

Beata Frydryczak

The Cityscape: from Garden City to Park City

Studia Europaea Gnesnensia 7, 327-342

2013

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej bazhum.muzhp.pl, gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Beata Frydryczak
(Gniezno)

THE CITYSCAPE: FROM GARDEN CITY TO PARK CITY

Abstract

The main subject of the article is analysis of the relationship between urban space and nature understood as natural environment which has become acclimatised in the city. Here, three types of relation may be distinguished, where nature is “decorative”, “socialised” and “privatised”. The deliberations are accompanied by a question about the possibility of harmonious coexistence of city and nature, and about the accomplishment of Gernot Böhme’s utopian project of the “park city”.

Key words

urban space, nature, park, garden city, G. Böhme, E. Howard, Regent’s Park

When considering the relationship of the city and nature, the idea which immediately springs to mind is the concept of garden and park as integral elements of the city, which seem to live up to the ideal of harmonious coexistence. Although the idea of garden and park presupposes the participation of nature in the shaping of the city tissue, the actual historical development of the city demonstrates that the role intended for nature is different from the expected one. It remains therefore an open issue which nature we are dealing with, as its status, although seemingly obvious because it has been present in the city since the very beginning, is not unequivocal. One could set out from the preliminary assumption that nature in the city comes in three different forms: as “socialized”, subordinated to the city structure in the shape of gardens, parks, greens, avenues of trees lining the streets and squares, and thus in designated places with specifically stated function. The second manifestation of nature in the urban space is “privatised” (or “domesticated”) — this includes all private gardens adjoining the house, fenced off and accessible only to their owners, or equally “private” potted plants on the balconies and window sills, which constitute an integral decorative and structural element of the city. The third form in which nature appears in the city is more complex: it is a living, almost uncontrollable nature in the shape of birds and smaller animals inhabiting the city, forgotten wasteland, as well as climatic conditions and elements: the rain, wind, storms or other cataclysms.

With those preliminary assumptions in mind, one may have the impression that there are two kinds of nature in the city: the controlled one, which is subordinated to the human, and the “living” one, which evades that authority. It is an obvious fact that we, inhabitants of the city, confront in various circumstances: during a walk through a city park, a civic response to the attempt to cut down an old tree by the municipal services, spontaneous feeding of the birds and cats in winter, or a hurricane which lays waste to the surroundings.

The encounter with the spontaneity and the vehemence of nature makes one realise that the city is not a besieged fortress, while its walls crumble with the same ease as trees felled by the wind. Only from that perspective can one discern that the socially and culturally moulded urban space is also a part of a larger natural system, where the same laws of nature apply. In “Philosophy and Aesthetics of Nature”, Gernot Böhme postulates a new understanding of the city, advancing the ideas of the park city, whereby the city may be perceived as an ecosystem, a component of nature¹. The concept evinces an attempt to

¹G. Böhme, *Relacja człowiek–przyroda na przykładzie miasta*, [in:] idem, *Filozofia i es-*

draw on Ebenezer Howard's idea of the garden city, although it is accompanied by a fundamental difference in how nature is construed and experienced. In its utopian dimension, the concept of the garden city formulated by Ebenezer Howard is a proposition that would nowadays be called balanced urban development, seeking such possibilities of planning a city and its functional space that it becomes "friendly" to the human being. One of its aspects involves the attempt to build a harmonious relationship between the human settled in the urban space and nature which guarantees its harmonious development.

Gernot Böhme provided a short historical outline of the process in which nature penetrated and entered the city tissue, emphasizing two entirely opposite directions he denoted as "bringing nature into the city" and "transferring the city into nature". The first term encompasses the entirety of city's characteristic "applications" of nature, which superficially disrupt the distance between two spheres, enabling one to commune harmoniously with nature, but which do not eliminate being remote from nature. The second direction is associated with the utopian vision of a new relationship between the city and nature, devised upon the idea of "extended ecological vision of the city" where the city is construed as part of nature.

