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**KRYSTYNA PAPRZYCA**

# **PLACE AND COMMUNITY OF PLACE IN THE STRUCTURE OF THE CITY?**

## **SOURCE:**

*Places of meetings – afterimages : interdisciplinary workshop (Miejsca spotkań – po-widoki: interdyscyplinarne warsztaty), B. Gibała-Kapecka, T. Kapecki, T. Wesołowski, Krakow 2015.*

# ABSTRACT

Capitalism has radically changed people's attitudes. A fundamental transformation in the sphere of human values and attitudes, a new attitude towards nature, is causing a change in man today. Man is constantly living in a world of "places". Taking care of the human soul becomes the most urgent issue. Continuous human development is a synthesis of **to have or to be**<sup>1</sup>. The article focuses on the need to improve the quality of many places, the relationship between man and the urban environment. This is to be done by way of increasing and improving the utility, cultural, emotional, aesthetic values of places, creating places that are adaptable, safe, known, and recognized as one's own – all of this in order to create conditions for human identification with the place, a sense of human responsibility for the environment, to create, in places, a variety of forms of social life, and social activities all of which make it possible to meet people, form opinions, make acquaintances, or carry out tasks. In the places, an important task is to create a "spirit of the place" as a determinant of urban-architectural impressions, by introducing symbols and signs, which are understandable for people living in a given place. The resurgence and rediscovery of values and places – both in the cultural and spatial and social terms – are positive responses to globalisation and unification of space.

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<sup>1</sup> E. Fromm, *To have or to be?*, Dom Wydawniczy Rebis, Poznań 2012.

## **KEY WORDS**

place; quality and value of places; people; humanisation of places

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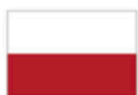
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# Place and Community of Place<sup>2</sup> in the Structure of the City?

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*Places of meetings - afterimages: interdisciplinary workshop (Miejsca spotkań – po-widoki: interdyscyplinarne warsztaty)*, B. Gibała-Kapecka, T. Kapecki, T. Wesołowski, Krakow 2015.

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## Introduction

Shower [man] with all earthly goods, plunge him into happiness up to his noseholes, so that only the bubbles pop on the surface of happiness as on water; create for him such material prosperity that he

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<sup>2</sup> Community (after: *Słownik języka polskiego PWN*, [sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/wspolnota;2537996.html](http://sjp.pwn.pl/sjp/wspolnota;2537996.html))

1. "being marked by common characteristics, having or experiencing something in common";

2. "what unites, unites";

3. "a group of persons bound together by common descent, common culture or common interests, common property".

has nothing else to do but sleep, eat delicacies and take care of the continuity of the universal history [...]<sup>3</sup>.

Modern man is fascinated by the development of technology, science and engineering. He has built a system of production which leads to the destruction of nature and the "man himself". Today, as never before in history, man has an influence on the nature of spatial structures in cities, the manner, style and quality of life in them. Meanwhile, he lives in a trap, thinking that prosperity will help solve all the pressing problems on Earth. The pursuit of prosperity is evident in the unprecedented growth of cities, which results in a poisoned environment, the pillaging of resources, the uncontrolled development of many cities and many other phenomena.

Getting rich has become the overriding aim of man and the world. Globalisation, privatisation, deregulation of financial institutions and market forces have become phenomena over which man no longer has any influence. The effects of these phenomena are the devastation of public resources, the spread of differences between extreme poverty and wealth, and the result is the "fall of man", his failure to see the meaning and purpose of life and the loss of his value system.

**The philosophy of materialism** and the global consumer culture are gradually leading to the decline of the "public man"<sup>4</sup>, the collapse of the public culture, and thus the **collapse of community**. "The new coming world", the new reality has a huge impact on the sense of social engagement in places, in urban spaces, also on our safety, our perception of the reality around us. Relationships with the places, objects, people around us are becoming increasingly fleeting and short-lived. We are moving away from people, fascinated by prosperity, science, research. Population growth and the growth of wealth, consumption, their scale, are in clear contradiction to human nature.

