PARADE SQUARE

Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw

BY BLANCA ABRAMEK

Bachelor of Arts in Architecture and Fine Arts
University of Pennsylvania, 2013

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ABSTRACT

Parade Square in Warsaw is a battleground where different political projects are confronted, without any possibility of a seamless reconciliation. Prior to World War II, the area used to be a dense residential neighborhood. In the post war years, it was reconfigured by the socialist urban design project. It became the site of a monumental skyscraper commissioned by Stalin, called the Palace of Culture and Science. Today, having been used as a parking lot for the past quarter of a century, Parade Square is about to be reconfigured again, this time by the neo-liberal economic forces.

This thesis positions the square as an agonistic space, in which every order is political and based on some form of exclusion. The project seeks to disrupt the prevailing contemporary discourse about the future of Parade Square and to bring to the fore other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated.

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Ana Miljacki, Ph.D.
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Architecture.
To Ana
Thank you for showing me how to define a project and be a commander of the field in which I am operating.

To Brent and Azra
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A huge thank you to those who helped me in the lead-up to the final presentation and on the day of: Ammar, Angeline, Joey, Mack, Ellen, Stephanie, Natalie, Paul and Stefan. Your support meant a lot.

To my parents
Mom- thank you for your strength, perseverance and wisdom. Dad- thank you for your enthusiasm, energy and always dreaming big. Thank you both for always giving me the freedom and support to chase after my interests, even when they took me thousands of miles away from home.

To my brother Alan
Thank you for always calling to check up on me, and forgiving me for never calling you back. I couldn’t ask for a better brother. I am very proud of you.

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Thank you for being my rock and my reality check. I love you so much.

To Joanne
Thank you for your help and kindness, when I needed it the most.
Every order is therefore political and based on some form of exclusion. There are always other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated.

CHANTAL MOUFFE

Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces
INTRODUCTION

Parade Square is a conflicted space. Imposing Soviet sculptures of workers and peasants look out at dainty H&M models, advertising bikinis across the street. Tired travellers wait for a shabby bus, sitting by an enormous speaker's tribune, from which some of the most important political speeches of the previous era were delivered. Amid neglected lawns and makeshift parking lots, small metal plates, embedded in the surface, whisper “This used to be Chmielna Street”, “This used to be Zlota Street”, “This used to be Sienna Street”. A thick line runs through the sidewalk stating solemnly “Ghetto Wall 1943.”

Despite its contradictions, conflicts and anachronisms, Parade Square constitutes the most lucrative piece of real estate in the city. Originally designed for thousands of marching bodies and the waving of banners, the space is now coveted by many developers, businessmen and investors. Neo-liberal economic forces and laissez-faire politics are starting to erode its physical order.

The site of Parade Square has always been a political battleground, shaped by different hegemonic forces. However, despite the historical complexity of the space, the contemporary public discourse around it is largely focused on profit and ownership issues. The current discussion suppresses and tranquilizes the political character of the space. Urban design and architecture proposals for the site show a frenzied desire for “normalization” and alignment with the smooth image of global capitalism. Their singular desire to make busy spaces of consumption, lacks critical reflection and needs to be examined in its historical context.

What is at stake in the discussion about Parade Square within this project, is a new kind of a conversation about the past and the future of the space. One that questions and disrupts the dominant hegemony and brings to the fore other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated. The project, in the form of a film and an exhibition of artifacts, seeks to invite an alternative public discourse, focused on the agonistic nature of the square and the political character of its physical order.
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
THE STORY
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
EIGHTH SISTER

In Three Acts
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Act One

NEW REALITY
A new day rises over the city in ruins. There is smoke and stillness.
Wind sweeps through the collapsed buildings. Silence fills the once bustling spaces.
Act One: NEW REALITY

Slowly, they return...
...looking for their streets, their houses, their past lives.
First paths are carved out from the rubble. First food cart...
... and first flower shop appear.
They want to rebuild the city fast. They have a plan.
DEKRET
z dnia 26 października 1945 r.

o własności i użytkowaniu gruntów na obszarze m. st. Warszawy.

Na podstawie ustawy z dnia 3 stycznia 1945 r. o trybie wydawania dekretów z mocy ustawy (Dz. U. R. P. Nr 1, poz. 1) — Rada Ministrów postanawia, a Prezydium Krajowej Rady Narodowej zatwierdza, co następuje:

Art. 1. W celu umożliwienia racjonalnego przeprowadzenia odbudowy stołówki i dalszej jej rozbudowy zgodnie z potrzebami Narodu, w szczególności zaś szybkiego dysponowania terenami i właściwego ich wykorzystania, wszelkie granity na obszarze m. st. Warszawy przechodzą z dniem wejścia w życie niniejszego dekretu na własność gminy m. st. Warszawy.

Art. 2. Dekret niniejszy stanowi podstawę dla przepisania we właściwych księgach hipotecznych na rzecz gminy m. st. Warszawy tytułów własności gruntów, określonych w art. 1.

Art. 3. Odpowiedzialność gminy m. st. Warszawy za istniejące w dniu wejścia w życie niniejszego dekretu obciążenia hipoteczne gruntów, które przechodzą na jej własność, będzie uregulowana odrębnymi przepisami.

Art. 4. Terminy i tryb obejmowania w posiadanie przez gminę m. st. Warszawy gruntów, określonych w art. 1, ustali w rozporządzeniu Minister Odbudowy w porozumieniu z Ministrem Administracji Publicznej.

Art. 5. Budynki oraz inne przedmioty, znajdujące się na gruntach, przechodzących na własność gminy m. st. Warszawy, pozostają własnością dotychczasowych właścicieli, o ile przepisy szczególne nie stanowią inaczej.

Art. 6. (1) Gmina m. st. Warszawy może wyznaczyć właścicielowi przedmiotów, znajdujący

With one stroke of pen, they nationalize all land and abolish private property.
They say that, the new city must not repeat...
...the errors of the past.
I am my father’s gift to them. I am to guide them into the future.
I am to guard them.
And so I rise, dutifully...
...from the land that once belonged to hundreds of families. It is now everyone’s. Or is it no one’s?
I am lonely at first.
The city that surrounds me is sad and forlorn.
But those in power seem to love me.
They make films about me...
...and put me on front covers of magazines.
They gather at my feet...
...and entertain me with their military parades or hundreds of marching bodies.
I am their muse.
Shrouded in darkness I look towards Moscow, where my seven sisters remain. I wonder if they ever think of me.
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Act Two

BEHIND THE CURTAIN
After my father’s death, the way I look becomes a problem.
My form, my mass, my ornaments come under scrutiny.
I am too heavy, too vulgar.
My overbearing presence reminds them too much of him. I am no longer the poster child of a new reality.

I am a mistake of the past.
But I don't care. I continue to entertain...
...to host and to educate.
Like in the old days, I still act in movies...
...but now I'm cast as the backdrop for the pointless and the absurd.

I can feel that changes are coming
People are more and more disenchanted with the regime.
Fights erupt.
The opposition gets stronger every day.
From up above I see how in Berlin, the wall falls. I tremble- am I next?

But the party just takes out their flag and leaves.
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Act Three

THE AFTERMATH
The tides have shifted. Today I find myself in the center of a shiny, Western-oriented city.
My neighbors from across the street are looking at me suspiciously.

I know I don't fit in...but also, they don't really get me.

They don't understand how a building can be doing so many things at once...

...how it can be so social.
Act Three: THE AFTERMATH

On the street level, I house: three theatres,
a cinema complex,
a huge convention hall,
a nightclub,
a youth center,
a swimming pool and a technology museum.
On the upper floors I have: lecture rooms...
banquet rooms and regular office spaces.
My tower keeps time for the whole city and broadcasts signals for dozens of TV and radio stations.
No wonder my neighbors look at me the way they do...
Act Three: THE AFTERMATH

All they can offer are luxury swimming pools with a view of me.
I look at my reflection in their glass facades and wonder about my future.
Real estate is booming around me...
but the square I preside over continues to be empty. The plans to fill it in with shopping malls and shiny office towers make me cringe.
Is that the only future I can hope for?

Or is there something uncanny about the uselessness of my authoritarian expanse?

Can it re-constitute a new kind of a collective?

Can it develop a new relationship with the city?

Can it ignite new confrontations?
"This is not about destruction. This is not about a cover-up, or a creation of some screens. The idea is not to hide something embarrassing behind a screen, as it is our experience...

The point is to achieve the effect of a conversation..."

---

Oskar Hansen
Warsaw Dream, 2005
Directed by Artur Zmijewski
FIN
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Conversation No. 1

CULTURAL DISTRICT
A few years ago, a group of developers convinced the City Council to reconstruct the urban fabric that existed on my square before the war.
It used to be a bustling neighborhood filled with eclectic 19th century buildings, shops and cafes. Some of which had survived the war.
But it has always been easier for me to imagine there was nothing here before
my construction.
I preferred not to be reminded of all the buildings that had survived the war and were then demolished to make room for my square. Now, there is no escaping. "History sells" the developers said in their private meetings.
The pre-war streets now run through my square again. Buildings simulate their historical counterparts. The Jewish Ghetto that used to run through the neighborhood is back...memorialized.
History is edited and adapted to the contemporary demands...
Just like the Old Town reconstruction addressed the postwar needs of the city.
...turning it into a working class neighborhood.
My square is now a district for young, worldly urban professionals, connected through social media and sophisticated forms of brand loyalty.
They manage their feelings of belonging to all layers of history now simultaneously reactivated here, through selfies, shopping and occasional social gatherings.
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Conversation No. 2

NEW ORCHARDS ESTATE
A few years ago the city plunged into chaos. The political zeal for property ownership led to thousands of regular citizens loosing their homes. A small group of people benefited from the turmoil and consolidated their power.
My square became the battleground of conflicting interests. Plot by plot, the land started falling into private hands.
Soon, I was surrounded by a dozen of towers eying me angrily. My square became a playground of the oligarchs.
My northern side is no longer what it used to be. Two towers have been built where the swimming pool and the Youth Palace used to be. The developers said the old programs in the building were no longer profitable.... They turned the rest of me into a luxury hotel.
Meanwhile, regular citizens were losing their homes every day. 10 000 of them ended up in the streets, homeless.
Demonstrations lasting several weeks wreaked havoc on the city.
A newly elected, left-leaning administration promised to find ways to accommodate the evicted population. They wanted to make a big statement. They pointed to my square saying that the laissez-faire development could not continue.

That it was inhuman.
And so my square became the site of the largest social housing project in decades. It is a new kind of living, navigating the fragmented landscape of my square and providing amenities for the public on the ground floor.
The architects hired by the city say that the apartment layouts are based on different user profiles...
... and that they accommodate different needs.
I like watching kids play in the green spaces. It amuses me to see how happy, engrossed in the moment and oblivious they are.
The adults look more pensive. I see many as they stand by their windows, looking at me and my neighboring towers, trying to understand the reality they have found themselves in.
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
After years of disputes over the future of my square, the city officials decided to keep it public. I breathed a sigh of relief. It is now managed by the Chief City Architect and the State Bureau of Architectural Affairs.
The Bureau gave form to the disorganized, chaotic activities that used to take place in my shadows. The architects equipped my square with proper public amenities.
It became Warsaw’s most spectacular representational green space... or at least that’s how the Bureau talks about it. They named it the Common Grounds.
Now my grounds are covered by a grid of urban huts housing collective grills, small shops, cafes and public restrooms.
The surface is no longer flat, as it used to be in the days of public parades. Today, it is covered by an undulating topography of small hills. These allow every visitor to inscribe their own specific path into the park.
Labor Day athletic tournaments are held in the big sports field area.
And micro commerce continues to flourish in a modern marketplace that is a great improvement upon the architectures of the grey economy.
Further north, many attend summer concerts and festivals in my new outdoor auditorium.
For the younger visitors, there are age appropriate playgrounds, and the Ferris wheel is back to keep me company.
After years of solitude and rejection, my surroundings are now a place, where people want to be. I, on the other hand, may have lost the power to shock. I'm neither a muse nor a mistake of the past... I'm just a tall building.
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
FIN
Discursive surface
of post-socialist
Warsaw
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Discussion

CULTURAL DISTRICT
The layers of history negotiate room for themselves in this simultaneous landscape. It can be seen for example in the park area, where the socialist-era park is hybridized with the pre-war neighborhood and its street layout. Except now the pre-war streets are attenuated and are pedestrian paths.