Here, both models will serve to distinguish the various aforementioned forms of manifestations and planning of nature in the urban space as well as the dependencies emerging at the point where they meet.

NATURE IN THE CITY

It would be hard to imagine a city without the natural element, without a single trait of the organic, devoid of trees, flower beds, greens with benches; and yet, this particular form of presence, which seems to have accompanied the development of the city since the outset, has a much shorter history in terms of conscious rational planning than the history of urban planning, whose essence it is to uproot the natural and whose fundamental assumption is separateness of city as a socially and culturally constructed space. Initially, as the sphere of production and agriculture, it had been banished outside the city walls, yet it filtered back (or returned), losing its productive, functional character, acquir-

tetyka przyrody w dobie kryzysu środowiska naturalnego, transl. by J. Merecki, Warszawa 2002, p. 46–65.

ing purely non-utilitarian decorative value instead. Indeed, the moment when nature began to be taken into account in the designs of urban planners and visionaries of new architectural concepts may be seen as a turning point in the understanding of the city space and its functional spheres.

From the planning perspective, its presence has been observed since the 19th century, when the movement for the creation of city parks, supported by natural protection activists, became widespread in England and then across Europe, with the result that towards the end of the century the inhabitants of all major British cities could enjoy walks in public parks. The idea of public parks evolved, from discreet private gardens and recreational areas to a broader concept of parks as a staple element of the daily landscape².

The grafting of nature in the city, which proceeded in various waves, is put into practice today through novel urbanistic and architectural concepts inspired by the shift towards ecology and the fashion for ecological lifestyle. Naturally, in this historical process which yielded specific park or urbanistic forms, reveals on the one hand the immemorial dichotomy between nature and culture, which transformed into distinct negation of nature in the modern times; on the other, one may attribute it an attempt to eliminate the human eternal fear of elements, compensated by the dependent “urban greenery”. Nevertheless, “bringing nature into the city” would always take place under conditions set by the city which, acting as the best of gardeners, delimits special green areas and controls the spontaneity of nature.

The 19th century was of key significance for the grafting of nature in the urban tissue, as the development of the cities, industrialism and the capitalist system of production causing barely controllable growth of the ever more numerous lower classes, brought out the new needs of the inhabitants and the necessity to satisfy those. It is also associated with the unanimous division of the public and private sphere as well as with the emergence of the leisure time as distinct from working time, which had to be filled with some activity. Beginning with England and then throughout Europe and beyond, the movement for the creation of landscaped public parks was a response to the increasing overpopulation, industrialisation and pollution of the cities which had little to offer to its inhabitants. As Charles Quest-Ritson notes, “it was increasingly

²H. Conway, *Everyday Landscapes: public parks from 1930 to 2000*, *Garden History* 28/1, 2000.

recognized, that people who lived in towns had a special need for open parks”³. Interestingly enough, the romantic longing for nature was to be accomplished within the city, but in a space so transformed that it displayed no relation to the city; quite the contrary: the landscaped parks were modelled after the best of “picturesque landscapes”, which had been created a century earlier in all country estates according to the canons of the picturesque aesthetics⁴. All city parks had at least four shared components: a dense framing of trees which separated the park from the city, wide, open space where one could sit on the grass with one’s children, recreational and sports areas, as well as flower beds with plants blooming throughout the season. In England, the two most interesting parks from that period include Regent’s Park, which opened to the public in the 1830s and the slightly later Battersea Park, both in the landscape style, with abundant and diversified layout, featuring numerous clearings, roads, walking avenues with separate lanes for horse-riding, a botanical garden, places for recreation, games, team games and restaurants. The comprehensive layout suggests that the park was to be a self-sufficient space with different functions, which were chiefly aimed at rest and recreation, not an encounter with nature, although the latter was represented not only by greenery but also small zoos which were often established within the boundaries of the parks.

