

PREFACE

The compilation of this monograph was initiated by the INTBAU Conference, which was held in Krakow, in May 2014. This event, organized by INTBAU Poland, gained the support of the INTBAU International College of Chapters and the Cracow University of Technology's International Centre of Education. The contacts that had been established there allowed us to begin our work on an anthology of essays presenting the diversity of approaches to the tradition and heritage of urban, architectural, and building design, and their place in the contemporary image of the city in a number of places and cultures around the world.

Krakow seems to be a particularly conducive place for such deliberation. Its varied traditions and diverse cultural heritage – which have been shaping its society, landscape, and culture for over a thousand years of its historically documented development – intertwined within its cityscape with a mature approach to urban planning and the conservation of historical monuments. The local tradition of municipal and non-governmental involvement in taking care of historical monuments, which dates back to the beginning of the 19th century, and the local school of conservation with its old-established rule of respect for the various historical layers, have both formed a solid base for the development of our perception of tradition as something not belonging solely to the domain of historical research, but as a living practice which can help to shape a better environment for the future.

Heritage, understood likewise as the effect of, and the greater sum of the collective intelligence of many generations of artists and craftsmen, has started to inspire both academics and practicing architects again. To them, tradition and heritage are a source of inspiration as well as a repository of readily available, tried and tested resources on design, which are still viable in our time. Since sustainability has become the main challenge of civilisation, we are all the more keen on searching for solutions, methods, techniques, tools, and materials which can allow us to create a built environment that has the best possible life-cycle energy balance, accessibility, and renewability. Advanced technologies – after decades of development in the fields of architecture and construction – have proven still to be highly experimental and out of reach of all but the wealthiest. At the same time, the regional traditions of building and architecture – often discovered anew – remain a true treasure trove of knowledge and design solutions that make possible the ideas of sustainable and affordable building, and urbanism friendly to its users and the environment, compatible with local climates, landscapes, and resources.

Architectural tradition is also a source of compositional canons and rules that stem from a synergy of the observation of natural phenomena, as well as the study of mathematics and the humanities. The harmony of proportions and classical forms are among the most enduring elements of civilization. The urban heritage of antiquity and the Middle Ages still remains the fundamental source of knowledge of urban design

and a particularly valuable inspiration for the development of compact, mixed-use towns, polycentric cities, walkable neighborhoods, and distinct places. On all of the spatial scales of planning and architecture, one can observe a tendency to return to traditional and still viable patterns – ones corresponding with a human scale, and human perceptions and nature in their psychological and social dimensions. Traditional architecture, understood not as a matter solely of historical study, but a living, evolving, and still relevant current of design, is making its way back to the curricula of architecture schools. Granting it equal status with the so far dominating style of Modernism happens more and more often, while Modernist architecture itself, after having captured the global architectural landscape for over a hundred years (and undergoing its own Mannerist period) has entered – along with its own heritage – the category of historical styles.

The tendencies and cases highlighted here are elaborated upon in the chapters of our three-volume monograph. Seventy authors, representing a varied and diverse range of places and schools, analyze on its pages the relations between contemporary architectural occurrences and particular traditions. The overall tone is far from uniform, as the monograph showcases a wide spectrum of facts, works, design concepts, commentaries, attitudes, opinions, and stances. The scientific approach is the dominating factor, however, and it allows for a clear demarcation between what is demonstrable and what is hypothetical or presumptive.

We would like to thank the authors of the papers that have been gathered in this monograph for their trust and patience with which they waited for this publication. Our thanks also go to the reviewers of over a hundred articles from which this work has been composed for their conscientious and expert support, as well as their insightful comments.

This monograph would not have been possible without the organizational backing that we received from INTBAU, especially our colleagues from INTBAU Polska and INTBAU UK: the kindness of Robert Adam and the constant help provided by Harriett Wennberg. In this endeavor, the Cracow University of Technology has played an equally important part, strongly represented by the authors and with invaluable support from Barbara Korta-Wyrzycka. While giving thanks to the Authors and the editorial team, one needs to mention Kenita Jalivay, our dedicated proofreader, who has made it through the massive amounts of text that we produced and has diligently made them clearer.

We believe that our combined effort can contribute to the protection of the diversity of building cultures and traditions, the preservation of the architectural heritage and character of various places, as well as restoring the historical continuity of spatial narrations and those traditions which are conducive to the sustainable and urbane development of cities.

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