The Jewish Ghetto wall runs through the Palace and is memorialized as a physical wall in certain moments, whereas in others, where street traffic is a concern it is signified with a line.

This opens a conversation about the signifier and the signified....

Ana Miljacki: Do you want to bring the second table and we will then talk about all the scenarios?

B.A.: Yes.

[B.A. wheels out the first table and wheels in the second table.]

(...)
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Discussion

NEW ORCHARDS ESTATE
B.A. In this scenario, the city is consumed by the chaos of re-privatization. There are riots and a regime change. The new regime builds social housing for the victims of re-privatization. The housing complex navigates the landscape between the towers built on private land and the lots that are in city’s hands. The building becomes a luxury hotel.

[The students in the audience begin to move around the space and examine contents of the exhibition, while listening to the discussion at the critics table in the center.]


(...)  

Mariana Ibanez: How much is your own invention and how much is based on real plans?

B. A.: All three scenarios are rooted in some kind of reality. I’m just choosing which reality and expanding upon it. For example in this case, these are real ownership disputes.

A.M.: Can you explain something about the issue of ownership?

B.A.: Yes. There are four lots on the square that are in private hands today and there are ownership claims submitted to court about several others.

Also, there are plots where there is evidence of prior private ownership but where no claims have been submitted to the court yet...

Florian Idenburg: How does the process work?

B.A.: Let’s say your grandfather owned a lot and you have documentation proving it. You go to court and, if the case is resolved in your favor, you obtain ownership of the land. You can then sell it if you want and make millions.

A.M.: But there are also companies specializing in this...

B.A.: Yes. For example this plot, is owned by a businessman who made a cottage industry out of finding former owners or their relatives, buying up ownership claims from them for very little, winning the ownership disputes in court based on those documents, and then selling or developing the properties for big money.

(...)  

A.M: It is very simple when you have a building that survived a war and you return it to the owner. But it is more complicated when you have a representative building built on nationalized land...
Mark Goulthorpe: It makes me think of the Kaiser's palace in Berlin that's getting rebuilt... where the GDR parliament building used to be but was demolished.

B.A.: The Palace of the Republic... Yes, that was one of the precedents I looked at but it is more like the first scenario I presented. Where a certain version of the past is resurrected and overwrites other versions.

(...)  

[B.A. wheels out the second table and wheels in the third table. Students continue browsing the exhibited materials.]
Discussion

COMMON GROUNDS
B.A.: This is a scenario in which there is a regime change, the square stays in public hands and the city officials decide to turn it into a public amenity.

M.G.: And Bernard Tshumi takes hold of it...

B.A.: Yes, exactly.

M.G.: Do you have a Zaha scheme?

B.A.: No, but there was a proposal by Zaha Hadid to build a tower near Parade Square and it was a giant blob.

A.M.: Do you have that?

B.A.: Yes, there have been a number of proposals for the site. This is one by Thomas Phifer to put a Contemporary Art Museum building. This is the same museum but designed by Christian Kerez. These are Liliium Towers- a proposal by Zaha Hadid... the Palace of Culture and Science is in the back. This is a proposal that the city is pushing for- shopping malls and office towers.

M.G.: Typically, when there is a thesis you have a declarative statement and you would be seeking to prove it or disprove it...

B.A.: Yes, my statement is that every order is political and based on some form of exclusion and that there are always other possibilities that have been repressed and that can be reactivated. This is especially true for a public space like Parade Square, where all these different agendas have been laid out over the years and where the order is extremely political. My project is about questioning the dominant direction that the city council is pushing for, which is about turning the square into a district of shiny office towers, residences and shopping malls.

F.I.: Fun fact. We actually won the temporary museum in this building. They gave it to us and then...

A.M.: They took it away?

F.I.: Well, yes. It was the Ministry of Culture- that's the museum. And then the Mayor doesn't like the Ministry so they sold the building to a Luxembourg developer and then the Ministry of Culture made it a national monument... So imagine the situation...

(...)  

A.M.: On the note of the project, I think it's important to see this as a project and not as a proposal for a project. Otherwise, it's going to devolve into a conversation which is not meaningful for the project.

M.I.: As I said, I think it is extremely interesting because it is not only about the potential
for certain architectures to happen but also about the mechanisms that architectures throughout history contend with.

There were actually two things that I found amusing but very interesting. First, the idea that the narration of the project is done in first person by the building. This building talking suddenly acquires some human characteristics. Second, this idea of simultaneity. The notion how these projects happen. (...)

You know, at the office [Zaha Hadid Architects], when a lot of these projects were coming in, there was this constant question how to operate in the context of the post-communist city and what type of architecture to produce. There was certainly a desire for coming into the new century, so somehow the request was to stay as far as possible from historicism. I think you're putting all these things on the table, which I find quite compelling.

If I can name just one reference, I was just looking it up. (...) In Budapest they have this park called Memory Park or Memorial Park. After the communist regime fell, they collected all the statues that symbolized figures of communism. So you had Lenin pointing his finger at Stalin, Stalin putting his foot towards Engels... I think it's ridiculous, right? Somehow your building was proposing to be in that kind of a dialogue of the past, the present and the future.

Timothy Hyde: The question that I have, that you haven't put forward an answer to, is how or in what way is your building surviving in each of these scenarios. Because in all three, your building is surviving, even though there are clear pressures in each case. Presumably its resistance is different in each case. In the history one, there is enough sympathy to the historical context, or the building is old enough that it gets used.... I think you need to give an argument for the resistance of the building in each case, because otherwise it's inexplicable that your protagonist would survive. You mentioned that in the developer mode that the swimming pool is erased, that there is some modification there. But I think that in order to understand these collectively as a project you need to show that there are three different kinds of architectural resistance.

B.A.: I think it's a discussion that came up in the mid-review as well and I have been thinking about it since. In the history scenario for example, the building stays in its location but there are lines on the square that indicate the pre-war city grid. They would be lines on the ground, similar to Lars Von Trier lines indicating spaces in the movie Dogville.

T.H.: Let me phrase it differently then. I mean, I buy the explanation of more detail,
but just to put it more bluntly- why wouldn't we rip the building down in this? We're trying to recreate the historical fabric in the ghetto. Wouldn't this, in moral terms, trump the Stalinist building? If history is going to come, you can't just put lines of the pavement. We need to destroy the entire thing and restore the ghetto.

A.M.: It is an interesting question... But it goes against the genre of the first person narrative that your film is embracing. It's very hard for you to lose the protagonist. Unless it became an angel or something...

M.I.: Or not. Can we deal with the fact that our protagonist dies and we need to find a new protagonist?

B.A.: I think it's an interesting question- in this scenario when all layers of history are on simultaneously- who negotiates these conflicts of histories? What history is more important to express.

T.H.: Right, so you decided... Why didn’t you tear the building down?

B.A.: Because I think it's the most prominent symbol of the Soviet era of history.

*Byron Roberts:* To push on your approach on the approach to the landmark, I think it's great that you concretized all of the existing tactics. Chantal Mouffe would be very proud of you that you made it into an agonistic discussion about what you should do with the site. The way that you presented all that has been great. But I think it's interesting that you managed to discredit all the existing tactics but not show us what could happen. They are all maintaining an idea of a monument as an isolated object. It is true that your towers start to interrupt that, but there is still this delicate touch. There are so many examples of this thing playing out... There are so many possibilities for challenging the protagonist, but also challenging how we think of preservation and monumentality. That preserve something doesn't mean keeping a mote around it... You can actually radically re-purpose it, change the way we perceive it, alter its physical form.

(…)

F.I.: Maybe in the developer scheme it's a perfect excuse for that. In the historic scheme it has historic significance. They all have a different cloak...

A.M.: It does that... I'm not going to speak on Blanca's behalf, but I certainly feel nostalgic for what this building contains, what it might symbolize. And I don't mean the tyranny part of this narrative, but the collective part.

*See p. 333 Chapter: Modifications*
(...) Andrew Holder: In a sense, it is the expression of choice between the three scenarios that bothers me. And the substitution of one form of public for another, which I want to return to in just a second. But first, let me echo Mariana’s appreciation of the design of the story, prior to the presentation of the three scenarios. I thought it was totally ingenious. You have this building as the first person narrator, who is both interested but impassive and preserves a certain ironic detachment in observing its surroundings. Even the way you miked your voice, that was close miked and almost affectless... in a conversation in a kind of a documentary mode. But then the presentation of the extensive field of choices, among which you clearly prefer the third, bothers me. There is a certain nostalgia for certain forms of public mobilization and certain forms of forming publics, that belong to a particular political regime, that can’t be replaced by fragmentary consumption in huts. They do a lot of stuff. They are obliterating all of the alleys. Engagement is happening on the scale of fifty square feet as opposed to ten thousand people simultaneously. So there is a kind of a show game where we assume that one form of filling the square is equivalent to another or is good enough.

A.M.: This is where the specificity of the socialist collective has to be parsed out. The mass that goes for the parade is not necessarily collective. There are certain experiences of the collective in it. But the kind of a collective that is in “healthy body, healthy spirit” collective, that is feeling that this is theirs, that this entire lot is not private, they can be anywhere in it and take care of it. That’s a very different understanding of the collective that the one that’s marching with the tanks, shot from above.

M.I.: But you have thing about both simultaneously. I was thinking of Saaskia Sassen understanding of public space in the context of the Arab Spring and how all of these spaces that are not designed for parades, suddenly become the site of parades. If this space is truly public, it can fulfill that dual function. And as much as I love the hilly side, it seems almost like a strategy to divide and control. So just because of the post-Soviet context in which you’re placing it, it can definitely be read that way. Attached to that, I think Timothy’s question is super important. How does the building survive? I was hoping that the answer was not adaptive reuse.

M.G.: I don’t know if you know the work of Fred Rubin- he was an artist who went to East Berlin and he would find ten thousand fluorescent light bulbs and thousand television sets and buy them for ten dollars. He started using them to exhibit them as artwork in West Berlin. When the wall came
PRE-WAR

THE WAR
POST-WAR

TODAY

WHAT HAVE BEEN REPRESSED AND THAT CAN BE REALIZED
down he got bolder and bolder. When they were to demolish the Soviet embassy or something, he went in and plundered stuff from it. He began redeploying it in underground nightclubs. Finally he wrote to the Ministry and said he was interested in the People’s Palace. And the People’s Palace... they spent thirty percent of the national budget on that building. And they had all sorts of crazy stuff in there. They would have awards for good workers. Honecker would lead the dancing... And they gave him the key to the whole building and said “take what you want.” So he took everything he could detach from the People’s Palace and used them to appeal for the building to be saved, which is an extraordinary responsibility. But the ideology changed and they were going to eradicate that and put up the Schloss of the Keiser.

(...)  

So his take on it was quite good. He was going to reuse this material to try to make a case for maintaining it. So that’s one strategy, which is active. He was actually taking this stuff and redeploying it. What I would welcome in a sense is examples like that.

B.A.: This may be a digression, but I was looking at different examples of ways that buildings can react to history and organized these typologies of operations: inserting, hovering, wrapping, weaving etc.... That has been on my mind earlier in the project. I think that maybe a new generation of the project is thinking about how the building survives.

F.I.: In this case the discussion is more about the ground than the building. Is this true that you actually support option “C” the most?

[the timer goes off signaling the end of the review]

B.A.: Well, I support... time-out.

A.M.: We were talking about how do you produce a project that you can bring back to Warsaw and put in the context there, in a gallery or something, and actually get more conversations about the real future of this site. To get people to think about it in a way that’s at least a little bit different from what they’ve been doing so far.

(...)  