Paris of the redevelopment period is a good example as well. Much is said about the tracing of new broad streets and boulevards, liquidation of the medieval centre for the sake of tall tenements, yet many fail to mention that Haussman’s development plan presumed delineation of green areas: numerous little squares with greenery and large parks. One of those is Square des Batignolles shown on a print from 1862⁵. At a first glance, the top view shows an astonishing feature: a rectangle isolated in the middle of the city, demarcated on the one side with high tenements and railway tracks on the other, shows an envisaged picturesque landscape, surrounded by a row of trees: winding avenues, clearings, groups of trees, artificial ponds. It should be noted that the garden-cafe life of the contemporary Paris and its landscape qualities were recorded e.g. by impressionists, the documentarians of the 19th century Paris and its social life.

³Ch. Quest-Rtison, *The English Garden. A Social History*, London 2003, s. 204.

⁴I have already discussed the category of the picturesque in *The Picturesque: refleksja estetyczna na rzecz parków krajobrazowych*, [in:] L. Sosnowski, A. Wójcik (eds), *Ogrody. Zwierciadło kultury. Zachód 2*, Kraków 2008, p. 245–274.

⁵L. Majdecki, *Historia ogrodów*, Warszawa 1972, p. 400, Fig. 318.



Fig. 1. Grimsby, People's Park. Photo by Beata Frydryczak

One should draw attention to the fact that the “birth of modernity” which Walter Benjamin observed in Paris, permitted the urban space to be identified with landscape, to which both the parks established in the city as well as the popular panoramas certainly contributed. For Benjamin, they are “an expression of a new experience of life” and the attempt to bring “the country into the city”, as efforts had been made to make them into “places which perfectly imitate nature”⁶. However, one cannot ignore their artefactual character, which increased the artificiality of the urban space twofold. Resorting to artificial nature, to nature devised, is yet another proof of instrumental treatment of nature in the building of a new vision of the city.

Those “pioneering” attempts to implant natural landscape in the urban tissue deserve particular attention, if only due the fact that the 19th century develop-

⁶W. Benjamin, *Paryż — stolica dziewiętnastego wieku*, transl. by H. Orłowski, in: idem, *Anioł historii. Eseje, szkice, fragmenty*, Poznań 1996, p. 322.

ment of the city, the density of population which caused the city to shrink by devouring any free space for housing, expose the artificiality and the utopian character of the undertaking even more powerfully. As Longin Majdecki observes, public gardens became an important, integral part of the city, exerting an influence on the urban custom and urban life, as well as “hygienic conditions of existence of the urban population”⁷. Indeed, from the perspective of the city, the parks were primarily intended to perform a hygienic function and keep the working population within its boundaries. Taking into consideration the romantic ideology of “escaping to the bosom of nature”, they did their task perfectly, without the need to leave the city, but in the context of organised and structurized urban space, they seem a creation as artificial as today’s theme parks.

Richard Sennett notes that both in Paris and in London, the green islands in the middle of the city played the role of the “city lungs”; these, in turn, required to be attended to⁸. Simultaneously, one cannot help the impression that they become a kind of simulacrum of nature with a problematic status. This is evident for instance, when one studies the prints showing prospective or actual city parks of the 19th century, and when one sees them today, tightly walled in by the city. Most of the still existing public parks preserve that principle of a “green picturesque island”, a place of rest, recreation and education, producing an impression that the city itself becomes more cramped, as e.g. New York’s Central Park, which is more and more dwarfed by the skyscrapers. Consequently, one is not surprised by such conclusions as those of Anthony Giddens, according to whom in the modern world people are not only isolated from nature, but its very existence has been challenged since the modern world is an artificial one, while the city renders the process even more profound: “The contemporary city is definitely the greatest and the most artificial human settlement known to history”⁹. In an artificial environment nature acquires likewise qualities, and remains “natural” only because it exists thanks to organic processes.

These examples sufficiently prove that a city park, as a place which perfectly imitates nature, is subjected to the same mechanisms of aestheticizing nature

⁷L. Majdecki, *Historia ogrodów*, p. 395.

