

Introduction

The new XVII volume of “*Annales Universitatis Pedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia de Arte et Educatione*,” has been dedicated to the relationship between contemporary art and urban space.

Aware of the dynamics of revitalization processes, which we understand according to Polish legislation as the process of bringing degraded areas out of crisis through integrated actions and for the benefit of the local community, space, and economy, we would like to focus on the architectural, social and economic aspects of these processes. However, due to the nature of the discipline we represent, we want to emphasize the presence of artists and curators in these activities.

We still remember the empty streets and squares during the period of government-ordered lockdowns. These situations were extremely oppressive, but they revealed that in recent years certain places within cities have become deserted or, on the contrary, have become a vibrant stage for artistic and design creations. We are referring to the districts where factories have gradually been demolished, markets that have slowly been regaining their original functions, or abandoned courtyards. An observer- an architect could create in these spaces if only inside his imagination, a set of lofts or modern buildings; a landscape architect – could dream of the design of urban green enclaves; an artist – of monumental scale actions for unprejudiced witnesses; an animator – of the urgent need to reach out to those who remained isolated.

Many examples show that such plans and dreams can be realized, that the empty spaces and the situation of crisis (loneliness) inspire various forms of design and creative activity. Therefore, artists and designers have also intensified the discussion about the possibilities of using public space for exhibition purposes, especially during such oppressive situations. There is, without doubt, a need for ongoing reflection on this topic. It has already appeared during the debate within the international exhibition of the 17th Architecture Biennale in Venice, which closed last November, and was conducted under the motto: “How shall we live together?” It was a question about the quality of our lives and our (artists and scientists) creativity and causality in the new socio-economic situation.

We addressed our invitation to art historians, cultural studies scholars, philosophers, architects, artists, all those for whom the city is a space of action and scientific reflection, and those who are convinced that art can be an impulse, a tool and a stimulator of concrete changes in its complex fabric.

As we expected, the authors addressed the following issues in their texts:

- art as a tool for revitalization and social change

- the artist in relation to the urban fabric in a crisis situation
- creative placemaking
- artistic interventions in central and local public spaces
- participatory actions in social revitalization
- ephemerality and permanence of artistic interventions versus their effectiveness

Although most of the collaborating authors are from abroad, we hope that this volume will also serve to increase awareness of the need to protect and revitalize the architectural fabric and social relations in Polish cities among students and staff of our university and other friendly artistic and scientific communities.

Bernadeta Stano, Natalia Bursiewicz