

Transfer, or a big-city walk

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“Cities can be recognized by their pace just as people can by their walk.” Robert Musil begins his novel about Ulrich, the man without qualities, with a description of the automobile traffic in Vienna on a fine August day in 1913: “Motor-cars came shooting out of deep, narrow streets into the shallows of bright squares. Dark patches of pedestrian bustle formed into cloudy streams. Where stronger lines of speed transected their loose-woven hurrying, they clotted up – only to trickle on all the faster then and after a few ripples regain their regular pulse-beat.”¹ This description of the busy streets of the capital city of Kakania, that is, Imperial Royal Austria, could be the description of some other contemporary metropolis and the everyday life of its inhabitants, its movement and crowds, its cars and pedestrians.

We owe our knowledge of big-city walking above all to daily experience, but literary images inspire our imagination more intensely. Franz Kafka strolled about Prague, James Joyce and his protagonists did the same in Dublin. In February, Joseph Brodsky wandered around Venice – a city without cars. In London, Edgar Allan Poe followed a man of the crowd, a genius of deep crime who “refuses to be alone.”² Fernando Pessoa, a writer of many incarnations, roamed the streets of Lisbon creating poetic guidebooks of the city and the recesses of his solitude: “More than once, as I slowly stroll the afternoon streets, I have been suddenly and violently struck by the strange presence of the organization of things. It is not natural things that affect me so much and that produce this sensation so strongly in me. Rather it is the layout of the streets, the shop signs, the people dressed and talking, the workers, the newspapers, the intelligence of it all.”³

The streets of Paris seem to afford the greatest walking opportunities, explored by the Romantic poet Charles Baudelaire and later by Louis Aragon and other Surrealists, who sought out everyday marvels and “staggered beneath the impact of certain places and spectacles, without understanding why.”⁴ André Breton (*Nadja*, 1928) wandered in the footsteps of Aragon’s *Nightwalker* (1926), seeking “to find something but not knowing specifically what.”⁵ Finally, Walter Benjamin left behind an impressive list of people who meandered around Paris, himself fascinated by the city’s phantasmagoria: “Whoever sets foot in a city feels caught up as in a web of dreams, where the most remote past is linked to the events of today. One house allies with another, no matter what period they come from, and a street is born.”⁶

HERE IN WARSAW

People also walk around contemporary Warsaw, though its sidewalks and the playgrounds between housing blocks are increasingly becoming parking lots. Busy inhabitants rush about, tourists saunter and writers record their impressions: “... a rainbow of exhaust and sun, architecture of the end, the capital city of Warsaw, the state, so to say, Poland.”⁷ *Transfer*, Jarosław Kozakiewicz’s conceptual-urban project, was inspired by Warsaw as a city where the post-1989 political, economic and social changes are revealed in a singular instance of the culture of congestion. This city is constantly criticized; it is the site of vast

construction investment and simultaneously of architectural and urban design negligence. New skyscrapers and office towers are sprouting up in the center, plans call for expanding the sole north-south metro line, crossing the city by car or bus at rush hour means 'skirmishing' for hours with nasty vehicles and people, while cyclists complain that bike paths are forgotten each time a major thoroughfare is redesigned and revamped.