⁸R. Sennett, *Ciało i kamień. Człowiek i miasto w cywilizacji Zachodu*, transl. by M. Konikowska, Gdańsk 1996, p. 260.

⁹A. Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość. “Ja” i społeczeństwo w epoce późnej nowoczesności*, transl. by A. Szulżycka, Warszawa 2007, p. 227.

as one finds in the 18th and 19th century landscape parks, with the exception that the emphasis is not laid on the sights, but on spaces with clearly designated roles. The inclusion of the park into the city structure, the demarcation of a singular green enclave as a place for rest and relaxation is a kind of “compensation for the experience of nature” within the city. In this sense, the park was to be and continues to be a surrogate of what is natural in the location of one’s residence. If there is any doubt, then indeed it pertains to its essence.

In the 1930s, the new movement of environmental protection was less critical towards industrialisation and modernisation processes, and more interested in the modernist concern with the regulation of boundaries between the city and the country, with the actual need for new solutions in urban planning and control in the background. For this reason Howard’s idea of the garden city formulated in his *Garden Cities of To-morrow* took on a different dimension. The power which compelled one to seek new ideas was not longing for nature anymore, but the concept of social eugenics and hygiene, dating back to the Enlightenment, which was a foundation for the development of “new civilisation based on the service to the community”¹⁰. Howard’s diagram of the ideal city, or rather a satellite-like town, with the predicted and planned share of greenery in the form of parks and gardens adjoining the houses, whose fences were to effectively separate the neighbours, rejects any possibility of introducing “spontaneous” nature. That singular endeavour to reconcile the city and the country responded — just as in the 19th century — to overpopulation and the gradual collapse of the rapidly developing metropolises, which could be rectified by the development of the suburbs and housing reform. “Howard unfolds the vision of charming dwellings spaced along cobbled streets, surrounded by gardens, agreeable neighbourhood, small groves and green hedges ensuring intimacy, and finally — clean and sunlit apartments”¹¹. This short description fully reflects the place nature was to have taken in the project: it is to perform a complementary role to architecture, underline the idyll of the area and create private or semi-private space in an aesthetic manner. For this reason Lewis Mumford remarked on the inaptness of the notion of garden city, suggesting

¹⁰L. Mumford, *The City in History, Its Origins, its Transformations, and its Prospects*, London 1961, p. 586.

¹¹A. Czyżewski, *Trzewia Lewiatana. Antropologiczna interpretacja utopii miasta-ogrodu*, Kraków 2001, p. 13.

a term he thought more appropriate, namely the green-belt town¹², because the main concern was with a city that would become a perfect, functional organism rather than with the presence of nature in the city, meticulously designed though it may have been. The number of cities which subscribed to that concept is noteworthy, employing it either at the planning stage (as newly laid out) or redevelopment (as suburbs), also in Poland, a fact which is extensively and interestingly discussed by Adam Czyżewski in “Trzewia Lewiatana”¹³. Howard’s project is a perfect instance of the utopian visions of which Zygmunt Bauman said that their essence was in “planning a life led in a perfectly ordered space, cleansed from all randomness, free from what is unpredictable, accidental, ambiguous”¹⁴, while Giddens summed them up saying that they are expressed in “increasingly inclusive ordering of the world of nature according to the structure of internally referential modern systems”¹⁵.

Nowadays, nature in the city is perceived as “green areas” which, as Marguerite Charageat suggests “puts an end to the traditionally conceived art of gardens”: “the term became wildly popular, featuring in all projects of architects and urban planners. [...] It was most likely enthusiastically received because it did not oblige anyone to anything, because it was meaningless, while the ‘green stain’ grew or diminished depending of the financial circumstances”¹⁶. Nature becomes the domain of urban development experts, who have to include it in their designs, if only for the sake of “public health”, which was one of the watchwords of the 19th century movement for public parks, and the improvement of the “quality of life” which today becomes an attractiveness criterion of a city. Therefore it is present as planned greenery: the avenues of trees flanking the street, a garden by the house, flower beds on squares, a sizeable city park. A similar assessment was suggested by Böhme, who argued that although nature is taken into account in urban planning, it happens without any profound knowledge in that field, which boils down to “seeing it

¹²L. Mumford, *The City in History*, p. 587.