Future changes can have serious psychological and sociological consequences, which are reflected in the shaping of places in urban spaces. People still have a certain freedom of "choice". They should be aware of these changes. Otherwise they will experience a "future shock". The "future shock" - is what Alvin Toffler calls "the shocking stress and disintegration that engulfs people exposed to too much change in a very short time"<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Spółeczeństwo konsumpcyjne, jego mity i struktury*, Sic!, Warszawa 2006, s. 5; cyt. za: F. Dostojewski, *Notatki z podziemia*; Gracz, tłum. G. Karski, Puls, Londyn 1992, s. 28.

<sup>4</sup> R. Sennett, *Upadek człowieka publicznego*, Warszawskie Wydawnictwo Literackie MUZA, Warsaw 2009.

<sup>5</sup> A. Toffler, *Szok przyszłości*, Wydawnictwo Kurpisz, Przeźmierowo 2007, p. 8.

The city has always been built for people, being a centre for active social life, experiencing contacts and interests. Towns and cities have historically been a coherent whole, integrated into the landscape and built on rules, which have been created over millennia. They were a refuge for people living there from generation to generation, rooted in place. Ethnic identification was one of the characteristics of the formation of spiritual values, of spatial and social selfhood. Places shaped space. The atmosphere of a place, the smell, taste, sound or images still have many spiritual meanings for the receiver of space (photo 1).

“Life” and “dwelling” of a man in space - in a given place - gives him a certain dynamics and value. Man provides places with drama, romance of experiences, experiences of emotional, aesthetic, spiritual, utilitarian character, etc. Man connected to a place uses the advantages of given places - but also their disadvantages - to shape himself. Because places determine our behaviour (photo 2).

Many European cities and towns from the past (e.g. Italy - Alberobello, Miranda, Gubbio, Calascio; Greece - Santorini, Amorgos, Paros, etc.) have retained their personality, are pleasant places to live, and are popular to visit. They are places where people breathe fresh air, create and promote local arts and crafts, serve traditional dishes, shops sell local products. People who live in such places identify with them very well.