In the face of the modernist myth of the *metropolis* and contemporary global visions of the *megalopolis*, Warsaw's problems hardly appear unique. The city is often perceived, like many other capitals, as a city that "monopolizes population." In his classic tome *The City in History*, Lewis Mumford mentions Warsaw, first – alongside Berlin and Copenhagen – as a city whose population surpassed one hundred thousand in the 18th century, at a time when Moscow, Vienna, St Petersburg and Palermo had populations in excess of two hundred thousand.⁸ The second mention describes it as a city that, like Berlin and Tokyo, faced near complete physical extinction after World War II, but one where "swift reconstruction" proved possible and was accompanied by "many minor improvements," or "decisive functional alterations."⁹ The reconstruction resulted, among other things, in the creation of a "pseudo-historical urban reservation," a perceived historical center (Old and New Town, the Royal Route).¹⁰ Significant changes of function of the city center might include construction of the Palace of Culture and Science (1952–1955) on the new Parade Square, the building of the Marszałkowska Housing District (1950–1953) – i.e. a model big-city district in the Socialist Realist spirit, or construction of the monumental District Beyond the Iron Gate (1965–1972) on the ruins of Warsaw's so-called Little Ghetto. Contemporary Warsaw continues to monopolize its population, offering its inhabitants the lowest unemployment and simultaneously exposing them the highest daily cost of living in Poland. The real estate market recently saw construction of new housing stagnate, while architects noted "a state of absurd disurbanization."¹¹

"Warsaw is not political marmalade," writes a journalist commenting on the run-up to the city's mayoral election. "It's a hard-earned piece of bread featuring unresolved land ownership issues, a transportation mess, lack of bridges and a ring road, and no reasonable development plans. It is a true Augean stable that needs a Hercules."¹² Another journalist writing in the same newspaper consoles his readers that Warsaw placed a more than respectable eighth in a *Reader's Digest* ranking of cities according to the courtesy demonstrated by their inhabitants. We can only hope it did so deservedly.

THE TRANSFER FUNCTION

Transfer – the title of Jarosław Kozakiewicz's conceptual-urban project in the Polonia Pavilion – denotes a movement of someone or something to a different place, a shift of people, information or technology. A drawing can also be transferred, or traced. As a concept, the "transfer function" is familiar to sociologists (as a statistical method) and to architects, for instance those who design airport terminals.

Transfer was inspired, among other things, by Warsaw's historical and cultural spatial spines, that is, lost urban assets like the Saxon, King Stanisław August or the Praga urban axes. Since movement within a city contributes to its character, Jarosław Kozakiewicz proposes to change Warsaw's transportation networks. His new, organic transfer network is partly superimposed on existing communication routes, yet it simultaneously delineates new links that recall the city's historical spatial axes. Consisting of a series of elevated walkways, the transfer network fulfills three main functions. Firstly, it links green areas (city parks, suburban forests), providing pedestrians and cyclists an alternative way of moving between parks without resorting to modern means of transportation like automobiles, trams or the metro. Secondly, the network connects significant sites within

the city, creating a memory path leading through historical sites, an art path connecting Warsaw's museums, galleries and theatres, and a recreational path weaving its way through green areas. Thirdly, the network frees up existing communication routes.

Depending on location, the transfer network can assume one of three different forms: open elevated walkways similar to park alleys, glass-encased skywalks resembling winter gardens and encouraging strolls around the city even in inclement weather, and pedestrian areas on the ground, that is, streets closed to motor vehicles. The height of the walkways varies, contingent upon the presence of tram traction or the height of surrounding buildings; observed from below, the walkways are partly "dematerialized" by a bottom surface that reflects the city and traffic on the ground. The exhibition at the Polonia Pavilion showcases three elements of the design: a plan of the entire network, a 1:50 scale architectural and structural model, and visualizations of the walkways in more than a dozen sites around Warsaw.

ART AND URBAN DESIGN

"We practically always work in urban space, so urban design is increasingly becoming an art of reading contexts and taking action that will fit into the context in a cultured manner. Anyone who doubts if the urban design profession is needed should look at Warsaw. Its spatial cacophony derives from a lack of plans while architects and investors go wild," says Krzysztof Domaradzki, vice chairman of the Society of Polish Urban Designers.¹³

Jarosław Kozakiewicz is no urban designer, which does not mean he has not mastered the art of reading environmental contexts. He studied sculpture at Warsaw's Academy of Fine Arts (1981–1985) and at the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York (1985–1988). He produces architectural designs, installations and set designs, drawing inspiration for his artistic/architectural projects from contemporary ecology, genetics, physics, astronomy as well as ancient cosmological concepts linking the micro- and macro-cosmos. Noting the analogies between the human body and the natural world, Kozakiewicz questions the anthropometric character of the Vitruvian man as the traditional architectural paradigm, proposing in its stead an organic paradigm, a "geometry of the inside" where space is delineated by lines connecting bodily orifices responsible for vital functions, i.e. seeing, hearing, breathing, feeding and procreation.

