

**Polish Pavilion  
at the Biennale  
Architettura 2021**

# **Trouble in Paradise**

**PROLOG +1**



**17. Mostra  
Internazionale  
di Architettura**  
Partecipazioni Nazionali

**Although rural areas make up 93% of Poland's territory, only 40% of the population lives there. This data is an accurate reflection of worldwide trends. Engulfed in spatial chaos, having so far remained on the sidelines of architectural interest, the countryside has become the subject of the exhibition in the Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. PROLOG +1, authors of the *Trouble in Paradise* project, in collaboration with an international ensemble of architects and artists, will show that in times of growing local and global crises, rural areas can be the answer to a worldwide ecological or housing problem.**

**Biennale Architettura 2021, postponed by a year, will open on 22 May. On the opening day of the exhibition in the Polish Pavilion, a digital version of the project will launch online at [labiennale.art.pl](http://labiennale.art.pl). The exhibition in the Polish Pavilion is organised by Zachęta — National Gallery of Art in Warsaw.**

We have had to wait for three years for the opening of the 17th International Architecture Exhibition — the 2020 edition of one of the most prestigious events in the world of architecture was postponed by 12 months due to the pandemic. In light of the events of the past year, the theme of the biennale could not be more topical. 63 national teams from around the world had to face the question 'How will we live together?'

Presented in the Polish Pavilion, the *Trouble in Paradise* exhibition is a multi-threaded story about the future of communal life in the countryside, accompanied by a thorough analysis of the forms of work and life in these areas. The project calls attention to, among others, the issue of the marginalisation of the countryside; it also points out the problems faced by the inhabitants of the countryside today and shows its enormous, untapped potential. Data shows that although rural areas make up 93% of Poland's territory, only 40% of the population lives there. The situation in Poland is an accurate reflection of global trends — around the world, the population of urban areas exceeds that of rural areas, even though the latter account for the majority of land area.

The curators of the exhibition believe that the perception of the countryside through a lens of simplifications and stereotypes — treating it as a lost paradise, or a place where one can rest from the troubles of civilisation — is a significant problem. It turns out that the ideal of living near the city has a short shelf life. The pandemic, which led to a rise in migration to suburban areas around the world, has brought to light the daily struggles the Polish countryside has faced for years — including the lack of public transport, universal access to the internet or integration between the 'newcomers' and the local population.

'The countryside is less and less often a promise of autonomy and escape from the city, and more and more often a storage space, a place for ring roads, production halls, farms, all the infrastructure without which life in large agglomerations would be impossible. This is primarily due to the convictions that the countryside is there to serve, acting as support facilities for the cities. We want to reverse this perspective, to stop thinking of the countryside from a "city dweller" point of view,' says Robert Witczak of the PROLOG +1 curatorial team. 'It's important to us to show the countryside not as a closed, divided and privatised space, but as a space of ideas — a sense of community influenced by every inhabitant,' he adds.

The project was curated by PROLOG +1 (Mirabela Jurczenko, Bartosz Kowal, Wojciech Mazan, Bartłomiej Poteralski, Rafał Śliwa and Robert Witczak) — a team of young architects selected in an open competition. The exhibition consists of an analytical and speculative part. The former, carried out in collaboration with Polish artists, shows the contemporary problems of the countryside and is presented in the form of an enormous 70-metre photorealistic panorama that fills the space of the pavilion. Created by photographers Michał Sierakowski and Paweł Starzec, as well as artist Jan Domicz, in collaboration with the PROLOG +1 team, the panorama depicts the characteristic elements of the rural countryside which are the result of the processes that have taken place there over the past 100 years.

PROLOG +1 invited six architectural teams from Europe to the speculative part of the exhibition: Atelier Fanelsa (Germany), GUBAHÁMORI + Filip + László Demeter (Hungary), KOSMOS Architects (Russia, Switzerland, Austria), Rural Office for Architecture (Great Britain), RZUT (Poland) and Traumnovelle

(Belgium). The result of their work are architectural models, collages and drawings presented in the pavilion against the background of the panorama. The diversity of points of view and the juxtaposition of different perspectives are linked by a reflection on the effects of rural exploitation, climate disasters or global crises — including those whose impact on the fate of the planet and rural areas is yet to be known.

The exhibition is accompanied by the book *Trouble in Paradise*, which includes essays by Platon Issaias & Hamed Khosravi, Pier Vittorio Aureli, Andrea Alberto Dutto, Katarzyna Kajdanek, Łukasz Moll, a photo essay by Jacenty Dędek, as well as texts by the PROLOG +1 team, a photographic *Panorama of the Polish Countryside* and visualisations of the projects. The book will be available for sale at the Zachęta art bookstore and in La Biennale's bookstores starting 22 May, as well as for download in digital form at [labiennale.art.pl](http://labiennale.art.pl).