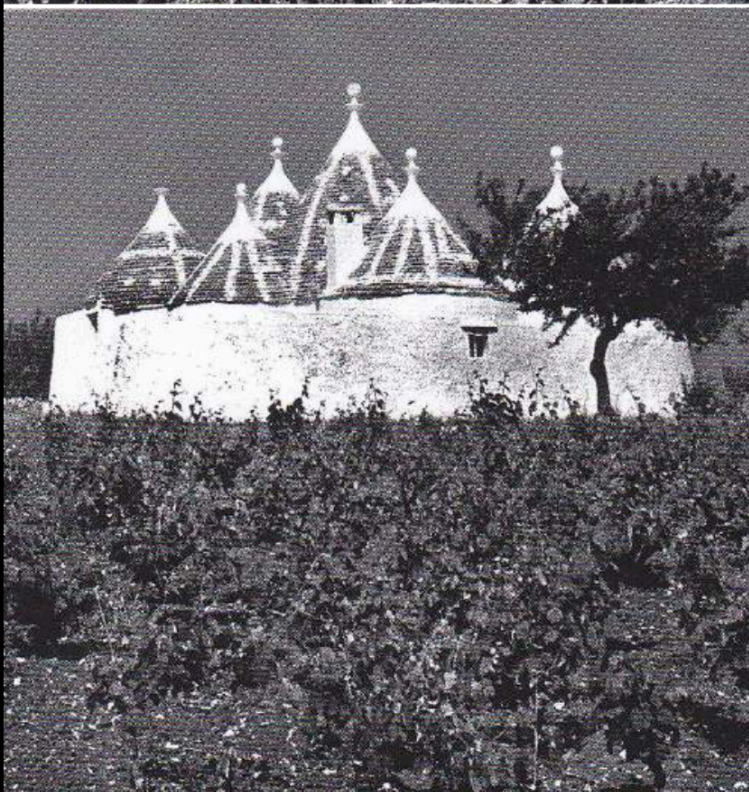
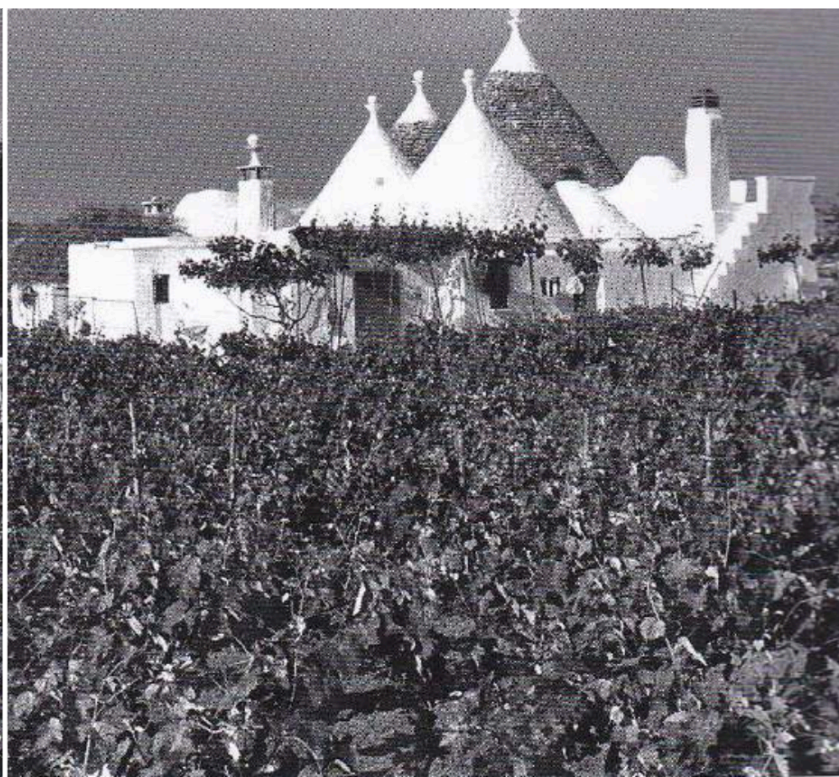
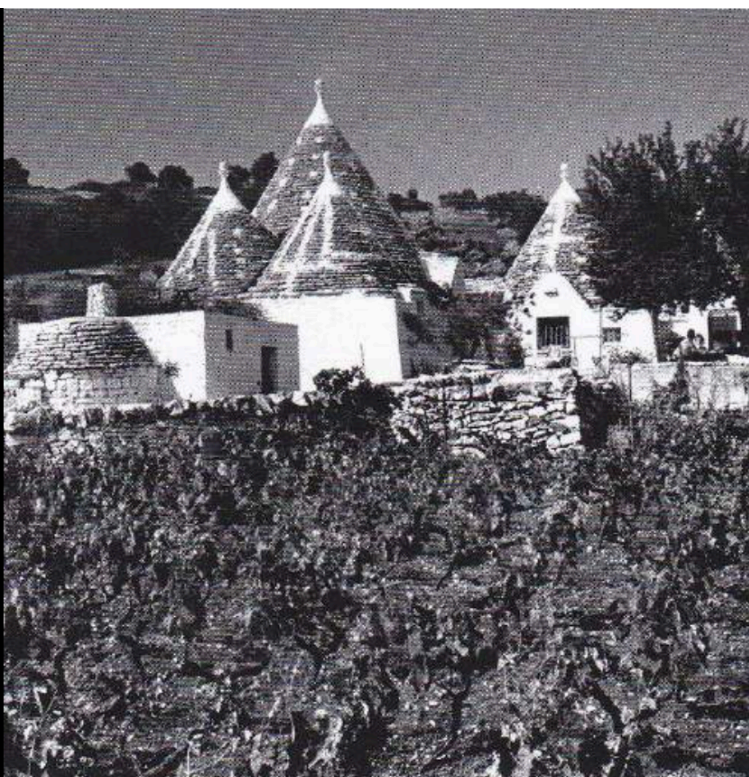




Fig. 1. Alberobello (S. House, C. House, Mediterranean Villages.  
An Architectural Journey, The Images Publishing Group Pty Ltd,  
Australia 2004)



## Territory - places

Man makes independent choices in his life, including about places. He thus influences who he is and expresses his freedom in this way. The humanistic motive manifests itself in man as a motive for existence. Hence the important role of places in human life especially places to live. There is no predetermined human nature.