Drawings to the right:
1. Cultural District
2. New Orchards Estate
Discursive surface of post-socialist
Warsaw
THE DOCUMENTS
CULTURAL DISTRICT
# CULTURAL DISTRICT

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<td>ARCHITECT:</td>
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1. PALACE OF CULTURE AND SCIENCE
   A. Dramatic Theatre
   B. Studio Theatre
   C. Puppet Theatre
   D. Youth Palace
   E. Swimming Pool
   F. Congress Hall
   G. Mirage Nightclub
   H. Technology Museum
   I. Cinema Complex

2. SUBWAY ENTRANCE — LINE 1
3. SUBWAY ENTRANCE — LINE 2
4. PRE-WAR STREET LAYOUT
5. CENTRAL TRAIN STATION
6. SHOPPING MALL
7. FINANCIAL CENTER
8. ENTRANCES TO RAILWAY STATION — commuter rail below
9. SHOPPING PASSAGE

ARCHITECT:
DOM ARCHITEKCI
U. Mokotowskiej 39, Warszawa

DEVELOPMENT:
INTERES DEVELOPMENT
Pl. Piłsudskiego 5, Warszawa

CLIENT:
CITY OF WARSAW
Pl. Bankowy 3, Warszawa

DATE: 22/12/2020
SHEET: 1/5
parking lot [now]

subway stop [now]

Jewish Ghetto wall [1940-42]

main train station [1939-1945]
- subway stop [now]

- pre-war neighborhood

- main train station [until 1939]

- post-war socialist landscape

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<tr>
<th>TITLE:</th>
<th>PROJECT CONCEPT DIAGRAM</th>
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NOTES:

1. RESIDENTIAL — reconstruction of pre-war housing

2. HOUSING LINES — pre-war houses indicated with lines on the ground

3. INVISIBLE COURTYARDS — situated in pre-war courtyard locations equipped with garden furniture

4. GHETTO WALL — indicated with a brick line through the streets

5. GHETTO WALL — rebuilt as a physical wall

6. FOOD MARKET & RESTAURANTS — former train station

7. PLANT MARKET — former train station

8. SUBWAY STOP — existing

9. SMALL SHOPS — former train station

10. STORES — former train station

11. PARKING — existing parking remains in operation

12. PARK — current park continues through the pre-war streets, pedestrian zone

13. SPEAKER'S TRIBUNE — existing, formerly used for political rallies

14. ENTRANCE TO SUBWAY LINE 2 — under the building

* World War II era train station buildings

ARCHITECT:
DOM ARCHITEKCI
U. Młodzieżowego 39, Warszawa

DEVELOPMENT:
INTERES DEVELOPMENT
Pl. Pilsudskiego 3, Warszawa

CLIENT:
CITY OF WARSAW
Pl. Bankowy 3, Warszawa

DATE: 22/12/2020
SHEET: 3/5
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| ARCHITECT: | DOM ARCHITEKCI  
Ul. Mokotowska 39, Warsaw |
| --- | --- |
| DEVELOPMENT: | INTERES DEVELOPMENT  
Pl. Pilsudska 5, Warsaw |
| CLIENT: | CITY OF WARSAW  
Pl. Bankowy 3, Warsaw |
| DATE: | SHEET: |
| 22/12/2020 | 5/5 |

1 BEDROOM 573 FT²
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
COMMON GROUNDS
<table>
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<th>PROJECT:</th>
<th>NEW ORCHARDS</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>SITE:</td>
<td>PARADE SQ., WARSAW, PL</td>
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<td>Ul. Sztucha 12, Warszawa</td>
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<td>Ul. Pulawska 15, Warszawa</td>
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</table>
housing hovering over land
stuck in limbo

housing resting on City's land
skyscrapers built on private land

social housing for victims of re-privatization

LAND OWNERSHIP:

- case closed - lot in City's hands
- case closed - lot in private hands
- case ongoing - lot falls into private hands
- case not opened, documented ownership - lot falls into private hands
- case not opened, no claims yet - uncertain future

ARCHITECT:
ATLAS ARCHITEKCI
ul. Sosnowa 12, Warszawa

DEVELOPMENT:
RADIAN DEVELOPMENT
ul. Polanicka 15, Warszawa

CLIENT:
MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSTRUCTION
pl. Bankowy 3, Warszawa

DATE: 22/12/2020
SHEET: 2/5
NEW ORCHARDS FIRST FLOOR PLAN

NOTES:

1. PLAYGROUNDS
   recommended for bike storage and rentals
2. DAYCARE
3. KINDERGARTEN
4. JOB TRAINING CENTER
5. AUDITORIUM
6. CHILDREN'S LIBRARY
7. SHOPPING MALL
8. CAR PARKING
9. MAKESHIFT BAZAAR
10. PARKING
11. LUXURY OFFICE AND RESIDENTIAL TOWERS
12. BUS STOP

ARCHITECT:
ATLAS ARCHITEKCI
U. Sudek 12, Warszawa

DEVELOPMENT:
RADIAN DEVELOPMENT
U. Polowicki 5, Warszawa

CLIENT:
MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONSTRUCTION
Pl. Rembielny 3, Warszawa

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<td>PROJECT REFERENCES</td>
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**Sady Zoliborskie Neighborhood in Warsaw Designed by Halina Skibniewska**

**Slowackiego Estate in Lublin by Oskar Hansen**

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</table>
PARADE SQUARE

Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
NEW ORCHARDS ESTATE
| PROJECT: COMMON GROUNDS |
| PROJECT NO.: 877456 |
| SITE: PARADE SQ., WARSAW, PL |
| DEVELOPMENT: STATE BUREAU OF ARCHITECTURAL AFFAIRS A/L. Jerozolimskie 47, Warszawa |
| ARCHITECT: CHIEF CITY ARCHITECT Ul. Marszalkowska 49, Warszawa |
| CLIENT: WARSAW CITY COUNCIL Pl. Zbawiciela 5, Warszawa |
| DATE: 22/12/2020 | NO. SHEETS: 7 |

ARCHITECT SIGNATURE: [Signature]

209
observation wheel
trampolines
chess tables
car access
roof
*for passage from railway station
open air auditorium

sports pavilion with lockers

sports fields: basketball, volleyball, tennis, soccer

* ice rink in the winter

grill huts

market

topography & vegetation

paths

underground passage

subway
TITLE:
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

NOTES:
1. OCCUPIABLE MOUND
   — recommended for bike storage and rentals
2. SPORTS AREA
   — pro-wax houses indicated with lines on the ground
3. MARKETPLACE
4. GRILL HUT
5. OUTDOOR AUDITORIUM
6. FERRIS WHEEL
7. ROOFED PATH

ARCHITECT:
CHIEF CITY ARCHITECT
UL Marszalkowska 19, Warszawa

DEVELOPMENT:
STATE BUREAU OF ARCHITECTURAL AFFAIRS
AL. Jerzy Kukuczka 47, Warszawa

CLIENT:
WARSAW CITY COUNCIL
Pl. Zbawiciela 5, Warszawa

DATE: SHEET:
22/12/2020 2/7

ARCHITECT SIGNATURE:
TOWARDS THE PALACE OF YOUTH

ARCHITECT:
CHIEF CITY ARCHITECT
U. Marnalkowska 49, Warszawa

DEVELOPMENT:
STATE BUREAU OF ARCHITECTURAL AFFAIRS
AL. Jeroxiemskit 47, Warszawa

CLIENT:
WARSAW CITY COUNCIL
PL. Zamojskie 5, Warszawa

DATE: 22/12/2020
SHEET: 4/7

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TITLE: SECTION THROUGH BIKE MOUND

NOTES:

ARCHITECT:
CHIEF CITY ARCHITECT
UL. Marszalkowska 49, Warszawa

DEVELOPMENT:
STATE BUREAU OF ARCHITECTURAL AFFAIRS
AL. Jeruzalska 47, Warszawa

CLIENT:
WARSAW CITY COUNCIL
PL. Zamojskiego 5, Warszawa

DATE: 22/12/2020

ARCHITECT SIGNATURE:
PUBLIC BATHROOMS.
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
THE RESEARCH
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
FOUR MOMENTS
POLITICAL BATTLEGROUND

Parade Square is an agonistic space—a political battleground shaped by different hegemonic forces: Nazism, Socialism and now Capitalism. Prior to World War II, the area used to be a dense residential neighborhood. During the war it was divided by the wall of the Jewish Ghetto.

In the post war years, it was reconfigured by the socialist urban design project. Houses that survived the war were demolished and a new massive voice was created in the middle of the city. It became Parade Square—the site of a monumental skyscraper commissioned by Stalin, called the Palace of Culture and Science. Today, having been used as a parking lot for the past quarter of a century, Parade Square is about to be reconfigured again, this time by the neo-liberal economic forces.

It is a surface on which the desire of “normalization” and “Westernization” is projected. There is a hidden desire to tranquilize the political, layered nature of the site. Proposals for the re-development of the square include a Contemporary Art Museum, office towers, residential towers and shopping malls. Well known architects like Thomas Phifer, Christian Kerez, Zaha Hadid and most recently, Norman Foster, have submitted proposals for buildings on the square or across the street from it.

The area constitutes the most lucrative real estate in Warsaw— is on the intersection of two subway lines, in close proximity to the main railway station, shopping and entertainment districts. It is important, however, to see as part of a larger historical continuum, over the course of which the physical order on the site was dictated by politics.

To the left: Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin at Yalta Conference, Feb. 1945; Air Ride World war II, Russian Troops reach Berlin; News of Hitler’s death; The political divide.
Contemporary city with the overlay of pre-war streets on parade square.

Chmielna St. - former street.
SOCIALIST MOMENT (1945-1989)
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Research

TRANSITION
Parade Square and the problems associated with its planning can be seen as emblematic of the messy transitional period in Poland. In 1989, the original function of the vast space, designed for the waving of banners and thousands of marching bodies, became obsolete. In 1990 the last Communist Party assembly was held in the Congress Hall of the Palace of Culture and Science. The square was the surface on which the first signs of anarchist capitalism emerged in the early 90s, in the form of a makeshift street bazaar composed of hundreds of metal booths.

In the years that followed, the city officials showed lukewarm attempts at giving order to the space. The bazaar was formalized into a permanent market housed by a metal hangar. The surface of the square became a parking lot, a bus stop and an amusement park.

The first competition for the square was announced in 1991. Since then, more than a dozen of concepts for the site have been proposed through various channels. None of them were realized. The ongoing conflicts over land ownership are making the re-shaping of the space impossible. The laissez-faire economic climate and significant lacks in regulation have led to parts of the square falling into private hands. A quarter of a century after the first architectural competition was organized, the square continues to be dominated by cars, buses and temporary booths.

To the right: Makeshift bazaar on Parade Square in the early 90s.
Above: Winter view from the Palace of Culture and Science onto Parade Square, used as car and bus parking. The speaker’s tribune can be seen in the center of the image.

To the left: Women waiting for a bus in front of what was the speaker’s tribune, used for political speeches during parades and rallies. This is where the leader of the Communist Party Władysław Gomułka announced the period of “Polish Thaw” in 1956. Now the structure is used as a bus stop.
LAND OWNERSHIP

With one stroke of pen, on the 25th of October 1945, the Communist Party took away private ownership of land from all Varsovians. Those who defend the Decree from 1945 say that without it the city couldn’t have been rebuilt fast. It is a fair argument for the central part of Warsaw, which was razed to the ground and in many cases filled with German mines and dangerous ruins. Trying to obtain the land through traditional means would have taken years since many owners died or left the city.

It is hard, however, to justify the nationalization of land on the right side of the river or in neighborhoods, such as Zoliborz or Ochota, which were destroyed by Germans to a lesser degree than central Warsaw. Those areas did not need rebuilding on a massive scale. Individual homes required to be repaired but no major infrastructural works were needed. It seems that there was no direct need for their nationalization other than the ideology.

The blanket process of land nationalization from 1945 shows the totalizing ambition of the Office for Rebuilding of the Capital—the arm of the party responsible for urban reconstruction. The Land Nationalization Decree did not arrive to Warsaw on tanks— it was conceived of by the politicians, planners and lawyers working in the Office.

