

## Facultative classes and student activities implemented in co-operation with local government

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**ABSTRACT:** Presented in this article is the author's programme of facultative courses carried out in co-operation with Professor Krystyna Paprzyca and designed for students in the last year of Master's studies and Erasmus participants. The subject matter of the course was inspired by the philosophy of Marc Augé, perceiving the urban space as living and active. Students choose locations that require interventions, frequently limited to simple activities necessary for the transformation of the space. Selected areas are subjected to urban analysis, and the conclusions are presented in the form of a SWOT analysis, emphasising strengths and weaknesses of the area, its development opportunities and threats. In the article is also presented a project commissioned by the Cracow Municipal office and executed by the students of the Faculty of Architecture at Cracow University of Technology. It concerns the functional and space-based diagnosis of selected neighbourhoods located within two districts of Kraków - Olsza II and Ugorek.

### INTRODUCTION

The architectural programme run in the Faculty of architecture at Cracow University of Technology, Kraków, Poland is aimed at preparing students to work in the profession or to begin third-degree studies. First classes are obligatory and constitute a base for complementary exercises included in the study programme. After the third year of studies, students choose optional, additional activities and courses. Their structure includes introductory lectures and exercises during which students solve design problems connected with architecture and urban planning.

There are many optional classes and students make their own choices. An essential goal of the course is to develop students' interests in a narrow thematic scope related to architecture or urban planning. Among the many exercises in the field of the Faculty, are *Places, no-places*, inspired by the philosophy of Marc Augé, who observed that the user experiences urban space in various ways and identifies with it differently, depending on the emotional involvement in the urban environment. A permanent resident is always concerned about the living environment, while the temporary resident is aware of future changes to the place of residence. Hence, the latter is not attached to the currently inhabited area.

Often, for various reasons or preferences, the modern resident decides to change the place of residence frequently. This makes it difficult to develop an emotional involvement in the housing environment. The ratio of users to the inhabited or visited space decides, to a certain extent, its viability. Places that are liked, admired and visited are living. Spaces which are visited briefly, without stopping are only apparent for a moment and are not-living. Spatial structures of a city contain degraded areas. They are *asleep*, and nobody visits them. These places require a breath of life - an intervention.

During the additional classes, students prepare an analysis of the existing state of a chosen location. They draw conclusions from the local vision and implement their creative ideas by suggesting design concepts for the chosen location.

### SELECTED STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Students choosing *Places, no-places* search for forgotten spaces, assess them and carry out urban analyses. Then, there is a SWOT evaluation to extract the strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats of their proposed design. After the study, the student groups work on the space revival concept. The analysis requirements are based on the Schwartz plan with the designation of the parcels to be assessed, including the approach radii, which indicate the distance to vital spaces, such as the city centre or a smaller town. The next analysis is a compositional analysis taking into account the main axes, as well as view openings and closures, which limits the areas considered. Each opening designates the viewing area, which is crucial as it provides an insight into the surroundings; *vice versa* from the adjacent space into the assessed area. These places should be adequately exposed and this should be taken into

account by students in their design concepts. The opposite of openings are closures, which can decide about the nature of the interior. Depending on the wall's compactness, Bogdanowski distinguished objective and subjective interiors, concrete and non-specific interiors [1]. Full closure significantly limits the interior. The smaller and more compact the walls, the less noticeable is the interior. Walls as elements restricting the view often obscure part of the space and are assessed as having negative effects on viewing values [1].

Interiors are also characterised by dominants and accents, which are free-standing elements or compact sets of forms. Students assess dominants by analysing their location - whether they are located centrally or in a corner, within or outside the team's selected location. Whether the character of the dominant is historical or modern is also important. The basic urban analysis also requires a functional study that distinguishes the individual functions of the terrain and a *physiognomy* analysis, which evaluates the view values of the area. Moreover, the functional analysis enables an assessment of the scenic values of the site, taking account of its aesthetic, architectural and technical condition. Depending on the specifics of the considered site, students perform compositional, historical and natural analysis, as well as a research of the social and educational activities connected with the place.

It is often required to analyse the buildings, which allows justifying the necessity of introducing seals or similar to supplement the existing urban fabric. The analysis is preceded by design concepts which aim to plan an intervention made necessary by the decay of city spaces - degraded spaces that have a chance for a *new, second life*.

### Examples of Spaces Studied by Students

The course is run for both students of Cracow University of Technology and students of the Erasmus Programme. Some of the projects and analysis were carried out by students as part of the project commissioned by the City Council of Nowy Sącz. Students were asked to propose strategic solutions to improve the quality of the selected, underinvested urban spaces of Nowy Sącz. The proposed space concerned the so-called Bridge of Love, Kraków, which could be a convenient communication connection of the river bank area with a sports area. The site included a sports hall and a green space, where investment activities using modern technological and structural solutions consistent with the idea of sustainable design are planned in the future.