The essence of a place is its qualities: spirituality, individuality, but also uniqueness. Places often have cultural values that are timeless and of intrinsic value. They are important places in our everyday life. They are the object of long lasting and intense human-place interaction. The cultural

values of a place are a source of identification for people, integration of groups and communities. Cultural areas - places, are a condition for the existence of a community of places. They play an important role in the existence of collective forms because it is in them that the processes of communication of the selected material and symbolic values take place. There are no identical places. Places themselves carry their own dynamics resulting from the unique, individual characteristics of a place. The cultural-semiotic features themselves carry a need for stability. They are the object of a long lasting and intensive interaction between space, place and man. They are spaces of “our common experience”, they are spaces of places.

Two basic characteristics of a place should be distinguished. These are: the **structural components, also called the internal components** of a place, and the **environmental components**, called the external components of a place. The lack of mobility of a place means that it is strongly connected to its surroundings, to the place in question. The environmental components include: the characteristics of the location and the characteristics of the neighbourhood.

**The context of a place** can create a scene that is enriched by distant perspectives, enlivened by views of the sea and the azure sky. Location, climate, terrain, surroundings once had an impact on the urban fabric, places, but also on buildings, their appearance, character, material, detail.

**The physical elements of a location - the natural features of a place** - contribute significantly to the attractiveness of places, making them unique, distinguishing a place/location.

The physical characteristics of a place, the neighbourhood of a place are man-made characteristics<sup>6</sup>.

The neighbourhood of a place is the space that has a multidimensional character and surrounds a place. It consists of tangible and intangible objects as well as people and animals. The neighbourhood tells us about the surroundings of a place, the location of a place in the inner city or in a villa district or in the suburbs. It also tells us about the quality of a place, its man-made environment, and its architectural and cultural features. Depending on the character of the neighbourhood, we may hear street noise or birds singing, we may see the walls of a factory, a scraped wall of a neighbouring building or admire a beautiful view of the sea, mountains, forests, landscape. We can breathe in the stench of a nearby factory, industrial plant or air pollution from the street, or smell the forest.

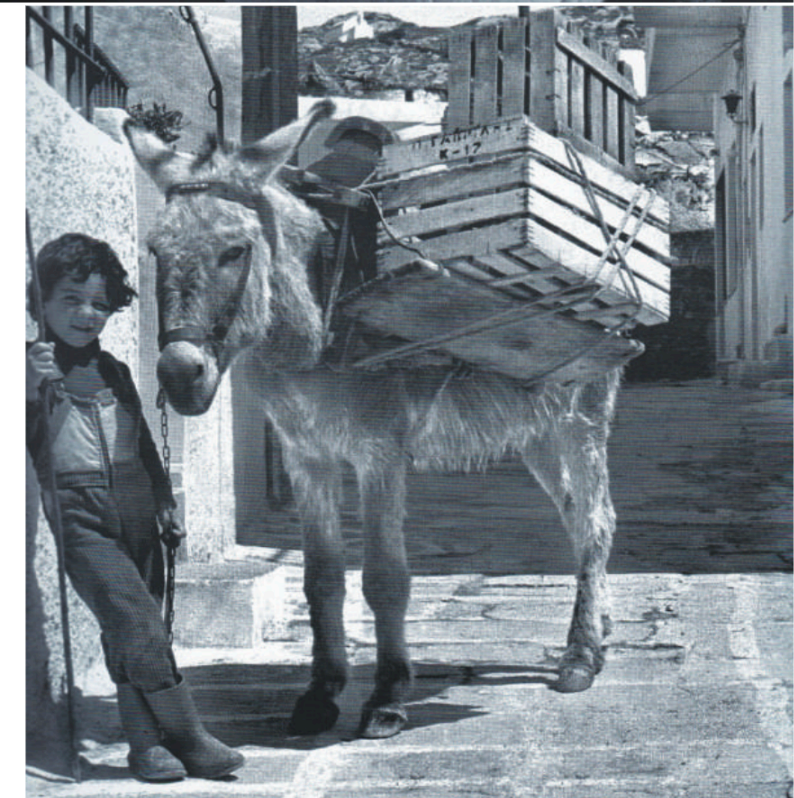
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<sup>6</sup> K. Paprzyca, *Harmonizowanie rozwoju urbanistycznego terenów miejskich – wybrane zagadnienia*, Monografia, no 417, Politechnika Krakowska, Krakow 2012.