## **POLISH PAVILION AT THE 17TH INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION — LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA**

Venice, 22 May–21 November 2021

*Trouble in Paradise*

**curators:** PROLOG +1 (Mirabela Jurczenko, Bartosz Kowal, Wojciech Mazan, Bartłomiej Poteralski, Rafał Śliwa and Robert Witczak)

### **participants**

architectural studios: Atelier Fanelisa, GUBAHÁMORI + Filip + László Demeter, KOSMOS Architects, Rural Office for Architecture, RZUT, Traumnovelle

authors of the *Panorama of the Polish Countryside*: Jan Domicz, Michał Sierakowski, Paweł Starzec, PROLOG +1

authors of the *Glossary* (online): Michał Sierakowski, Paweł Starzec, Wiktoria Wojciechowska, Patrycja Wojtas, PROLOG +1

exhibition visual identification, book design: zespół wespół

**organiser:** Zachęta — National Gallery of Art, Warsaw

Polish Pavilion Commissioner: Hanna Wróblewska, director of Zachęta — National Gallery of Art

Polish Pavilion Office: Ewa Mielczarek, Joanna Waśko

[labiennale.art.pl](http://labiennale.art.pl)

Polish participation at the 17th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia was made possible through the financial support of the Ministry of Culture, National Heritage and Sport of the Republic of Poland.

The exhibition in the Polish Pavilion is supported by the Adam Mickiewicz Institute and the Polish Institute in Rome.

Book co-financed by City of Wrocław.

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**Excerpts from the book *Trouble in Paradise* accompanying the exhibition in the Polish Pavilion at the 17th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice:**

*The Polish countryside is a place where the problems, hopes and paradoxes of the socialist and capitalist periods become clear; the notions of tradition and progress are not easy to discern here, and radical reforms have met with both enthusiasm and resistance. Despite the scale of the phenomenon that is the Polish countryside, the issues related to it remain outside the mainstream of architectural discourse. The marginalisation of these areas intensified during the political, economic and social transformation of the 1990s and consolidated their perception through the prism of simplifications and stereotypes, or simply excluded them from the sphere of collective consciousness, transforming them into an invisible element of the landscape. This project presents a new perspective, redefines the understanding of what is rural, going beyond the narrow framework of a romantic or technological utopia, and reads the countryside as a space of struggle and resistance against the forces colonising it, and not as an innocent, idyllic landscape outside the city.*

**PROLOG +1, curators, excerpt from the introduction**

*The object of PROLOG +1's interest is the countryside seen from different perspectives: historical, geographical and sociological. The countryside as a contemporary myth, but also as a place of transformation and post-transformation changes. The countryside from the perspective of an architect, researcher and resident — a native or a fugitive from the city. The Polish countryside, but in a global perspective. A countryside that has remained on the side lines of the interest of architects or urban planners, but which in recent years has become that 'extraordinary other' we want to encounter in order to conquer, colonise or tame it. A countryside with all its history, problems that have not always been clearly perceived in the past and a huge potential that perhaps holds the answer to the slogan of the current edition of the Biennale — at a time when physical distance and distance are once again highly valued.*

**Hanna Wróblewska, Polish Pavilion Commissioner, excerpt from the introduction**

*According to UN statistics, since 2007, the number of inhabitants of urban areas surpassed the number of inhabitants of rural areas. Today, more than 4 billion people around the world live in urbanised areas, and this figure is expected to rise to 7 billion by 2050. Global migration trends reflect a pattern of predominantly rural-to-urban movements and a strong, positive relationship between societies' wealth and urbanisation level. Current data provided by Statistics Poland shows that 40% of the population lives in rural areas, while areas administratively classified as rural (i.e. without city rights) represent 93% of Poland's area (according to data from the 2010 Agricultural Census). Thus, urbanised areas, which are home to 60% of the population, cover only 7% of the country's territory.*

**Katarzyna Kajdanek, excerpt from the essay 'From the Milky Way's Point of View, We All Seem to Be from a Village (Loesje)'**

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

### Curators

**PROLOG** was founded in 2017 by Mirabela Jurczenko, Bartosz Kowal, Wojciech Mazan, Bartłomiej Poteralski and Rafał Śliwa. It is scattered across Europe, with a base in Wrocław, Poland. PROLOG engages with architecture through design projects, research, writing, exhibitions and workshops. PROLOG aims to frame each design from a practical and theoretical perspective. PROLOG is thought as a formative period, therefore its focus lies in the exploration, speculations and experiments. PROLOG was shortlisted in the international competition for the Tautos Namai concert hall in Vilnius, Lithuania, received the second prize in the international competition for a concert hall in Żelazowa Wola, Poland; and the second prize for a master plan for the Interrodera district in Szczecin, Poland.