¹³Adam Czyżewski draws attention to the fact that while the concept of the garden city gained popularity in England, Germany’s preferred idea was that of a forest city, which was reflected in the Polish attempts to realise the concept in practice.

¹⁴Z. Bauman, *Globalizacja. I co z tego dla ludzi wynika?*, transl. by E. Klekot, Warszawa 2000, p. 49.

¹⁵A. Giddens, *Nowoczesność i tożsamość*, p. 227.

¹⁶M. Charageat, *Sztuka ogrodów*, transl. by A. Morawińska, H. Pawlikowska, Warszawa 1978, p. 214.

as nothing more than greenery”. One cannot ignore the fact that many of the current trends in architecture and urban planning results from the fashion for ecological lifestyle, as demonstrated by the roof gardens and terraces of apartment buildings. These tendencies also stem from the increasing congestion in metropolises, where free space for a park or garden is more and more difficult to find. The situation is excellently reflected in the pocket parks¹⁷: small plots reclaimed from the city, minute public gardens established in the existing urban arrangement, where one creates something akin to a “green study”. There, one can escape the hustle and bustle of the city, especially from its noise, find peace and make a symbolic encounter with nature¹⁸. Another aspect is the redevelopment of former industrial areas and converting them into all kinds of parks and recreational areas, an activity which gathered pace in the 1970s. This artificialization of nature is by no means an isolated case in the history of human relationship with nature: artificial flowers or artificial trees adorning banks, shopping malls, pools and many other, not only public places, does not differ so much from the artificial landscapes designed both in the city as well as in recultivated and renaturalised sites¹⁹. “Although nature is no longer separated from the city in terms of space,” claims Böhme, “it nevertheless remains outside it. It is a material, a tool, and serves above all as compensation for the living, the work and commuting”²⁰.

¹⁷Pocket parks are discussed by K. Pawłowska, *Dźwięk w krajobrazie jako przedmiot badań i środek wyrazu w sztuce ogrodowej i architekturze krajobrazu*, [in:] R. Losiak, R. Tańczuk (ed.), *Audiosfera miasta*, Wrocław 2012.

¹⁸The most prominent element in the Green Acre Park is a cascade of water flowing down the boundary wall of the plot where this minute park was made. The sound of the water is intended to mitigate the noise of the city. Similarly, in every city park the singing of birds becomes an exceptional experience in the hubbub of the city. This is an astonishing change in experiencing and perceiving nature, since originally the nature was seen as a source of noise.

¹⁹However, it should be noted that already in the 19th century parks were made on the former industrial grounds. The Buttes-Chaumont park, which was created in a disused quarry may serve as an example here. The uneven land left by the excavations was used to make a picturesque grotto, cascades, or a lake with a rocky islet. Another example of similar activities was creating parks within the old fortifications of the city; ramparts, bastions and moats were converted into promenades or green belts surrounding former city walls. Today, the awoken ecological awareness provides the incentive for such actions; the excavations are transformed into botanical gardens, centres of ecological education, while tourism generates the profit, as in Cornwall where the Eden Project was created in a similar location.

²⁰G. Böhme, *Filozofia i estetyka przyrody*, p. 60.



Fig. 2. London. Green terraces. Photo by Beata Frydryczak

Although nowadays the shift towards ecology is evident, any involvement here is reduced to asking question about the natural environment of the human. These activities correspond with the concepts of contemporary city, where the approach to nature, as Böhme observed, is superficial: it is given consideration, it is planned but solely as a space, a “geographic formation”. Seen from this perspective, “urban” nature in the visions of urban planners and architects becomes a tool of compensation.

CITY IN THE NATURE

The idea of the park city, which Gernot Böhme merely signalled giving it a preliminary shape, is either another utopia or, paradoxically, an expression of rational thought, which is perfectly aware of the inevitability of social, economic and ecological processes.