Today, Poland is the only country on the post-communist map of Europe in which re-privatization has not been achieved. However, there have been several attempts.

On the right: A map drawn based on information provided in the “White Book or Reprivatization” published by Warsaw City Council.

AL. JEROZOLIMSKIE

ownership case closed

ownership case ongoing
A recent close call came in 2008 but the bill had to be paused, allegedly for economic reasons. It would have cost the country 20 billion PLN, which the national budget was not able to provide.

According to the City Council website (um.warszawa.pl) The area covered by the land nationalization decree from 1945 constitutes 27.4% of the area of today’s Warsaw. Former owners and their legal inheritors submitted 17,000 property claims in 1947-1949 alone, most of which got a negative response in the 50s and 60s. Unfulfilled claims were then transferred to the inheritors and a part of them was sold to third parties. From 1990, there were over 7,000 applications, 4,000 property returns and Warsaw spent 1.13 billion zlotys on reparations.

Currently there are 3,800 ownership claim disputes in the City Hall, 30 new ones coming in every month. (29 of them are for Parade Square alone.) In many cases, the courts order the city to return the plots of land to the owners but the city is not following through and is accumulating fines.

In the meantime a number of businessman and lawyers are enjoying the lack of regulation and trading in ownership claims. There are several offices specializing in finding former owners, buying claims from them and fighting for them in courts. Earlier this year, for example, a mysterious businessman and a true wizard of re-privatization, Maciej Marcinkowski bought two parcels on Parade Square for 15.4 millions PLN through acquiring ownership claims. He is planning to build a 220m skyscraper there.

Last year, through a highly controversial process the city “returned” the plot of land just behind the Palace of Culture and Science, one with a pre-war address of Chmielna 70. Today it’s a piece of a lawn and a sidewalk near the Palace’s Congress Hall. It is supposed to become a 245m skyscraper with offices, apartments and a hotel. It would be the tallest building in Poland. Given the location in Warsaw’s growing CDB and the proximity to the shopping and entertainment areas as well as the railway station, the building would most likely be luxury tower.

Last August (08/2016), the President of Poland Andrzej Duda signed what is called “The Small Reprivatization Reform” which protects public use buildings such as schools and hospitals from being re-privatized. It also aims to limit the illegal acquisition of property by “curators” - individuals representing owners in their absence.

On the right: A collage showing the private individuals who secured ownership of lots on Parade Square.
EMILI PLATER
Area: 900 m² & 1500 m²
Value: unknown

MACIEJ MARCINKOWSKI
Businessman

ZIELNA 26
Area: 1300 m²
Value: 50 mln PLN
Re-privatized: 2008

TADEUSZ KOSS
Inheritor

CHMIELNA 70
Area: 1458 m²
Value: 160 mln PLN

ROBERT NOWACZYK
Lawyer

MARZENA KRUK
Lawyer and longtime employee of the Ministry of Justice
Robert Nowaczyk's sister

GRZEGORZ MAJEWSKI
Director of the Regional Attorney Council

JANUSZ PIECYK
Partner in Robert Nowaczyk's law firm
Above: A cover from the winter 2016/17 Issue of the "New Citizen" magazine. The title says "Reprivatization - A system of organized crime" and depicts a cake in the shape of the Palace of Culture and Science being sliced by public officials.

On the right: A map showing the boroughs of Warsaw included in the land nationalization decree of 1945. Red markers are current ownership disputes as reported by the activist group "The City is Ours" (Miasto jest Nasze).
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Research

ESSAY
THE STREET, THE SQUARE, THE PALACE

In *The possibility of an absolute architecture* Pier Vittorio Aureli explains the difference between the Latin term *urbs* and the Greek word *polis*. He argues that that *urbs* addressed the physical aspect of the city, such as an agglomeration of houses, without any political qualification. *Polis* on the other hand, was created out of a pre-existing, latent community bound by politics. Aureli calls *polis* the space between individuals or groups when they coexist. For him, *polis* is an incarnation of politics.1

The philosopher observes that the rise of the capitalist economy in the Western city brought about a new public sphere that was no longer bound by the civic glue of *polis*, or by *civitas*2 of a Roman town, but comprised of many interests of private owners. Aureli points out that capitalism absorbed the traditional values that once bound city-dwellers and continues to favor development based solely on the mastery of the urbanization (from Latin *urbs*).

It is interesting to consider Aureli’s observation in light of the reconstruction of Warsaw after World War II, which was carried out under a communist regime. The scope of the reconstruction project was hardly limited to re-urbanization or rebuilding of agglomerations of houses. It was also largely about shaping a new collective consciousness based on socialist ideals.

Taking as an example the controversial 1950s skyscraper- Palace of Culture and Science (PKiN) and the square it presides over, this paper argues that the ambition of the project was a re-insertion of civic and political values into the built fabric of the city.

Today, we may criticize the political values incarnated in the architecture of PKiN, but it is nevertheless fascinating to decipher how its design speaks of a certain socio-political mission, perhaps absent in the hands of Modernists working in the same era. The following paper takes on this challenge and sets out to analyze three aspects of the design: the street, the square and the building itself. After a brief introduction to the political context after the war, the paper examines the physical characteristics of the spaces and reflects on the design intent behind the formal choices.

THE CONTEXT

Near the end of World War II, as the Axis powers were weakening on all fronts, the Red Army pushed out* the Nazi German forces from the Polish territory. Warsaw, the vibrant pre-war city of 1.3 million, was razed to the ground from Nazi bombings and virtually empty.

During the Yalta conference in February 1945 Stalin convinced Churchill and Roosevelt to sanction the formation of a provisional government awaiting free elections. It doesn’t come as a surprise that, given the Red Army’s presence on Polish territory, the provisional government was communist-controlled. It ignored the democratic government-in-exile based in London. Through a rigged referendum of 1946 and manipulated elections of 1947 as well as exterminations of opposition, the communist party assumed its power.3

---


2. The Ancient Greek concept of *polis* (city-state) developed was the ancestor of city, state, and citizenship and persisted, with diminishing influence, well into the Roman era, when the equivalent Latin word emerged- *civitas*, also meaning “citizenship”. (Interestingly, until the 1990s the official term for the entering of the Red Army into the Polish Territory after the war was “liberation” (wyzwolenie) but it was later changed to “stepping in” or “encroachment” (wkroczenie) in the post-Soviet period.)

At first, the Moscow-backed communist government was unpopular in Poland and internal guerrilla fighting against it continued for several years. Around 1949 guerrilla resistance subsided but the government still lacked popular support. In order to win the minds and the souls of the ordinary citizens it used the program of reconstruction of the capital to draw up political legitimacy. Warsaw, a ghost city full of rubble and Nazi mines, became a massive public project to demonstrate the vitality of the new socialist regime.

The rebuilding of the city quickly became a backdrop for powerful propaganda images. Urban spectacles inaugurating rebuilt neighborhoods had a synecdochal function. The relatively limited additions to the city fabric, sometimes no more than a few blocks were “like islands in a sea of empty plots and dangerous ruins.” They did, however, when disseminated in official images, films and radio broadcasts, allegorically speak of constructing the new socialist reality.

Through a carefully constructed depiction in the media, the reconstruction of Warsaw was to create a new civic and political bond between the citizens and the regime, and also between the individuals themselves. In a sense, the process was just as much about the brick and mortar physical space, as about the elusive political and civic bond it sought to create. It wasn’t just about the mastery of the urbanization (urbs), as Aurelli calls it, but maybe more importantly about the mastery of the souls.

The most powerful synecdoche of that era was, of course, the construction of the Palace of Culture and Science (PKiN). The process received an unprecedented amount of media attention. It was in every magazine and in every radio broadcast. Children would learn poems about it in school and the construction site would receive hundreds of thousands of visitors coming on organized tours. Photographs contemporary with the works show an elevated public viewing gallery* erected beside the vast construction site, from which Warsaw’s citizens could gaze at it and admire the miraculous pace of Soviet construction.

Archival footage from the Polish Film Chronicle carefully documents every step of the construction process and describes it in highly emotionally charged terms. An episode entitled Building the Palace of Friendship7, for example, makes an unambiguous link between warfare, freedom and construction.

“Among the Soviet construction workers there are many of those who nine years ago fought in army uniforms for the liberation of our capital, today they fight for its beauty and grandeur...Warsaw is growing.”

or

“The hands that brought freedom are today building the most wonderful edifice of the new Warsaw...”

The Soviet domination was described as freedom and was being marketed as friendship between the two nations. The Palace, an official gift from Stalin, was supposed to embody the new balance of power. A famous poster from 1949 shows Stalin with Boleslaw Bierut, the Polish president, and the silhouette of the future Palace of Culture and Science, for which designs were underway, in the background.


5. Ibid.

*The viewing platform also can be seen in an archival footage from the Polish Film Chronicle https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twAzoW3TJ04


7. Building the Palace of Friendship. Polish Film Chronicle https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8m2D7_qU71Y&list=PLv1o7Ly0Z7Gyr7TGoM101sOBvD -Xs accessed May 13, 2016.
THE STREET

Situating PKiN on Marszalkowska Street was of great political importance. A propaganda volume from 1955 describes Marszalkowska Street as “the main artery of the capitalist city of contrasts,” which is “an ugly street of cosmopolitan kitch” but also the birthplace of a new, revolutionary consciousness of the working class. The volume presents the street as the former frontier of class struggle, where the proletariat was exploited by the bourgeoisie, and thus posits it as an irresistible location for new and “just” socialist city planning.

Modernist-inspired plans for post war Warsaw advocated for a separation of functions into zones and removing residential working class uses from the inner city, but the communist regime vehemently opposed the idea. In the party’s eyes, lucrative inner city land, historically only accessible to the bourgeoisie, had to be reclaimed by the working class.

Because of its pre-war commercial importance and its symbolic meaning, Marszalkowska became an important axis of post-war reconstruction. Similarly to the generous avenues from Haussman’s Paris, the street was widened to enable military parades and marches. What differentiates it from the Parisian boulevards is that, instead of displacing the poor to accommodate the wealthy, Marszalkowska was lined up with high quality and low-rent housing for the working class.

Similarly to East Berlin’s Stalinalle, it became what the Soviets called a magistrale, a term invented out of the reluctance to using the bourgeois term boulevard. As Stalinalle extended all the way to the showcase public square of Alexanderplatz, Marszalkowska continued and framed Parade Square and the Palace of Culture and Science.

Allegedly, Aldo Rossi called Stalinalle “Europe’s last great street” and in the book Landscapes of Communism Owen Hatherley extends that claim to Marszalkowska Street. Hatherley argues that Jane Jacobs wouldn’t support the design of Marszalkowska Street entirely: it was too overwhelming and majestic to be a truly traditional street, but she would most likely acknowledge that the project reclaimed the idea of the street when the discourse was largely absent in Modernism.

Marszalkowska was thought of as the exemplary street of the new regime, the place a traveler or a visitor would be directed to upon arrival in Warsaw. Its wide and triumphant scale, however, was hard to get used to for the average resident, accustomed either to crowded tenement houses with narrow winding streets of the pre-war city or to the peace and quiet of the countryside.

The imposingly wide section of Marszalkowska Street was designed specifically for the act of passing through in a parade, not passing across as an individual. The street that reportedly was the birthplace of a revolutionary consciousness of the working class in Warsaw, stopped being a stage for public protest and revolution and became a stage for the spectacle of order, the Via Triumphalis of the socialist regime. The demonstration became the parade.
THE SQUARE

Parade Square, with its Palace of Culture and Science, is framed by four streets: Marszalkowska, Swietokrzyska, Aleje Jerozolimskie and Emilii Plater. The square was conceived as Warsaw’s main ceremonial assembly space but prior to the war, the area used to be a robust residential neighborhood. The construction of the square entailed the razing of 400 houses, which had survived the Nazi bombings and the displacement of 4000 people at a time of great housing shortage. Because the land was nationalized overnight by the 1949 presidential decree, the construction moved at a miraculous pace. The square and the Palace were completed in just three years.