**PROLOG +1** is a team with the addition of Robert Witczak, working on the Trouble in Paradise project in the Polish Pavilion at Biennale Architettura 2021.

**Mirabela Jurczenko** graduated from the Faculty of Architecture of the Wrocław University of Technology and studied at the University of Minho in Guimarães, Portugal. She currently lives and works in Rotterdam. She has collaborated on research projects with the Technical University of Berlin and Technical University of Munich.

**Bartosz Kowal** holds an MSc Arch from the University of Liechtenstein. Previously, he studied at the Technical University of Munich, Yildiz Technical University in Istanbul and Wrocław University of Technology. Has worked as an architect in Germany, Poland and with Conradin Clavuot in Chur, Switzerland. Member of SIA (Swiss Society of Engineers and Architects).

**Wojciech Mazan** is an MPhil student of Projective Cities at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London. His dissertation focuses on the post-socialist countryside of Poland. He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture of the Wrocław University of Technology and studied at the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design. He has worked as an assistant researcher at the Royal College of Arts in London and previously for architecture offices in competition teams in Madrid, Rotterdam, Mexico City, and Graz.

**Bartłomiej Poteralski** graduated at the Faculty of Architecture of the Wrocław University of Technology, acquired experience in architectural offices in Poland, Spain and Austria. As part of his work at the Atelier Thomas Pucher, he worked on designs of the Sinfonia Varsovia headquarters in Warsaw and the Universitätsbibliothek in Graz.

**Rafał Śliwa** studied architecture in Portugal, at the University of Minho in Guimarães, the University of Coimbra, and the University of Porto. He received his master's degree at the Wrocław University of Technology, with thesis investigating the relationship between the architecture of the city and education. He worked for offices in Poland and Portugal and is collaborating on competition concepts at the ANALOG office.

**Robert Witczak** studied at the Faculty of Architecture at the Wrocław University of Technology. He recently completed his master's degree from the Delft University of Technology. In his thesis he investigated spatial problems of suburbanisation in Poland. Winner of numerous architectural competitions. He has gained professional experience in competition concepts in architectural offices in Poland and abroad.

## Architectural studios

**Atelier Fanelsa** is an international team of architects based in Berlin and Gerswalde (Brandenburg). The studio investigates contemporary forms of working, living and commoning in the countryside, the periphery, and the city. We realise private projects, public buildings, exhibitions, and workshops. Within these formats, we develop innovative and qualitative answers to questions regarding the conditions of today's society.

### **GUBAHÁMORI + Filip + László Demeter**

GUBAHÁMORI is an architecture and urban design studio focusing on the correlation between the natural and the built environment. They are discovering architecture beyond ocularcentrism.

Filip is a collective of visual artists based at a ship repair yard on the island of Népsziget, which is a culturally uprising brownfield of Budapest. The eclectic milieu of the still functional industrial site inspires them to look at everyday situations as platforms of art.

László Demeter is a forest and ethnoecology scientific expert at the Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary. He specialises in using different knowledge systems (e.g. traditional knowledge and western science) for innovative conservation management.

**KOSMOS Architects** is an office collaborating virtually, bringing together partners based in Geneva, Moscow, Graz and New York. KOSMOS designs projects and environments of all types and scales: from a door handle to a city, from hardcore architecture to pop-up art installations. The office combines art and technology, global experience with respect to local context, academic research and practical architecture.

**Rural Office for Architecture** is based in a remote rural part of South Wales, UK. Established in 2008 by Niall Maxwell, the practice often works within rural settings, responding to its context and surroundings by reinterpreting the familiar architectural language of the past. They work across the UK on historic and new architectural projects and are currently developing a new dwelling in rural Japan, their first overseas commission.

**RZUT** (Katarzyna Billik, Matylda Gąsiorowska, Igor Łysiuk, Karolina Matysiak, Andrzej Olejniczak, Zofia Piotrowska, Przemysław Sobiecki, Łukasz Stępnik, Milena Trzcińska). 'We are a group of people who write, tell stories and offer critique. We summarise the stories we observe in a quarterly published since 2013. We are not a design studio, and our goal is not to build. Nevertheless, we feel like architects and use our experience to deepen our reflection on the subject of space. Text, drawing and building are for us equal elements of a world where there is no division between theory and practice'.