When discussing the type of the nature-city relation, Böhme distinguished — apart from the external variety in which nature is treated superficially, as the Other — a type defined as an internal relationship, enabling one to abandon thinking in opposites, where the city is seen as non-nature. Here, it is presumed that “city is and will remain nature, although it is nature assimilated and shaped by the human”²¹. Such an interpretation offers not only a new understanding of nature, but also a new understanding of the city as urbanised space: the city becomes an “ecological system” comprehended as a “fragment of nature, whose boundaries and unity are socially defined, and whose state is reproduced by human usage and work. Each of us and every cultivated field is that kind nature”²². In this sense the city as an entirety becomes an ecological system understood as a natural area which is also inhabited by the human. It is, as Böhme argues, a vision with some affinity with the concept of the park city as nature shaped from the social viewpoint: “Then the city is understood as an element of nature comprising plants and buildings, which is continually reproduced by human usage and work in an alliance with the spontaneity of nature”²³.

The German philosopher makes use of the term “park city”, although bearing in mind his explanations it would be equally appropriate to employ the notion of environment, which subsumes natural and artificial space, both creations of nature as well as the works of the human. The new conditions in which nature develops and the human lives determine the notion of nature; no longer a whole, a universe, a cosmos but a biosphere, an environment. There is no nature in its natural state, since it is subject to historical and social transformation. It is, as Böhme writes, “a product of our fathers, grandfathers and all generations that came before”²⁴ or, as Phil Macnaghten and John Urry observe, it is “socially and culturally constructed”²⁵. It may be assumed that the notion of environment, which had to be ‘invented’, so as to replace the hitherto used nature, appeared in consequence of loss of clarity as to what nature is today. Exchanging the notion of nature for environment is an upshot of the advancing degradation and devastation of nature, but also a result of the growing aware-

²¹Ibidem, p. 62.

²²Ibidem, p. 64.

²³Ibidem.

²⁴Ibidem, p. 82.

²⁵P. Macnaghten, J. Urry, *Alternatywne przyrody. Nowe myślenie o przyrodzie i społeczeństwie*, transl. by B. Baran, Warszawa 2005, p. 46.



Fig. 3. London. A small patch of lawn sown with wild flowers, with a sign warning against danger to bees. Photo by Beata Frydryczak

ness of the ensuing threat. “We invoke nature as something which is self-evident at a point when nature itself ceased to be so. It has become unclear what nature is and what we take it to mean; whether what we consider to be nature is, in actual fact, nature; finally, it is unclear what nature we wish to have”²⁶.

Uncertain of the kind of nature we are dealing with today, there is even more doubt with respect to nature in the city and the postulated “city in nature”. As it turns out, the crux lies in the notion of park, which is equally misleading as that of garden which Howard employed. Admittedly, Böhme does not provide a straightforward explanation, but nor does he qualify: the park he refers to has the features of a city park, and therefore it is socially structured and subordinated to urbanistic order. Nevertheless, it allows one to see the city and its nature as a mutually conditioned whole.

²⁶G. Böhme, *Filozofia i estetyka przyrody*, p. 89



Fig. 3. Pripyat'. Photo by Keith Adams. Source: www.wikipedia.org, free image resources

One of the arguments that Böhme employs is the growth of the cities which leads to absorption of (or penetration into) the surrounding landscape, whose features still remain discernible. Another issue he addresses are the existing, absorbed or spontaneously created ecotopes — the domain of concern for ecologists and an area of interest for the urban gardeners or landscape architects. Those sites of wild vegetation, evoking the idea of freely growing, untamed nature, are approached as nature as such, an object of solicitude and interest of the local community demonstrating the diversity of nature which had not yielded to aestheticization. However, the process in which the city and nature permeate into one another as equal entities seems impossible without imposing limitations or degradation of either sphere. However ironic it may sound, a perfect example of harmonious coexistence of nature and the city is found in the Ukrainian city of Pripyat, abandoned over twenty years ago when all inhabitants were evacuated in the wake of the Chernobyl disaster. Yet it is dead only for the humans, from the social viewpoint, as it is alive with the nature developing within: the growing trees and bushes which, governed by

their own “logic” penetrate into the space which previously had been a human domain, the settled birds and elements, which are now the laws of nature. Its non-human life can hardly be denied. Although Pripyat has little to do with the “ecological vision of the city” of which Böhme speaks, it probably represents that vision best.