The 150m by 350m arena was designed as the premier venue for communist parades. The intent is illustrated by the presence of a ceremonial speaker’s tribune in front of the entry to the Palace. Party officials used the tribune for public speeches during main national holidays such as Labour Day (Swieto Pracy) or National Festival of Polish Revival.* Participation in communist parades and festivities was a mandatory activity well into 1980s and was supposed to enable the integration of citizens with the new political regime. For those in power, having a controlled and symbolic environment to frame the parades was as essential as running water.

Control and symbolism were thus two essential characteristics that Lev Rudnev, the Soviet architect commissioned by Stalin, had to design for while working on the Palace and the Square. Rob Krier, a well-known Luxembourgian urban designer, observed that the arrangement of a square naturally affords a high degree of control of the inner space and gives it a symbolic value. It’s not a coincidence that the Parade Square was supposed to be flanked by a wall of monumental social-realist buildings on its Eastern side of Marszalkowska Street.

Interestingly, the Square as we know it today, with its chilling authoritarian expanse and a singular gargantuan tower, was not the first or the only design considered for the site by the communist regime. The two winning proposals of the 1948 free competition were radically elegant and modernist. The prize winning project by Ihnatowicz and Romanski for an office and housing development featured a collection of high-rise buildings reminiscent of the UN headquarters in New York, on which work was then in progress. The second winning entry, (Boguslawski and Lowinski) was based on the same decentralized principle but the buildings took the form of cylinders.

To the detriment of the modernists, the results of the competition were overwritten just a year later in 1949, when a stage-managed conference of party affiliated architects ordered that all architecture and urban design had to follow a script written in the Soviet Union. As a result, architecture became subordinate to a six year economic plan. All architects were organized into big state planning offices and private practice was outlawed. Socialist Realism became the yardstick.

A propaganda volume from the era features images of the modernist proposals from 1948 accompanied by unambiguous captions:

"Warsaw’s urbanism of 1948 is stuck in old mistakes. Soulless “city” instead of a vibrant downtown. Cosmopolitan buildings-boxes, houses as..."

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17. The construction for the complex nicknamed Eastern Wall (Sciana Wschodnia) did not start until 1962, when Social Realism was already denounced as a style. The buildings that were erected were designed with the modernist aesthetic.


19. Ibid. p.127.
machines for living in, arranged in a grid.”

“No, we will not be building Marszalkowska like that!”

While the modernist proposals favored a pluralist form and decentralization, Stalin’s conception for the site was all about a singular, centralized gesture. As Paperny writes in Architecture in the Age of Stalin, the increased emphasis and valorization of the center, was supposed to oppose the despised cosmopolitanism, ‘foreignness’ and horizontality of the constructivist avant-garde. The centralized form can also be read as an expression of the Soviet political agenda of the era. Alexi Tarkanov argues in Stalinist Architecture, that after Stalin concentrated power in his hands he directed attention towards art and architecture in order to turn them into tools for an even more effective accomplishment of his political aims. The Palace, as well as other administrative buildings in Moscow, was a powerful way of asserting that the Stalinist ideology was in the center of all political and cultural activity.

This intent can clearly be read in the arrangement of Parade Square. The grand, collectivizing space was arranged in such a way that a spectator looking at an official speaking from the tribune, was facing only the massive form of the Palace of Culture and Science, dedicated to Joseph Stalin at the time. Nothing else in the city was comparable to its scale. The statement of power was mind-numbingly clear. The gargantuan bulk of the Palace was in its element only when thousands of bodies gathered at its feet or marched across its square. On a regular day the square was filled by an eerie, chilling emptiness.

THE PALACE

Ironically, to this day the Palace of Culture and Science remains the tallest building in the country. It is Warsaw’s most unrelenting and difficult piece of physical heritage, but also its most recognizable architectural symbol. It can be seen from almost any point in the city which makes it an inescapable part of daily existence.

The architecture of PKiN is a bizarre mixture of the neo-classical tradition, Baroque influences and lush ornamentation. In its centralized form, the Palace, built by a Soviet architect Lev Vladimirovich Rudnev, is similar to the Seven Sisters skyscrapers (Stalinski Vysotki) in Moscow. It is not, in any way, typical of Poland or of Eastern Europe. As Andres Aman, Professor of the History and Theory of Art at Umeå University, Sweden, “It is unique of its kind outside the Soviet Union, and it is an offshoot of the seven high-rise buildings constructed in Moscow, both technically and aesthetically speaking.” The Palace is close in size and massing to the Moscow State University, also designed by Rudnev and completed in 1952. It spreads itself on the generous Parade Square, and it soars vertically upward in a series of setbacks culminated in a spire. It has five impressive neo-classical “arms” which reach out for the land and house theatres, cinemas and the Congress Hall. The expansive, cascading form is not found in Western skyscrapers. It is a unique aspect of the Social Realist skyscraper typology. According to Aman, the form aimed to demonstrate that the cost of land did not control the expression of a Soviet skyscraper, the way it did in the west, because all land was public.

The official party rhetoric claimed that the Western skyscrapers reflected the chaos and
Stalin and the Polish president Boleslaw Bierut. Text reads: 'Soviet-Polish Friendship is peace, independence and a happy tomorrow of our homeland.' A sketch of the future The Palace of Culture and Science in the background.

Speaker's tribune. Palace of Culture and Science towering in the back. An eagle (without a crown) - a symbol of communist Poland. The crown was returned to the emblem in 1990s.

1966 celebrations of a national holiday of July 22. The Secretary of the Polish People's party, Władysław Gomułka, is receiving celebratory kisses.
Mandatory communist parades for Labour Day, in front of the Palace and marching through Marszałkowska Street. Every profession was required to wear an outfit indicating their occupation.

A procession of gymnasts going through Marszałkowska Street.

Young boys dressed up as astronauts in celebration of Gagarin driving through Marszałkowska Street.

"Long live peace between nations!" banner. Crowds marching from Parade Square.
Prize winning competition entry from 1948 by Ihnatowicz and Romanski for an office and housing development featuring a collection of high-rise buildings.
The second winning entry by Boguslawski and Lowinski architects.
internal contradictions of the capitalist economy. It highlighted that American skyscrapers were piling up one near another in a state of disorder and grew up chaotically. The Soviet skyscraper, on the other hand, was carefully considered and harmonious in its composition. It was believed that the Moscow-style central planning of the streets and squares allowed each high-rise enough space to create what the Soviets called the “affecting unity of silhouette and image.”

However, despite the best efforts directed at differentiating itself from the Western skyscraper, such as the addition of the spire and the horizontal expansion on the land, the Soviet skyscraper remained very much endowed to the American skyscraper of the early 20th century. Similarly to Manhattan’s Woolworth building from 1913, the Palace of Culture and Science is a steel frame building clad in terracotta, marble and adorned with historicizing ornamentation. The scale of the two buildings is similar, although Woolworth is thirteen floors taller, and they are both characterized by a stepped profile.

What differentiates the two buildings is what hides inside. While Woolworth was the “cathedral of commerce”, the Palace of Culture and Science was the cathedral of entertainment and education for the masses. A 1955 article from the main Polish architecture journal Architektura proudly lists all the amenities that the Palace was about to Warsaw: a theatre with 750 seats, two cinemas with 450 seats each, a concert hall with 460 seats, lecture hall with 750 seats, puppet theatre with 250 seats, youth theatre with 400 seats, Museum of Industry and Progress as well as a central gym, a swimming pool with a jumping tower and science labs, conference centers, medium sized lecture halls, administrative spaces, restaurants, cafes and buffets. According to the article the Palace would be able to entertain 12,000 visitors at a time. It was a true city within a city.

The building not only catered to the working class with its various programs and spaces but also elevated it as a symbol. The architecture of PKiN is a fine example of architecture para-lante- architecture that speaks of its own function or identity. The scale and the neo-classical character of the palace creates a sense of power and importance and the façade is populated with huge social realist sculptures showing various kinds of workers, next to sculptural allegories of high arts: literature, music and theatre. By presenting the statues of workers next to the personifications of forms of entertainment, traditionally reserved to the members of the upper class, the building draws and equality sign between fine arts and manual labor.

There is also a set of sculptures evoking the idea of a worldwide proletarian revolution. A statue of a young Soviet man holding a book with words Marx, Engels, Lenin inscribed on the cover is accompanied by monumentalized inhabitants of various parts of the world: China, Russia, Africa, Middle East.

I the same way in which cathedrals used to communicate to the illiterate through the allegorical stories rendered into stained glass windows, the Palace of Culture and Science tells her story to the masses through its massive social realist sculptures. Their design follows the script from Moscow: The Soviet architecture journal Arhitektura SSSR described the mission of Soviet architecture clearly:

“In its search for an appropriate style, Soviet architecture must strive for realistic criteria- for clarity and precision in its images, which must be easily comprehensible by masses.”
Moscow University designed by Lev Rudnev, the architect who also designed the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. The building is one of Moscow's famous "Seven Sisters."

The Woolworth Building from 1913 designed by Cass Gilbert.

Hotel Ukraine in Moscow. One of "Seven Sisters."

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow. One of "Seven Sisters."

Palace of Culture and Science by Lev Rudnev in Warsaw.
The communist party chose a monumental, historicizing style over modernism hoping that it would be more popular with the public and therefore more successful in legitimizing their power.

The message of the sculptures is painfully clear, yet their formal language is quite confusing. The allegories of fine arts are Social Realist versions of classical style muses. The workers are posed similarly to Russian Orthodox saints holding their attributes. Several of the statues are situated in naves evoking classical sculptures and their clothes are more reminiscent of classical gowns than of workers' clothes. In a few instances they hold a roll of what looks like parchment paper.

It seems that by opposing abstraction and modernist ideals of the contemporary Western world, the architects of the Palace grafted the future of proletarian internationalism on the internationalism of the classical world. At the same time, the Palace gave Warsaw the grandeur the city was yearning for after the war. With its lush ornamentation and opulent finishes, it was a glimmer of luxury in the grim post-war reality. The sculptures of young muscular workers seem to have been designed to say: “Come with us and we will bring you glory and prosperity.”

In a sense, the Palace of Culture and Science was a total work of art; where painting, sculpture and architecture were working towards the same goal, where everything was designed from the large urban gesture, through the sculpture on the façade, to the logo on a restaurant napkin. The architect had to consider everything: the lighting, the tiles in the swimming pool, the seats in the theatre, the finishes in the foyer, the elevators, the mechanical systems, the informational signs and the kind of tea cups the buffets used. The architect was in charge of every little detail.

One can say that The Palace of Culture and Science was a project that mobilized “the full intelligence of architecture and its related fields” of the era, which starts to sound similar to Rem Koolhaas’ explanation of Bigness. It is possible to see the Palace of Culture and Science as an embodiment of Koolhas’ ideas of Bigness, dressed up in an ideological cloak of Soviet socialism. Able to receive 12,000 visitors, the Palace was indeed a city within a city. Its size alone embodied a strong ideological program. Its parts were autonomous but not fragmented. The building wasn’t part of Warsaw’s urban tissue— it coexisted at best. Its subtext was and still is: “fuck context.”


All these are characteristics from Koolhas’ theory or Bigness. There are, however, also several differences. The Palace was never able to dissociate itself from past artistic and ideological movements—it was filled with their idiosyncrasies and their conflicts. It used them to convey a political message. Also, it never became what Koolhas calls a vehicle of modernization. In fact, its form and construction method were denounced as obsolete only a few years after the opening. The architecture was anachronistic at the time it was built.

Despite the political changes, the building continued to be used and valued for its civic and cultural spaces. No one denounced its swimming pool or the puppet theatre. No one stopped using its main restaurant or going to its cinemas. Stalin’s name was taken off from the front entrance but life continued.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Research

PAST APPROACHES
Koncepcja Zabudowy Pałacu Kultury i Nauki w Warszawie

Projekt: Jerzy Zamoyski
Data konc. 30.06.2000
Lektualnym: 10.10.2010
(škala 1:1000)
PAST APPROACHES

It is worthwhile to study past concepts for the redesign of Parade Square. They offer valuable snapshots of the changing attitudes towards the plaza and the Palace. For example, the winning proposal of the 1991 urban design competition, a circular boulevard concept, was understood by some as an attempt to cover the “symbol of Soviet domination.” To others, it was a way to glorify it, by putting “a halo” around it.