Fot. 2. Alberobello (S. House, C. House, Mediterranean Villages. An Architectural Journey, The Images Publishing Group Pty Ltd, Australia 2004)



Prawdziwa architektura jest tylko tam, gdzie w centrum jest człowiek z jego wszystkimi tragediami i komediami.  
[Alvar Aalto]

The spatial order and the architectural qualities of the neighbouring buildings are not negligible in places. A neighbourhood offering more green areas, with dead-end streets in an irregular grid is very popular with its residents and provides a varied visual experience.

**The urban spatial structure** is considered as a spatial configuration; the arrangement and layout of streets, the physical dimension of urban drawing concerning the size, shape of urban forms, land use, shape and distribution of open spaces, which constitutes the physical characteristics of a place. The urban spatial structure is important for the traffic system: pedestrian traffic and roads leading to services, work; it is important for the functioning and activity of a place in a district or city; it affects the access to jobs and services.

The qualities that determine the feeling of safety in a spatial environment are the legibility and the spatial order; thanks to these qualities it is possible to find a place to live in the surrounding space.

The image of a location, its **architectural and urban qualities**, its cultural **and** historical ambience, are all important for the quality of a place. Poor qualities of a place, of the urban environment, surroundings, or poor technical condition of buildings contribute to the increasing problems of vandalism and hooliganism. Especially the physical surroundings influence the intensity of social contacts.

Offering a **variety of options to use space**, spatial experiences to widen the range of forms of contact between people in street spaces is invaluable. The quality of outdoor spaces in the form of spaces between buildings - streets, squares, parks - increases the out-of-doors activity both in terms of the duration of this activity and its type. It prevents and counteracts the phenomenon of people constantly rushing home and thus limiting their activities outside the home. It prevents social segregation, social exclusion and alienation.

## Community of place - differentiation

The city exists for its inhabitants, and man today aspires mainly to develop an individual personality, to become an observer rather than a spectator of events taking place in certain places. This attitude leads to a situation where human contact has become impersonal, anonymous. The unification of life in urban spaces manifests itself, for example, in the replacement of the names of



merchants and craftsmen in the shop windows with brands and mass production, in the absence of colourful, individual clothing, in the personal, anonymous buildings of the tenement houses. The diverse, colourful society disappears from sight and in its place there is a “lonely crowd”<sup>7</sup>. . People rush home in silence, and the street bustle is replaced by silence. Behaviour in public has been reduced to mere observation, without participation in the life of the place. The reluctance to make acquaintances and to speak leads to the withdrawal of people from public life. People separated from each other do not see the need for mutual support and help. The idea of meeting strangers, who play an important role in the process of enriching impressions and experiences, is lost. An impersonal, solitary crowd can lead to the appearance of closed enclaves with people who control each other.

However, a city is inhabited by different groups of people. People constitute the “capital” that makes the functioning of a city – and of the places in a city - possible. The **social capital** is closely linked to a certain territory. The deep relations that people have with each other are mainly between people who live next to each other. The ability of people to cooperate, to organise themselves in order to pursue common interests, as well as to form and meet in groups or social clubs, forms the social capital. Strong ties between people and place can be observed especially among poor people in poor countries, where the material capital does not exist - it is often connected to clan, family or religious communities (photo 2).

Cities that invest in the “**human capital**” are characterised by creativity and innovation (which is the forecast to become the hallmark of the 21st century economy). Richard Florida<sup>8</sup> sees the city as a powerful system connected to the exchange of diverse information, in which the driving force of the urban development are the creative potential and creativity of inhabitants.