**Traumnovelle** is a militant faction founded by three Belgian architects: Léone Drapeaud, Manuel León Fanjul and Johnny Leya. Traumnovelle uses architecture and fiction as analytical, critical and subversive tools to emphasise contemporary issues and dissect their resolutions. Their work champions a multi-disciplinary approach with architecture at the crossroads and has been published internationally. Traumnovelle curated the Belgian Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2018.

## Authors of the *Panorama of the Polish Countryside*

**Jan Domicz** is a visual artist and creator of videos, objects and installations. He graduated from the Städelschule in Frankfurt and the University of the Arts in Poznań. He lives and works in Warsaw,

collaborating with the Wschód gallery. Since 2017, he has run the semi-curatorial project *Office for Narrated Spaces*. His works have been presented in exhibitions at the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, SALTS in Basel, the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Arts in Warsaw, Significant Other in Vienna and Karlin Studios in Prague. He uses the narrative potential of space in his works.

**Michał Sierakowski** is a documentary photographer and filmmaker. He graduated in photography from the University of Arts in Poznań. He was a holder of the scholarship of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. His works have been shown in Warsaw, Kiev, London and St Petersburg, among others. In his work, he focuses on the relationship between humans and their environment, as well as how communities reinterpret and reconstruct landscape, whether natural or in the form of urban planning and architecture.

**Paweł Starzec** is a photographer, sociologist and documentary filmmaker. He is a lecturer and academic teacher, creator of workshop programs, co-creator of the Azimuth Press collective of artists and publishing house. He is a doctoral student at the Institute of Applied Social Sciences of the University of Warsaw and a graduate student at the Institute of Creative Photography of the University of Silesia in Opava. A musician and sound artist, he currently performs with the Mazut project as well as solo. In his work, he focuses on the links between space, history and their social contexts.

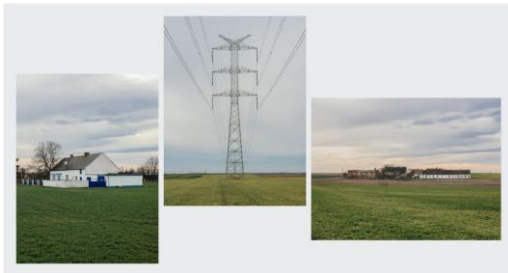
#### Organiser

**Zachęta — National Gallery of Art** in Warsaw, is the organizer of the exhibitions in the Polish Pavilion both for Art and Architecture Biennale, as well as the custodian of the building. The gallery's director acts as the pavilion commissioner. Poland has its own exhibition pavilion, which is located in Giardini — one of the two main exhibition venues of La Biennale.

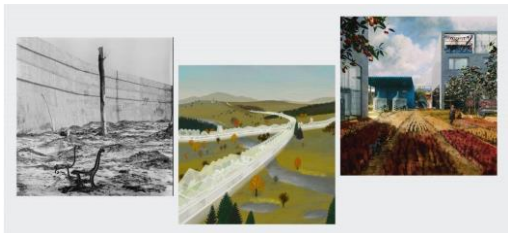
## IMAGES



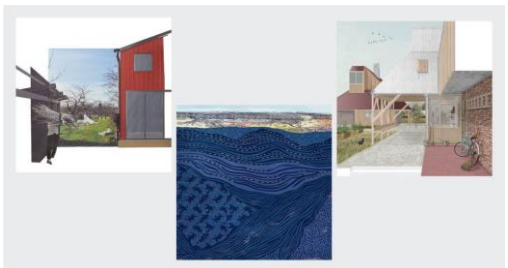
*Trouble in Paradise*, Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. Photo: Michał Sierakowski, graphic design: zespół współ.



Analytical part of *Trouble in Paradise* exhibition, Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. *Dwelling, Territory, Settlement*, photos: Michał Sierakowski.



Speculative part of *Trouble in Paradise* exhibition. Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. From left: *EURECA* by Traumnovelle, *Countryspine* by KOSMOS Architects, *Social Infrastructure* by RZUT.



Speculative part of *Trouble in Paradise* exhibition, Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. From left: *Village Commons* by Atelier Fanelsa, *The Sacred Species* by GUBAHÁMORI + Filip + László Demeter, *Spółem* by Rural Office for Architecture.





PROLOG +1, authors of the *Trouble in Paradise* exhibition in the Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. From left: Rafał Śliwa, Robert Witczak, Bartosz Kowal, Wojciech Mazan, Mirabela Jurczenko, Bartłomiej Poteralski. Photo: Paweł Starzec.

All images courtesy Zachęta — National Gallery of Art, Warsaw.