bohemian myths of vibrant lifestyle. Artists situate themselves closer to intelligentsia ethos and by their lifestyles are more in the

<sup>11</sup> It rises an issue of moral and professional choice of artists being encouraged to engage in community projects financed by local governments without a sincere commitment. Firstly it tangles them in the bureaucratic system of grants, secondly generates tensions in local communities perceived by some of them as a one-time artistic material. See: K. Forkert, *Artistic Lives: A Study of Creativity in Two European Cities*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013, p. 73.

<sup>12</sup> J.P. Barszczewski, *Przymus kreatywności jako źródło cierpień. Życie i praca w obliczu neoliberalnej polityki zarządzania*, Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Katedra, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Reference to Sigmund Freud’s book *Civilisation and its Discontents*.

findings of aforementioned research are more similar to characteristics of western middle-class. Both students' and artists' maps of the city include domesticated private places, the public or semi-public spaces are shared not only within the group. The students places are not specific to them, the artistic cafes and pubs are shared with tourists and other residents of the city.<sup>14</sup> Is the urban lifestyle becoming more homogenic and at the same time more privatised in personal spaces shared with close group of friends?

Both considered groups are more active in the cultural life and more mobile within the city. But at the same time they share a Polish dislike to modern nomadic life. Most of them after choosing a city to live, usually in the student years, stay there for life. This is a characteristic to Polish society as whole where social and family bonds are the most valued capital. The authors of the book may have been as many of academics under influence of so called mediacentric study of the media<sup>15</sup> giving them the role of a cause of socio-cultural phenomena, when in fact they may act as a result of certain lifestyles. The moment of academic self-reflection about the attributed role of new media and internet in social changes is noticeable also in the special edition of journal *Kultura Współczesna* [*Contemporary Culture*] titled "Tylko dostęp. Koniec kultury uczestnictwa?" ["Only Access. The End of Participatory Cul-

ture"].<sup>16</sup> The new media and mobile technologies supporting modern nomadic lifestyles despite their potential doesn't change that tendency at least not in such a big scale as some of scholars would see it; not among considered groups—maybe not yet. Mobile media are rather used for keeping in touch with the close ones and intimate memory storage—for privatised (yet highly influenced by popular styles) fragments of urban space. Despite cities being scanned by cameras all the time those pictures don't have much influence on the real life of the city other than marketing of the place in the public. They play much bigger role in social relations and presentations.

The public sphere of modern cities is a combination of material urban constructs and the virtual space accessed by mobile media. The public sphere is often described as pseudo-space of interaction in which people don't "act" but rather "behave".<sup>17</sup> Those superficial and faceless contacts are enhanced by the city and mobile media. The effects of creative city may be reciprocal to what have been intended despite the visible but shallow change in urban life and space. Without a community those cities acts as a spectacle of creativity owned by influential groups but not shared by the citizens—divided in their urban sub-realities (artists and students being one of them) but deprived of the sense of community and real ability to act in the public sphere, featured as the public of the show. As Jane Jacobs has imagined the category of

<sup>14</sup> Except for actors and other performers whose specific career paths force them to be very mobile between cities.

<sup>15</sup> M. Filiciak, A. Tarkowski, "Kultura 2.0: nie/ domknięty projekt", *Kultura Współczesna* 2016, no. 1(88), p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> "Tylko dostęp. Koniec kultury uczestnictwa?", *Kultura Współczesna* 2016, no. 1(88).

<sup>17</sup> M. Dymnicka, op. cit., p. 60.

place is endangered by the individualisation of urban life and the role of physical space as a common good is in decline.<sup>18</sup> Those cues are easily observed in the books being the topic of this review: in lack of the common shared spaces by students culture and mediated experienced of the superficial city; as well as the low visibility of artistic life, when in doesn't serve the purpose of place marketing of artistic districts.

Both books despite being imbedded in the city context and invoking the concept of place does not deepen the process of placemaking influenced by media or artistic work. Most students and artist don't reflect spontaneously on the reversible relation with urban space as a living inspiring reality. When asked they are usually more knowledgeable about local issues, more conscious of the cities *genius loci* but at the same time they don't realise the real and potential influence them have. To cultural studies scholars this is still a field worth further research. To policymakers on the local level this is a mean to reconsider the commonly used clichés of creative class, born in the western societies with different historical, social and cultural background, in Polish conditions.

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 102.