Richard Florida prefers a city with places that are open to diversity. Places in the city should attract people, involve them. They should remove barriers to creativity, which he describes as mediocrity, intolerance, poverty, social and economic degradation. Places should aim to attract young, creative, dynamic people who want to change the world. The climate of places is meant to encourage people to express their ideas. R. Florida writes about his book that “the main [character]

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<sup>7</sup> D. Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd*, Vis-a-vis/Etiuda Publishers, Krakow 2011

<sup>8</sup> Richard Florida (born 1957 in Newark, New Jersey) is an American scientist, economist, university teacher at the University of Toronto, specialist in urban studies, creator of the term "creative class". In his research work, he focuses on social and economic issues related to urban planning. After: [pl.wikipedia.org/ wiki/Richard\\_Florida](http://pl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Florida)

[of his book] [...] is PLACE as an element in our personal lives as well as in the global economy. [...] choosing a place to live is the most important decision we make. It has a huge impact on the job we find, our family, our choice of friends, our lifestyle and quality of life, in fact our overall happiness"<sup>9</sup>. Every person has some talents, we just need to be able to unleash them, to help bring them out. According to Florida, every person is a creative individual.

Talented, creative people are in constant motion. They make up the “human capital”; they need not only places connected to openness, entrepreneurship, culture, science, social connections, but also they need openness to new ideas, views, lifestyles, jobs, interests, passions. This is possible by **improving the quality of places and the quality of life of their inhabitants.**

## Man in space - relationships

Value is an invisible and intangible spirit, it comes and goes unexpectedly while visible and concrete things remain the same <sup>10</sup>.

Places in cities have always been the sites where values important to the civilisational development are created: material, cultural, aesthetic-emotional and spiritual. They have also contributed to the processes of: communication, social exchange, identification, information. In the contemporary theories of place-making in urban spaces, **the mutual relations among value-needs-contact-conflict** play a particularly important role.

Urban spaces, that is, places, have specific values that have a significant impact on human assimilation, human behaviour and the use of these places and space. They are divided into:

- instrumental values;
- situational values;

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<sup>9</sup> R. Floryda, *Narodzina klasy kreatywnej (The Birth of the Creative Class)*, National Centre for Culture, Warsaw 2010, p. 229.

<sup>10</sup> A. Smith, *Bogactwo narodów*, Wydawnictwo Studio EMKA, Warszawa 2012, s. 26.

- existential values<sup>11</sup>.

Once places are deprived of these values, they can never be recreated. Places will be deprived of their vitality - streets, squares, markets - in favour of the increased attractiveness of commercial spaces, places that are “intellectually and culturally empty”.

Chombart de Lauwe writes:

There are the following sources of difficulties:

- a growing sense of insecurity about overcrowding;
- environmental pollution and urban degradation;
- the disappearance of landmarks for orienting oneself in space and the social structure, which is caused by the information chaos and the formalised, abstract organisation of space;
- the inability of individuals and social groups to adapt to the rapid spatial transformations brought about by the technological developments;
- incompatibility between the culturally anchored archetypes and the current ways of creating space<sup>12</sup>.

Living and dwelling in a given place, in a given space, in an urban environment, should provide a lot of experiences and should be assimilable for people.

Tange wrote: space is the terrain on which man creates or does physical work, but at the same time this space shapes and transforms man. Architecture and urban planning only fulfil their tasks if they become symbols of human values. I think that many a piece of modern architecture and many a city are devoid of these symbols<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> The “instrumental values include the functional character of the space (division into streets, squares, fields, interiors, etc.), the ease of reading the architectural and urban layout and its socially perceived status (old-new, pretty-not pretty, etc.). Situational values include feelings of physical and psychological safety or threat, the possibility to identify with a given space in social and cultural terms, the feeling of openness or anonymity, the possibility to fulfil one's chosen social roles and the opportunity to realise one's own prestige and personality. Existential values include all those that are a source of emotions, provide aesthetic and intellectual impressions and induce us to discover the qualities contained in objects and items of symbolic significance, as well as in the architectural and landscape environment. A. Majer, *Sociology and Urban Space*, PWN, Warsaw 2010, p. 57.

<sup>12</sup> For more details, see: <http://www.edukateria.pl/praca/przedmiot-socjologii-miasta-procesy-spoeczne-zwiazane-z-space-society-impact/>.