The discussion about the decision of the competition jury turned into a discussion about tearing the Palace down completely. The urge to cover it or destroy it, was associated with the strong need to manifest a new, free-market identity and to mark and end to the socialist era. The discussion about the current urban design plan has been centered on profit and land ownership. Many commentators advocate for a high rise approach, by claiming that only a certain density of development would allow desired profits, given the high price of land in the area.

The proposed concepts show a desperate desire to normalize the area, to make it busy with commercial bustle. However, given the uncertain ownership status of many parcels on the square, the discussion remains on a conceptual level. In the meantime, a group of activists has been trying to revive the square through pop-up events, independently of the official plans and strategies.

To the right: A concept for an addition to the Palace of Culture and Science by an architect Jerzy Zagner, 2004 (updated in 2010).
Past Approaches: **URBAN DESIGN**

CROWN

Architects: Skopinski and Bialyszew
Year: 1992 & 1999

The concept proposed medium height urban fabric on the periphery of the square, which would correspond to the existing, and a circular boulevard of skyscrapers surrounding the Palace.

GRID

Architect: Michal Borowski
Year: 2003

The scheme proposed a grid-like, medium height urban fabric on the side of Al. Jerozolimskie/Central Train Station, while preserving the Park on the Swietokrzyska St. side.
DENSIFICATION

Architect: Warsaw Development Forum
Year: 2008

The scheme was about mixing high-rise development on the Emili Platter St. side with low-rise public buildings, such as museums, on the Marszalkowska side. It also includes a shopping mall and a small square centrally located in front of the Palace.

TWISTING TOWERS

Architects: City Planning and Development Council
Year: 2010

It is an evolution of the earlier scheme mixing high-rise fabric with medium and low-rise fabrics.
Past Approaches: PUBLIC SPACE

SUNKEN PLAZA

Architect: Jerzy Soltan
Year: 1993

The caption on the sketch by Jerzy Soltan calls for digging down on the square, providing pools and slides, showing trains connecting the Pacific with the Atlantic and erecting a few edifices of the modern times powered by solar batteries.

FORUM

Architects: Various
Year: 2010

A few ideas for the square from the Development Council and the Development Forum show an idea about a square, within Parade Square. One surrounded by buildings on all sides.
SQUARE WITHIN A SQUARE

Architect: Piotr Szczesniak (Bygg Architecture)
Year: 2016
Competition: Futuwawa

Tadeusz Kantor Square was a recent submission to the architectural ideas platform Futuwawa. It is an urban design concept for a park situated between the proposed museum buildings.

PRESERVED AS IS

Historical Preservation Proposal
Year: 2016

Chief Landmark conservator Barbara Jezierska proposed including the square on the Landmarks List. The Palace of Culture and Science is already on it.
Past Approaches: PROGRAM

URBAN BEACH

Pop Up Intervention
Year: 2016

The intervention, organized by the City Council and the Mayor, provided a recreational spot on the Surface of the square. 1000 tons of sand were brought and visitors were able to enjoy volleyball and tanning.

FLOWER MARKET

Pop Up Intervention
Year: 2015

The pop-up garden was an event organized by the city council for the 60th anniversary of the Palace of Culture and Science. On the inauguration day of the event, visitors were invited to plant flowers together.
OUTDOOR DINNERS

Pop Up Intervention by Studio Theatre
Year: 2015

The event was organized by Studio Theatre located in one of the wings of the Palace of Culture and Science. A ticket included a dinner on a 25 meter table and live music.

OUTDOOR CONCERTS

Pop Up Intervention by Studio Theatre
Year: 2015

The intervention was a concert during "Dinner in the garden: Summer Night Dream" event on Parade Square.
Past Approaches: ARCHITECTURE

POST-MODERN SKYSCRAPERS

Artist: unknown (SARP Competition)
Year: 1992

One of the competition entries from 1993 suggested that the Palace should be surrounded by equally imposing post-modern skyscrapers.

TWISTING TOWERS

Architects: various
Year: 2010

The most recent proposals show surrounding towers as soaring, slick, all glass structures indicating a desire to break from the heavy historicizing form of the Palace.
CONTRASTING FORM

Architect: Oskar Hansen
Year: 2005

The artist Oskar Hansen said that architects should enter into a conversation with the Palace and not try to hide it with towers. He suggested that the building is part of the heritage and designers must learn how to engage it with contrasting forms.

MUSEUM OF SOCIALISM

Architect: Czeslaw Bielecki
Year: 2012

The proposal asked for the creation of an underground Socialism Museum under the surface of Parade Square. It would include a giant decapitated statue of Stalin.
Past Approaches: ARCHITECTURE

CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM

Architect: Christian Kerez
Year: 2010

The scheme proposed a building with linear vaults letting light into the exhibition spaces. It was criticized for not being "sculptural enough" to engage the Palace outside. The Swiss said that the Palace is already a sculpture and there is no need to amplify that.

CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUM

Architect: Thomas Phifer
Year: 2015

The proposal by Thomas Phifer echos the North Carolina Museum of Art in its sober, minimalistic form. It breaks the volume into two buildings the Museum and the Theatre.
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
OTHER SQUARES
E.U. MEMBER COUNTRIES

FORMER SOVIET UNION TERRITORY

FORMER USSR-ALIGNED TERRITORIES
(BULGARIA, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, EAST GERMANY, HUNGARY, POLAND, ROMANIA)

FORMER NON-ALIGNED TERRITORIES
(YUGOSLAVIA ALIGNED UNTIL 1948, ALBANIA ALIGNED UNTIL 1960)
OTHER SQUARES

Travelling through the cities of the former Easter Block, it is impossible to ignore their showpiece squares. Built or significantly reconfigured by the socialist regimes in the post World War II years, they are a product of extreme centralization of political power.

They are formally composed, organized along the classical principle of the axis, with all their elements strategically placed. Nothing is left to whimsy or chance. Their function is to instill a respect for power by playing the game of scale, distance and framing.

The squares are designed for military parades and mass rallies. They are not capitalist spaces, yet today they find themselves governed by capitalist political and economic forces. This section takes a look at how they have changed in the last quarter of a century.

Some of them, like Potsdamer Platz and Alexanderplatz in East Berlin sparked the imagination of great Western architects and urban planners already in the early 90s. Others, laid in limbo for decades, like the Republik Square in Ljubljana or became the sites or major protests, like the Independence Square in Kiev. In many ways, we can read the political forces of each nation being played out on these public spaces.
ALEXANDERPLATZ
BERLIN, GERMANY

In Across the Plaza Owen Hatherlay claims that Alexanderplatz is the archetypal Soviet-style square in Europe. After the reunification of Germany, the Kollhoff plan aimed at returning the square to the "normal" city fabric. This was done by filling it with buildings and adding additional streets running through it. Hatherlay says it is now a "Neo-Prussian box, depressingly redolent of the Third Reich's middlebrow stripped classicism."
The much mythologized Potsdamer Platz was a vibrant part of the pre-war Berlin. After 1961 it became part of the Wall's death strip. Caught between the Russian Sector and the American Sector, the square saw most of its original buildings demolished. After the reunification, the city administration sold it to four multinational investors, who failed to engineer what the hoped to be the new center of Berlin at the crossroads of the eastern and western districts.  


2.IBID.P.35
INDEPENDENCE SQUARE
SOFIA, BULGARIA

The Square is flanked by an architectural ensemble of three Socialist Classicist buildings designed and built in the 1950s with the intention to turn the square into the city’s new representative centre. The square once featured a statue of Vladimir Lenin, which was later removed and replaced by the one of St. Sophia in 2000.11 Over the past few years, the square has been in reorganized, for example the ruins of the ancient Thracian and Roman city of Serdica became exposed to become a tourist attraction.12

12. Ibid.
THEATER SQUARE
PLOVDIV, BULGARIA

This small post-socialist Bulgarian square was recently the subject of an architectural competition won by a Portuguese design office FORA. The ideas competition was to "outline the future of the Central Square in Plovdiv—an emblematic location where most of the significant historical periods of the city overlap." The site has remains from the Roman era as well as Soviet style buildings.

INDEPENDENCE SQUARE
KIEV, UKRAINE

Since the start of Ukraine's independence movement, the square has been the traditional place for political rallies such as the 1989 student protests, the 2001 "Ukraine without Kuchma", the 2004 Orange Revolution, and the 2013-14 Euromaidan. Before the 2014 revolution, the square was the traditional site of City's main celebrations. Since 2014 the public events were banned from the square and relocated. In 2002 a shopping mall opened underneath the surface of the square, it was advertised as "Kyiv's first modern shopping center."
In September 2014 Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, toppled its landmark statue of Lenin located in the heart of the city's main square. Forbes magazine reports that the so-called 'Fall of Lenin' – the Ukrainian movement of toppling statues of the Soviet-era totalitarian leader - began in Kyiv in 2013 when Euro-Maidan protesters took down the statue of Lenin near the Bessarabska district.4

Ljubljana's square has been operating as a car park for many years until recently it was converted into an open space, owned and managed by the Swiss company that owned and operated the car park. There are two monuments occupying the square, both sculpted by Drago Tsar. There are also two tall office buildings, tallest in Slovenia according to Hatherlay, one of which is called Iskra after Lenin's first newspaper.

9. Ibid.
CONSTITUTION SQUARE
WARSAW, POLAND

The Square was a main ceremonial assembly space, part of Marszalkowska St in Warsaw. It is a wide symmetrical plaza named in celebration of the 1952 constitution of the Polish People’s Republic. It was designed as the premier place for communist ceremonies. As Martyna Obarska writes, it was equipped with special underground sound system, which didn’t have to be installed and de-installed every time there was a public event. Today the square is undergoing an exciting renaissance—what Owen Hatherley calls “hipster urbanism.”

RED SQUARE
MOSCOW, RUSSIA
Red Square's motto seems to be "Restoration by means of demolition". The Kazan Chapel was destroyed during Stalin's era, only to be rebuilt in the 90s. More recently, the Kremlin secretly demolished five of its 19th century buildings. The ornate neo-classical buildings at 5 Red Square were part of a courtyard next to St. Basil's cathedral. According to the Guardian, they were knocked down in the middle of the night in 2007 (rubble taken off in army trucks) in order to build a luxury hotel and exclusive apartments.13
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
Research

SEVEN SISTERS
Above: Map of the Seven Sisters: 1 is Moscow State University; 5 (Palace of the Soviets) and 6 (the eighth skyscraper) were never built.
MOSCOW STATE UNIVERSITY

1949-1953
240m/36 floors

The building was designed by Lev Rudnev, the same architect who designed the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw. The building is said to have been constructed in part by several thousand gulag inmates, some of which were housed on the 24th and 25th floors to reduce the cost of transportation and the number of guards required. To this day, the 182 meter building with a 57 meter spire is the tallest educational building in Europe. Lateral towers are lower than the central one and contain dormitories. The edifice looks over to the river and connects to it with a central axial boulevard.
HOTEL UKRAINE

1953-1957
206m/34 floors

The hotel is the second tallest building out of the original seven sisters located in Moscow. It was commissioned by Joseph Stalin and designed by Arkady Mordvinov and Vyacheslav Oltarzhevsky. In 2005, the hotel was acquired by billionaire property investor God Nisanov for £59 million during an auction*. In 2007 the hotel started a 3 year renovation and opened its doors again on April 28th 2010 *. In 2009, the owners, God Nisanov and Zarakh Iliev, signed a contract with the Rezidor Hotel Group to operate the hotel as the Radisson Royal Hotel, Moscow. It offers 505 bedrooms and 38 apartments.
KOTELNICHESKAYA EMBANKMENT