Another topic was the concept of a lookout tower located in the surroundings of Nowy Sącz. This subject was addressed in various ways by suggesting observation terraces or field stairs ensuring a panoramic view to the top of the mountain. An interesting proposition included an observation tower in the form of a balloon permanently suspended at the location. The last area selected for the design task included courtyards located in the centre of the town and requiring a development, so that they could be isolated from the surroundings. The development should be consistent with the features of the neighbouring city and not necessarily open to the general public. The topics were varied and demanded an individual project approach.

During the facultative classes, students were frequently encouraged to choose a location, and commonly they chose sites situated in Kraków as they were easy to access. The many places that the students indicated as *non-places* included riverside areas, objects adjacent to post-industrial sites and former factories. Another intriguing proposition was the idea to connect an historical building and a green recreational area with the campus of Cracow University of Technology located on the other side of Szlak Street. For several years, the condition of the historic building with a high architectural quality has significantly deteriorated. Once the seat of Radio Kraków, it has not been used for a long time. The concept suggested the adaptation of the building to be the centre for workshops, science and education for students. This solution would depend on the development of Cracow University of Technology campus, and would also help to use the former headquarters of Radio Kraków.

At the end of the course, the most interesting student ideas were selected for exhibition at the conference organised by the Student Scientific Club of Sustainable Design. For six years, students have been taking part and organising the intercollegiate and even the international Arch Echo Scientific Conference. During this important event, they present their scientific research or creative designs.

Students can gain experience while taking part in field trips organised during the holiday period when the university teachers conduct a series of lectures and workshops (see Figures 1-4), as well as classes in the field. The programme for these classes has been presented on the Web site of the Student Scientific Club of Sustainable Design [2]. They relate to the field of urban assessment of existing spatial workshops. These trips were organised for a group of students from the Faculty of Architecture (Wydział Architektury) at Cracow University of Technology (Politechnika Krakowska) (WA PK) and students from AGH University of Science and Technology in Kraków (Akademia Górniczo-Hutnicza im. Stanisława Staszica w Krakowie), Poland.

Therefore, the research conducted by the students had an interdisciplinary nature. Students from AGH placed indicators to read the level of air contamination in areas subject to the urban analysis performed by students of the Faculty of Architecture at Cracow University of Technology. Supplementary research and methods of the studies favoured an objective assessment of the quality of the analysed city space. The knowledge of students from AGH University of Science and Technology in the field of environmental protection was also useful during the workshops, as the groups of

students developed concepts for the revitalisation of selected urban areas, using modern solutions characteristic of sustainable design. Knowledge of environmental engineering and its application in architectural and urban planning solutions was valuable for students of the Faculty of Architecture, who created bold visions based on the research carried out by the students from AGH. The results of this collaboration were presented during the Arch-eco Conference, and the conference organised at AGH associated with the December festival celebrations of *Barbórka*.



1)



2)

Figure 1 and Figure 2: Workshops (source: [www.zrownowazeni.pk.edu.pl](http://www.zrownowazeni.pk.edu.pl)) (Photographs by Patrycja Haupt).



3)



4)

Figure 3 and Figure 4: Workshops (source: [www.zrownowazeni.pk.edu.pl](http://www.zrownowazeni.pk.edu.pl)) (Photographs by Patrycja Haupt).

#### Conferences and Published Work

Cracow University of Technology has been publishing post-conference articles. The first book, *The Architecture of the Place* was thematically related to Marc Augé's concepts of places and no-places, which were discussed above. The conference also featured the exhibition of the works of students undertaking the project at the request of the city of Nowy Sącz.

The next publication was a collective work edited by J. Kobylarczyk, *Interior Inside and Outside* [3]. The first part of the monograph was devoted to interior design issues, while the following chapters describe the role of dominant, accent, colour and function in building an architectural and urban form. The summary of the theme devoted to the composition included the comments on the creation of mood in the architectural and urban interior:

*The second problematic trend of the monograph was presented in the chapters describing elements of composition in the contact zones between the building and the surroundings. It includes comments on shaping contact spaces, their form and destination, constituting a kind of typology of contemporary solutions in this field. The last thread taken by the authors were actions in the urban interior, related to both design and social activities. Their results and possible consequences for the image of contemporary urban space have been reported [4].*

The last monograph presenting students' articles is a collective work entitled: *The Urban Interior in the Spatial Structure of the Urban Space and the Interpersonal Relations* edited by J. Kobylarczyk and P. Haupt. This monography is an attempt to define the urban interior and its role at a time when technological progress enables to use urban spaces without leaving homes, as more and more meetings take place on the Internet [5].