<sup>13</sup> Z. Kósa, K. Tange, *Architektura i architekci świata współczesnego*, Arkady, Warsaw 1977, p. 21.

The senses are a very important intermediary between man and place. From the point of view of a human being as a **receiver**, a given space should sharpen and intensify his or her sensitivity, be helpful in gaining experiences, knowledge, contacts. All the sensations and experiences shape not only the human attitudes, but especially the social values. The **humanistic values of the city**, which shape man, are the most difficult to assess. They concern many aspects: comfort, satisfaction, convenience, aesthetic aspects, perceptual aspects<sup>14</sup>. The humanistic view of the city emphasises the condition of urban space, its beauty. Emotional and aesthetic values, their wide range - monotony, ugliness, power, overwhelm, soullessness and others - act on the human psyche in different ways.

The category of human reception is an essential feature of a place in space, it is a so-called transmitting and receiving act. Between buildings in given places we have the possibility to be with different people, in an independent, non-committal way. This possibility of talking to people, of meeting them, gives us a lot of information about the world around us, about the place, the urban environment, the social environment in which we live and work. It helps us to relate to the world around us, to become connected to a place. Experiencing the presence of people, offers a rich and varied sensory experience, offers a wealth of information, and develops a person spiritually and intellectually.

## Dynamic adaptability of places by humans

A very important feature of places is their ability to adapt to diverse functions in space-creating tension between the diversity of people's needs and the diversity of how these needs are realised in spatial structures. The diversity of people is about diversity of age, education, status, income, interests.

The spatial arrangement of the multifunctional purpose and use of a place is an important argument for the potential of a place. Urban areas, places which have a dynamic capacity for adaptation, gather all kinds of people, offering a choice of different types of use. Accessibility is of considerable importance for the development of places in urban areas. It includes: the availability of services, utilities, local transport, the location of shopping and manufacturing centres, recreation, culture, etc.

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<sup>14</sup> "According to psychologists, the four functions of the human psyche that determine purposeful human action in space are: thinking - relationships and consequences; feelings - emotions, including aesthetic ones; perception - perception and feeling of reality; intuition - spontaneous perception of moods, also a type of perception". E.Cichy- Pazder, *Humanistyczne podstawy kompozycji miast*, Politechnika Krakowska, Krakow 1998, p. 117.

We need to establish creative places, creative spaces that provide people with more than just pleasure, that are accessible and achievable, appropriate to the cultural attractions associated with the city.

The desire to enforce the meeting of different social groups should characterise places in cities that want to develop. Proximity between people is a moral good. The development of the human personality through contact with people, the experience of proximity, is crucial for the development of the human personality. It liberates the personality and creates expressive people. People rediscover the value of mutual support and direct contacts, which makes the city friendlier for them.

## Conclusions

As a result of a series of transformations, capitalism has radically changed people's attitudes. People's behaviour has been separated from ethics and human values, it has become insensitive to human needs and values. The system requires people to be selfish, greedy. The lifestyle is pathogenic, resulting in a sick personality. Only a fundamental change in the sphere of human values and attitudes, a new attitude to nature will bring about a change in man. Man is constantly in the world of "places". Being in the world, nurturing the soul, caring for the soul become most urgent needs. The continuous development of man is a synthesis of **to have or to be**. The rapid changes which are taking place before our eyes in urban spaces are caused by changes in public life, in people and in the changing, essential needs which are reflected in the use of places. The consequence is a crisis of use of places in urban spaces, places are being recomposed. In this difficult situation it is important to create places that are adaptable, safe, familiar and recognised as belonging - in order to create conditions for the identification of the human being with the place, a sense of responsibility for the surroundings, the creation in places of a variety of forms of social life, social activities, thanks to which it is possible to meet people, form opinions, make acquaintances and carry out tasks. An important task in places is to create a "spirit of places" as determinants of urban-architectural impressions by introducing symbols and signs, which are understandable for the people living in the place. The rebirth and rediscovery of place-related values: cultural, spatial, social ones, is a positive response to the globalisation and to the unification of space.

**A revision of the value system and a change of objectives, both directed at the person and his living environment, should become the primary goal of human attitudes. Man should treat "place" as a specific good.**

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