1938-1940, 1948-1952
176m/26 floors

The building was designed by Dmitry Chechulin, Chief Architect of Moscow at the time, and Andrei Rostkovsky. It was originally designed as luxury apartments for the elites but by the end of World War II it was converted to multi-family, communal apartments. The building was conceived as a city within a city: featuring post office, grocery store, dry cleaner, a bakery and even a movie theater. Similarly to the Moscow State University Building, the construction was carried out by prisoners, some of whom resided in the newly-built apartments during the construction period. Today, it is hard to determine the exact number of apartments because current tenants tend to join several apartments in one and rework the original floor plans of the building.
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1948-1953
172m/27 floors

The building was designed by V.G. Gelfreih and A.B. Minkus. It was originally drafted without the spire which was later requested by Stalin. Today, 200 rooms and offices inside the building cover an area of approximately 65,000 square meters. There are 18 express elevators. The building continues its original function of housing the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
KUDRINSKAYA SQUARE BUILDING

1948-1954
156m/24 floors

The building was designed by Mikhail Posokhin and Ashot Mndoyants. Its apartments were originally intended for the political elite. The four corners were designed to hold “food palaces” that would be open to all. However, upon the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, this 22-storied building fell into disrepair. Today they are inhabited by wealthy and stylish Muscovites. Parts of the building are being repaired and hold stores and restaurants that strive to re-create the building’s former glory.
HOTEL LENINGRADSKAYA

1949-1954
136m / 17 floors

The hotel was originally designed to be the finest luxury hotel in Moscow. In 2008 the hotel joined the Hilton Hotels chain and completed a multimillion-dollar restoration and renovation. Today the hotel includes a restaurant, bar, lounge, spa and beauty salon, fitness center with swimming pool, bureau de change, gift shop, meeting rooms, grand ballroom, and business center.*

RED GATE SQUARE BUILDING

1949-1953
138m /24 floors

The smallest of the Seven Sisters, the building used to house the Soviet Ministry of Heavy Industries. Today it houses offices of Transstroy, a corporation which is the successor to the Ministry of Transport Construction of USSR. In addition, its right wing houses one of the two vestibules of the Metro station Krasniye Vorota as well as a jewelry and grocery store; a children's daycare center is located in the left wing.
The building, which was supposed to be the administrative center of the communist party and a congress hall, was never built. The construction started in 1937, on the former site of the Church of Christ the Savior.* But the construction was halted in 1941, when Germany invaded Russia, breaking the Ribbentrop-Molotov non-aggression pact. The steel frame of the building was disassembled in 1942. Under Nikita Khrushchev, the foundations of the building were transformed into the world’s largest open air swimming pool, named Moskva Pool.

*After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the church was rebuilt on the site during 1995–2000.
ZERYADYE BUILDING

unbuilt
former site of Rossiya hotel, planned park

The Zeryadye Building was supposed to be a social realist skyscraper housing administrative functions but the plan fell through. In 1967, the plot became the site of Rossiya hotel, the largest hotel in the world until 1990 when Excalibur Hotel was erected in Las Vegas. In 2006 Rossiya hotel was demolished to make room for an entertainment and shopping district designed by Norman Foster but the plans fell through once more. In 2013 the site became the object of a landscape architecture competition for a park complex, which was won by Diller Scofidio Renfro.

* competition entries at http://www.archdaily.com/tag/zaryadye-park
Scale comparison between PKiN and the Moscow seven Stalinist high-rises.
Source: skyscrapercity.com
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw

PARADE SQUARE
Research

TIMELINE
1940s

Churchill, Stalin, Roosevelt meet in Crimea.
YALTA CONFERENCE

1944

WARSAW UPRISING
City in ruins.

1945

Atomic bombs dropped on Japan. Japan surrenders six days later.
HIROSHIMA & NAGASAKI

1946

Communist forces testing the waters. "The results were forged and the referendum failed to meet democratic standards."
REFERENDUM IN POLAND

THE ROYAL CASTLE COMPLETELY DESTROYED
Rigged elections bring communists to power.

**ELECTIONS IN POLAND**

"Architects and builders are faced with a great challenge, namely to create a series of high-rise buildings which should be, in terms of size, technology and architecture, a new form of construction, seen for the first time in our country. (...) These new buildings should not therefore be copies of the multi storied structures already familiar abroad."

USSR calls on architects to design high rises.

**HIGH-RISE RESOLUTION IN USSR**

Construction of the expansive worker's town begins near Krakow.

**NOWA HUTA RISES**

1947 1948 1949

**ARCHITECTURE COMPETITION**

FOR THE SITE

Modernism knocks on Warsaw's doors.

Images of the two winning entries of the 1948 competition. A year later the results were canceled.

**SOCIAL REALISM = YARDSTICK**

Architecture has to follow USSR's ideals.

The famous poster from 1949 shows Stalin with Boleslaw Bierut, the Polish president, and the silhouette of the future Palace of Culture and Science, for which designs were underway, in the background.
Gregory Malenkov takes power in the USSR.

STALIN DIES

Two days after Stalin's death Polish Government passes a bill to dedicate the Palace of Culture and Science to the leader. The square around it becomes Stalin Square.

DEDICATION

CONSTRUCTION STARTS
The Palace of Culture and Science designed by Lev Rudnev breaks ground.

THE ONE AND THE ONLY
The party Polish communist party issues a mandates that the Palace of Culture and Science has to be the only building standing on the space surrounding it.
Nikita Khrushev takes power in the USSR. Khrushchev's Thaw and de-Stalinization, Socialist Realism denounced.

KHUSHEW IN POWER

1955
INAUGURATION
Opening of the Palace coordinated with the Fifth World Youth Festival

1956
HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION
Soviet tanks enter Budapest.

1957

1958

1959

Gomulka takes over.

KANAL
Film by A. Wajda.

ASHES AND DIAMONDS
Film by A. Wajda.

REMOVAL
The sign dedicating the Palace of Culture and Science to Stalin is removed. The trace of it is still visible. Stalin Square is renamed as Paradise Square.
1960s


Film by A. Wajda. INNOCENT SORCERERS

Modemism begins in Warsaw. EASTERN WALL BREAKS GROUND

LEONID BREZHNEV takes power in the USSR.

BERLIN WALL ERECTED

PUBLIC PARADES ON MARSZALKOWSKA STREET CONTINUE
“They thought the show was so awful, so decadent, that they said this would never happen in Moscow.”
-- Mick Jagger.

FIRST SECRETARY OF THE POLISH UNITED WORKERS' PARTY RECEIVES HOLIDAY KISSES

APRIL 13TH 1967
THE ROLLING STONES IN THE PALACE OF CULTURE AND SCIENCE


MAY '68 REVOLTS IN PARIS
MODERNIST HOUSING ENTERS WARSAW
The Palace appears in a film by T. Konwicki, **HOW FAR FROM HERE, HOW CLOSE**

Construction starts.

**CENTRAL RAILWAY STATION IN WARSAW**

- 1970s

**ROYAL CASTLE OF WARSAW**
Reconstruction starts.

**1970** **1971** **1972** **1973** **1974**

**SUPERJEDNOSTKA- “POLISH UNITE D’HABITATION” COMPLETED IN KATOWICE**
It is the largest apartment building in Poland. Today, it has the status of a neighborhood.
Official opening
CENTRAL RAILWAY STATION

Massive construction process starts.


RECONSTRUCTION CONTINUES
The Royal Castle raises from the ashes.

URSYNOW
Massive construction process starts.

MAN OF MARBLE
Film by A. Wajda.

CENTENNIAL WINTER IN WARSAW
1980s

Film by A. Wajda.
MAN OF IRON

DIRECTED BY
ANDRZEJ
with
JERZY KUBRZ

FOOD SHORTAGES & LINES


LECH WALESA
Photographed right before leaving for work.

MARSHALL LAW IN POLAND
Troops and tanks everywhere.
For the first time in Poland-
DEPECHE MODE

PARTY BLOCKADE
STUDENT REVOLTS IN WARSAW


CHERNOBYL DISASTER

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS
**FREE MARKET ENTERS THE SITE**
The flag of the communist party (Polish United Workers Party*) is carried out of the Congress Hall in the Palace of Culture and Science. Simultaneously, the first casino is opened underneath it. Small merchants inundate the square with metal booths.

**1990s**

|------|------|------|------|------|

**1990**

**DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS**
First free democratic elections in Poland held, the first completely free national election of any sort since 1928.

**1991**

**CULTURAL PROGRAMS MOVE OUT**
The rent become too high in the building so many educational programs (a science library, Polish Academy of Science and university spaces) need to move out. Coca-Cola moves in.

**1992**

**FIRST COMPETITION TO REDESIGN THE SITE**
300 proposals submitted
The main requirements for entries are: to integrate the space around the palace of Culture and Science with the surrounding city and to break up the dominance of the Palace of Culture and Science and the monotony of the spaces around it. Architects Bielyszew & Skopinski win.

1992 winning entry: the idea of a circular boulevard.
MUSEUM OF COMMUNISM
An idea emerges to build a Museum of Communism next to the Palace.

THE CITY BEGINS RETURNING LAND
After 1996, the city begins returning the once nationalized plots of land to their former owners. The lack of an official bill guiding the process makes it piecemeal and chaotic.

TEMPORARY STRUCTURES
City officials attempt to offer a more organized and ordered space for private business. On the Southwest side of the square a big metal, hangar style, marketplace is constructed. Another one was constructed on the North side. These were the only investments made on site for a while.

RE-THINKING THE 1991 PLAN
Warsaw City Council starts working on another plan for the site together with a group of British consultants and architects who won the 1991 competition Bielyzew & Skopinski.

SOCLAND FOUNDATION
Architect Czeslaw Bielecki establishes an organization Fundacja Soeland, which gains support from Andrzej Wajda, Lech Walesa, Vaclav Havel and many Polish intellectuals and authors.
2003 MASTERPLAN
Draft master plan presented by a 13 person team from City Planning and Development Strategy led by Jolanta Urbanowska. It includes a Museum of Contemporary Art and a Musical Theatre or Philharmonics. (image on the left)

2000s

THE MILLENNIUM CLOCK
The tower of the Palace of Culture and Science has a new accessory.

2000 2001 2002 2003 2004

MUSEUM OF COMMUNISM
The idea of a Museum of Communism returns. Czesław Bielecki proposes an exhibition space for Museum of Communism under the common plaza.

PROPOSAL REJECTED
The proposal prepared by Bielszews & Skopinski is completed and submitted after numerous revisions. City Council rejects it and stops the collaboration. 1.5 million PLN are spent on proposals up to date. Work is started anew.

NEW BEGINNING
The new Chief City Architect – Michal Borowski accelerates work on a new concept for Parade Square. The idea is to do a masterplan for the area and architectural competitions for individual buildings to speed up the process.

No one considers ownership claims on the parcels that constitute Parade Sq.
MUSEUM AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE
The minister of culture Waldemar Dabrowski and vice-president of Warsaw sign an agreement to create a Museum of Contemporary Art on the intersection of Marszalkowska and Swietokrzyska.

LANDMARKED!
Palace of Culture and Science with its surrounding area is declared a historical landmark and is thus protected by preservation laws. The mandate to include the Palace in the register of historical landmarks does not however specify if "surrounding area" includes Parade Square.

SCANDAL
First competition for the design of the Contemporary Art Museum.
It resulted in a scandal and cancellation. Polish laws on public works disqualified a lot of well-known architecture firms ex. Zaha Hadid, Peter Eisenman, Dominique Perrault.

LAND OWNERSHIP
March 2008, Tadeusz Koss is the first person to reclaim his plot of land under Parade Square. It's 1 300 m square near Marszalkowska and Swietokrzyska. Inheritors of land from past owners are trying to reclaim their land.

UPDATED TERMS
Second competition announced on updated terms.
The competition brief states that "the Contemporary Art Museum should be a formal and semantic counterweight to the Palace of Culture and Science and that its form should be recognizable worldwide and that it should become the new symbol of Warsaw."

KEREZ WINS.
Some criticize the project for not being formal and expressive enough. Many hope that a more expressive building could bring the Bilbao Effect to Warsaw.