## Co-operation with Local Government

The project commissioned by the city of Nowy Sącz involved some students from the first year of studies, who carried out additional research, unrelated to the obligatory curriculum. The works were presented in the main building of the Nowy Sącz City Hall (town hall) during the Arch-eco Conference, where the Rector of Cracow University of Technology handed out distinctions and diplomas confirming the students' participation in the project. Some of the works have been exhibited twice: during the *Architecture of the Place* Arch-eco Conference in the Gil Gallery, and during the USB Conference (University, Local Government, Business) in Brainville in Nowy Sącz. The USB Conference presented the results of co-operation between the University, local government and business units.

The effects of this co-operation can be seen in the scientific activities and scientific projects. *Functional and Spatial Diagnosis of two Cracow Housing Estates: Olsza II and Ugorek* is further confirmation of this co-operation [6]. In addition to the scientific value (the result included a scientific book), the project also had educational value since students were included in its implementation (see Figures 5 and 6).



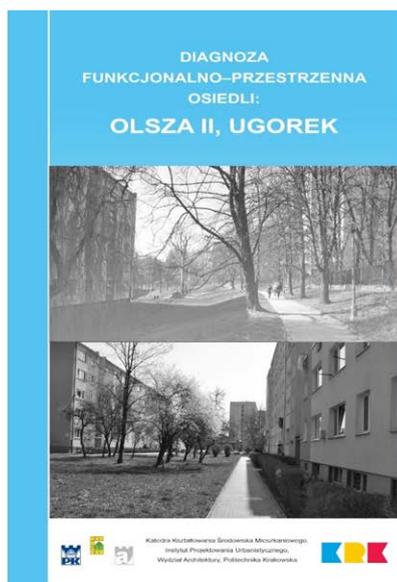
5)



6)

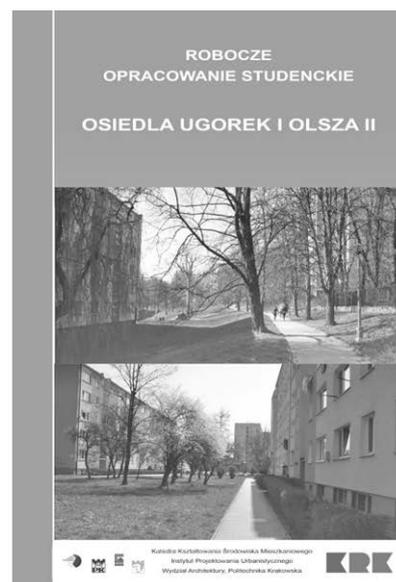
Figure 5 and Figure 6: Students on a visit to diagnosed settlements as part of a scientific project commissioned by the city of Krakow (source: [www.zrównowazeni.pk.edu.pl](http://www.zrównowazeni.pk.edu.pl)) (Photographs by Patrycja Haupt).

Students taking part in the workshop prepared concepts for the development of selected areas inside the housing estates, which later became the subject of the course exercise for the first-year students of *Initial Architectural and Urban Planning*. Designated teams supervised by the leaders took part in a site inspection in the neighbourhoods selected for the diagnosis: Olsza II and Ugorek. Then, they prepared a study of macro factors, presented in the second volume of the book, *Functional and Spatial Diagnosis of the Estates: Olsza II and Ugorek*, for which the students and leaders were awarded the University Rector's award (see Figures 7 and 8).



7)

Figure 7: Front cover of the book *Functional and Spatial Diagnosis of the Estates: Olsza II and Ugorek*, Vol. 1 (Photograph by the Author).



8)

Figure 8: Front cover of the book *Functional and Spatial Diagnosis of the Estates: Olsza II and Ugorek*, Vol. 2 (Photograph by the Author).

## CONCLUSIONS

Expanding the educational process to include post-course classes gives students the opportunity to pursue their many interests, both those that focus on science and creative activities. Some of the activities result directly from the University's co-operation with local government and companies operating in the market. The benefits related to the collaboration between the universities, local government and business units are incorporated into the didactic process.

It should be noted that the third-degree students - PhD students - also take part in these initiatives. They were able to present their papers and undertook the work connected with organising of the Arch-eco Conference and the USB Conference. The ability to present and publish achievements is important for broadening the scientific accomplishments of people studying for a doctoral degree. It is also an opportunity to increase experience in scientific activities. Joint activities that were undertaken by the first- and second-degree students, including students from abroad, encourage teamwork skills.

It should also be noted that the conferences organised as part of the activities of the Students' Scientific Circle for Sustainable Design are an optional activity for students, which they undertake believing it better prepares them for work in the profession or for doctoral studies.

## REFERENCES

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