Nature would always “encroach” upon the urbanised space, shaping it in its own fashion, which is evidenced already in the ancient plans of urban development, where the direction and strength of the winds is taken into account. Another issue, as I remarked previously, is that in the city we are facing not only tamed nature, controlled by the human and subordinated, nature which exist in urban conditions, but there is also nature which exerts a spontaneous impact on the city. This becomes perceptible when it penetrates into the city space as raging elements, over which the human has no control. At that point, the difference between the tamed, controlled nature and its spontaneity, which at times is violently manifested, is expressed in the reawaken fear of its power.

Even if, as Böhme would have it, the idea of the park city harbours a semblance, then this concept still does not eliminate the state of “degraded” nature which the city has absorbed, adapted and subdued. Despite all kinds of attempts, also historical ones, to “bring nature into the city” its status in the city space remains ambiguous.

Beata Frydryczak

KRAJOBRAZ MIEJSKI: OD MIASTA-OGRODU DO MIASTA-PARKU

Streszczenie

Zastanawiając się nad relacją miasta i przyrody, analizuję sposób, w jaki przyroda pojawia się w przestrzeni zurbanizowanej. Można wstępnie założyć, że przyroda w mieście pojawia się w trzech różnych formach. Stanowiąc integralny element dekoracyjny i strukturalny miasta, jawi się jako „uspołeczniona”, podporządkowana strukturze miasta oraz „uprywatniona”, choćby w przydomowych ogrodach. Trzecia forma to żywa, a czasem wręcz żywiołowa przyroda przejawiająca się w postaci zapomnianych nieużytków, ale też warunków klimatycznych i żywiołów.

Te trzy formy konfrontują z koncepcją Gernota Böhme, który przedstawiając historycznie kształtujący się proces przenikania i wnikania przyrody w tkankę miasta, wskazał dwa mechanizmy, które ujął w terminach „sprowadzenia przyrody do miasta”

oraz „przeniesienia miasta w przyrodę”. Odnosząc się do tej propozycji, zastanawiam się, w jaki sposób przyroda istnieje i przejawia się w mieście, w szczególności w kontekście koncepcji parków publicznych i ich gwałtownego rozwoju w wieku XIX. Parki miejskie jako „zielone wyspy”, chociaż wydają się przestrzenią uwolnioną od miasta i jego procesów, są jednak całkowicie podporządkowanym przestrzeni miejskiej surogatem tego, co naturalne w miejscu zamieszkania.

Podobnie w kontekście relacji przyroda–miasto rysuje się opierająca się na idei eugeniki społecznej i higieny życia koncepcja miasta-ogrodu E. Howarda, w której bardziej chodziło o przejrzyste i funkcjonalne miasto aniżeli zbudowanie harmonijnej relacji między człowiekiem zamieszkiującym w przestrzeni miejskiej a przyrodą gwarantującą jego harmonijny rozwój.

Analiza parków miejskich i idei miasta-ogrodu pozwala przejść do kolejnej propozycji Böhmego — idei miasta-parku. Wpisuje się ona w utopijną wizję nowej relacji między miastem a przyrodą, budowanej na bazie idei „rozszerzonej ekologicznej wizji miasta”, w której miasto rozumiane jest jako część przyrody. Chociaż propozycja Böhmego wydaje się rozwiązaniem kompromisowym, to również ona nie spełnia warunków, w których można mówić o przenikaniu się na równych prawach miasta i przyrody. Wydaje się to niemożliwe bez ograniczenia lub degradacji jednej ze sfer.