NEW MAYOR, NEW VISION
Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz becomes the president of Warsaw and declares that the re-design of Parade Square and PKiN's surroundings is one of her main ambitions. She's in favor of high-rise architecture on the site.

COMING FULL CIRCLE
The city council of Warsaw renewed a collaboration with Bielszew and Skopinski who continue to propose a circular boulevard with high-rise buildings.
INSTITUTE OF NATIONAL REMEMBRANCE

Discussion to move the Institute of National Remembrance and its archives into the Palace of Culture and Science.

2010s

LAW SUIT

After many modifications and disputes, the city breaks the contract with Christian Kerez and sues him in Polish court.
WILD REPRIVATIZATION IN WARSAW

Discussion to move the Institute of National Remembrance and its archives into the Palace of Culture and Science.

MAYOR UNDER FIRE
Many accuse Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz for not doing enough to stop the wild re-

A NEW (NEW) BEGINNING
The Museum's Council prepares a new plan of action.
After two failed attempts in 2014 the Museum of Contemporary Art has a new fiscal and legal situation and a new architect. The idea of an architectural competition was abandoned and Thomas Phifer was selected through a process of negotiations. The museum owns the land and has a plan for financing the construction.

THOMAS PHIFER'S DESIGN
The architect shares visualizations.
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw
THE APPENDIX
Discursive surface of post-socialist Warsaw

PARADE SQUARE
MODIFICATIONS
INSERTIONS
SAN TELMO MUSEUM

Architect: Nieto Sobejano Architects  
Location: San Sebastian, Spain  
Project Year: 2011

With its rear wall pushed into the edge of the hillside, the new two-storey block stretches out at a right-angle to the San Telmo Museum. A staircase ascends across the block, allowing visitors to climb over the roof and onto the landscape. Moss is expected to grow on the perforated aluminium skin, visually merging it with the landscape.

JOAN OLIVER LIBRARY

Architect: RCR Arquitectes  
Location: Barcelona, Spain  
Project Year: 2007

The library is elegantly inserted into a courtyard of Barcelona’s gridded Eixample neighborhood. Along with 49 others, the courtyard was recovered through the initiative Pro Eixample and the library was designed to activate the interior pocket and make it a destination for the public.
MORITZBURG MUSEUM

Architect: Nieto Sobejano Architects  
Location: Halle, Germany  
Project Year: 2008

Nieto Sobejano Arquitectos's design for enlargement is based on a single and clear architectural idea. It involves a new roof, conceived as a large folded platform, which rises and breaks to allow natural light to enter, and from which the new exhibition areas hang.

REICHSTAG DOME

Architect: Norman Foster  
Location: Berlin, Germany  
Project Year: 1999

The transformation of the Reichstag is rooted in four related issues: the Bundestag's significance as a democratic forum, an understanding of history, a commitment to accessibility and a vigorous environmental agenda. The cupola is now an established Berlin landmark. Symbolic of rebirth, it also drives the building's natural lighting and ventilation strategies.
CULTURE BUNKER
Architect: Index Architekten
Location: Frankfurt, Germany
Project Year: 2005

Index architects added a light-weight woodent structure to a bunker facility from the 1940s. The leaking roof was calling for a pricy renovation or a demolition. Index Architekten provided the alternative: A light timber construction has replaced the old, run-down roof structure. It houses arts studios and artist spaces.

SHARP CENTER FOR DESIGN
Architect: Alsop Architects
Location: Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Project Year: 2004

The elevated “table top” extension to the Ontario College of Art and Design, with its striking black and white pixilated skin and 12 multi-colored legs, stands 26 meters above the mixed Victorian and modern streetscape. Raising the building above the ground created a new outdoor public space, Butterfield Park, and also improved pedestrian circulation in the area.
RUCKSACK HOUSE

Architect: Stefan Eberstadt- Urban Drift Productions
Location: Leipzig, Germany
Project Year: 2011

Perched between art and architecture, form and function, the Rucksack House is a walk-in sculpture with its own spatial quality. A hovering illuminated space that looks like a cross between temporary scaffolding and minimal sculpture. As mobile as a rucksack, this mini-house is intended to be an additional room that can be suspended from the façade of any residential building.

MARSEILLE HISTORY MUSEUM

Architect: Carta Associés
Location: Marseille, France
Project Year: 2013

The Marseille History Museum is placed on an archaeological site to the rear of the Vieux-Port de Marseille which is a proof of the city's Greek origins dating from 600 BC. In 1983 the museum was integrated in the garden level under the shopping center in 1983. Carta renovated the project and enlarged it in 2013.
LE FRESNOY NATIONAL STUDIO FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

Architect: Bernard Tschumi Architect
Location: Le Fresnoy, France
Project Year: 1997

The site holds buildings from a 1920s leisure complex. Although the existing structures could have been demolished to make way for new construction, they contained extraordinary spaces whose large dimensions exceeded what the limited project budget could supply. The aim was to keep the old and insert the new.

SANTA CATERINA MARKET

Architect: EMBT Architects
Location: Barcelona, Spain
Project Year: 2005

The Santa Caterina Market is Barcelona's oldest market, built in 1848. Nearly the entire market was recently renovated by Enric Miralles and Benedetta Tagliabue. The very expressive arc roof, mosaic tiled designed by artist Toni Comella, displays vivid colors and figures that represent vegetables and fruit.
GEMINI RESIDENCES

Architect: MVRDV & IJW Arkitekter
Location: Copenhagen, Denmark
Project Year: 2005

Two former silos on Copenhagen's waterfront are transformed into exciting new residences. In converting the old twin Seed Silos on Copenhagen's waterfront into residential towers the architects placed the circulation in the core of the concrete structures and, "clipped" the apartment to the exterior of the silos.

WRAPPED REICHSTAG

Artist: Christo and Jeanne Claude
Location: Berlin, Gemany
Project Year: 1995

After a struggle spanning the seventies, eighties and nineties, the wrapping of the Reichstag was completed on June 24, 1995 by a work force of 90 professional climbers and 120 installation workers. The Reichstag remained wrapped for 14 days and all materials were recycled.
CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER

Architect: Nieto Sobejano Architects
Location: Cordoba, Spain
Project Year: 2013

Inspired by the patterns of traditional Islamic architecture, Nieto Sobejano planned the building as a non-linear sequence of connecting rooms that open out to one another in a variety of configurations. Each room can be used as either an exhibition area or as a space for art production.

JAMES SIMON GALERIE

Architect: David Chipperfield
Location: Museum Island, Berlin, Germany
Project Year: 2007

As a continuation of Friedrich August Stüler’s forum architecture, the James Simon Galerie is designed to serve as the new entrance building for Museum Island, completing the ensemble between the Kupfergraben arm of the Spree Canal and the long south-west façade of the Neues Museum.
MÉDIATHÈQUE OF NÎMES

Architect: Norman Foster
Location: Nîmes, France
Project Year: 1993

The site faces the Maison Carrée, a perfectly preserved Roman temple. The challenge was to relate new to the old, but at the same time to create a building that represented its own age with integrity. The Carré d'Art is articulated as a nine-storey structure, half of which is cut into the ground, keeping the building's profile low in sympathy with the scale of the surrounding buildings.

NEW ACROPOLIS MUSEUM

Architect: Bernard Tschumi Architects
Location: Athens, Greece
Project Year: 2009

The Museum stands less than 1,000 feet southeast of the Parthenon. The top-floor Parthenon Gallery offers a 360-degree panoramic view of the Acropolis and modern Athens. Designed with spare horizontal lines and simplicity, the Museum focuses the visitor's attention on extraordinary views and works of art.
The project was led by the need of combining different programmatic uses (hotel, housing, office and retail space) under the unifying character of a closed city block. A sequence of linked courtyards creates a new connection within the city. It plugs into the existing fabric and re-interprets the traditional roofscape.
LA GRANJA ESCALATOR

Architect: Lapeña-Torres Arquitectos
Location: Toledo, Spain
Project Year: 2001

The external escalator cuts into the hillside, zigzagging its way up the slope. It never reveals the whole view at once, but concedes glimpses of the surrounding town between folds in the concrete. It's architecture confidently and sensitively merges with the landscape. Cast in-situ concrete gives it a monumental quality and a unique texture.

JOANNEUMSVIERTEL GRAZ

Architect: Nieto Sobejano Architects
Location: Graz, Austria
Project Year: 2013

The horizontal, continuous surface of the square connecting different museum buildings is carved into by a series of conical patios that bring natural light into the underground spaces and house the entrance, the lobby, and the areas shared by the museums and the library such as the gathering place from which to reach each of them.
The CaixaForum arts centre incorporates walls from a power station that previously occupied the site. It includes galleries, administrative offices and a restaurant in the upper levels, as well as an auditorium below ground level. The architects create additional spaces both by carving underneath and adding on top of the existing building.
COLLISIONS
MUSEUM OF MILITARY HISTORY

Architect: Daniel Libeskind  
Location: Dresden, Germany  
Project Year: 2011

"I wanted to create a bold interruption, a fundamental dislocation, to penetrate the historic arsenal and create a new experience. The architecture will engage the public in the deepest issue of how organized violence and how military history and the fate of the city are intertwined." said Daniel Libeskind in a 2011 interview. (source: ArchDaily)

ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Architect: Daniel Libeskind  
Location: Toronto, Canada  
Project Year: 2007

The building's five intersecting metal-clad volumes are inspired by the crystalline forms in the ROM's mineralogy galleries. Libeskind created a structure of organically interlocking prismatic forms that collides into the old building creating a dramatic effect and repositioning the Museum as a dynamic element of the city.
KOLUMBA MUSEUM
Architect: Peter Zumthor
Location: Cologne, Germany
Project Year: 2008

Built on the ruins of the Gothic Church of St. Columba in the old center of Cologne, the Museum does not reveal a lot from the outside. The new building develops from the old remains whilst respecting it's materiality and character. Urbanistically, it restores the lost core of one of the once most beautiful parts of Cologne's city centre.

NINGBO HISTORIC MUSEUM
Architect: Amateur Architecture Studio (Wang Shu)
Location: Ningbo, Zhejiang, China
Project Year: 2008

Large stretches of the building's facade are composed of bricks of various sizes, shapes and materials. Some of them are recent, some of them are hundred years old. Most of the Ningbo Museum's exterior is composed of debris collected from destruction sites around the region.
JUXTAPOSITIONS
DOMKYRKOFORUM

Architect: Carmen Izquierdo
Location: Lund, Sweden
Project Year: 2011

The new building aims to integrate itself in the urban-fabric in a natural way, by adapting to the scale and lines of the surrounding cityscape. The facade of the building is made of a brass alloy, a natural material that ages with a rich and living texture, allowing the building to age into its surroundings.

NEMBRO LIBRARY EXPANSION

Architect: Archea Associati
Location: Nembro, Italy
Project Year: 2007

The new volume is only connected through the basement, while it maintains a studied physical and morphological distance from the existing building. The facade, reminiscent of a three storey bookshelf, is constructed of rotating terracota panels that filter light.
KUNSTHAUS GRAZ

Architect: Kunsthaus Graz
Location: Graz, Austria
Project Year: 2003

The blob shaped building disrupts the quaint historical fabric of the city. Known to locals as the "Friendly Alien," the structure contains contemporary art, design, new media, film and photography and is covered by thousands of semitransparent acrylic glass panels that form a BIX (Big+Pixel) facade.

METROPOL PARASOL

Architect: Jurgen Mayer H. Architects & Arup
Location: Seville, Spain
Project Year: 2011

The structure consists of six parasols in the form of giant mushrooms is organized in four levels. The underground level houses an exhibition of ancient remains, street level is the Central Market. It's roof is the surface of the open-air public plaza. Levels 2 and 3 are devoted to panoramic terraces offering great views of the city centre.
MUSEE DES BEAUX ARTS

Architect: Ibos & Vitart Architects
Location: Lille, France
Project Year: 1997

The Palais des Beaux-Arts is one of France's finest museums almost on a par with the Louvre owing to its first rate collections. The Ibos & Vitart extension gives the museum a town-facing front while reflecting the old museum building behind it.