Some of Kozakiewicz's projects reference traditional garden architecture; others refer to strategies like conceptual art and land art, or to the utopian architecture of the 1960s and 1970s. These diverse inspirations find reflection in works like *Landscapes: A Concept of a Humanistic Theory of the Solar System* (1998–1999) – an installation of ten architectural models shaped to resemble bodily orifices and symbolizing the planets of our solar system – or *Tower of Love* (2004), a visualization of a skyscraper enclosing a multi-level park, a structure in keeping with the principles of the "geometry of the inside."

Since 2002 Kozakiewicz has been involved in an architectural project known as the *Brok Culture Centre*, which calls for a partial reconstruction of a ruined 17th century palace near Warsaw and for the creation therein of an international culture center. In 2004 the artist received an honorable mention in a competition for the design of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Toruń. His design called for covering the museum's roof with grass, thus extending an adjacent park and creating a viewing terrace from which to admire the panorama of the city's Old Town.

In 2005 Kozakiewicz's entry took first prize in the international architectural competition for a design of the Park of Reconciliation – Gardens of Europe near the Auschwitz-Birkenau Museum in Oświęcim. One of the features of the project, which is now being implemented, is the *Bridge of Ghosts* – shaped like a stretched

Moebius strip – connecting the museum with the town and park. The year 2007 will witness the completion of Kozakiewicz's *Project Mars*. A massive landscape redesign in a former lignite mining area near Lake Baerwalde, Germany, the project will create a hilly landscape incorporating an amphitheatre and shaped like a giant human auricle.

With *Project Mars* Kozakiewicz faced a site devastated by industry, a post-industrial landscape that was far from picturesque. In this sense *Project Mars* is a voice in the wave of ecocriticism that has surfaced recently in the work of contemporary architects and artists, and in academic discourse. Contemporary architecture increasingly denotes the redevelopment of abandoned places, barren lands, defunct mines, quarries and factories.

In the project for the Park of Reconciliation Kozakiewicz was confronted with a site burdened by a “surplus of memory,” a place near a death camp where genocide had been committed. The organizer of the competition in Oświęcim, the Park of Reconciliation – Gardens of Europe Foundation, set a difficult task before the participants, above all emphasizing the park's symbolic significance as a place where reconciliation could be achieved between memory and daily life, between the Museum and the town. The park as designed by Jarosław Kozakiewicz clearly takes on this symbolic challenge.

Transfer, or the network of walkways Kozakiewicz has conceived for Warsaw, is not an urban project designed for implementation but an attempted entry into a specific urban situation. It is a proposition that tackles an urban design challenge in a city of “absurd disurbanization.” *Transfer* offers an alternate “means of transport” and thus a change of our perspective and the way we experience the city; it implies a transfer not only from place to place, but also in time.

WALKWAYS, OVERPASSES AND ARCADES

A comprehensive plan of the singular urban “organism” that is the *Transfer* project is shown as a small, projected computer-generated visualization. The walkways are symbolically superimposed on Warsaw's existing urban networks: public transport routes (bus, tram, rail and metro), power and telephone lines, water mains and natural gas lines. These existing routes, lines and links – each of which has its purpose – are supplemented by one more circulation system that supports the organism's functioning.

Jarosław Kozakiewicz describes the new network as a kind of prosthesis placed on the city. Since urban crowding prevents us from creating wider sidewalks, additional bike paths, park alleys and from isolating pedestrians from automobile traffic, then rising above street level may indeed be the sole solution. *Transfer*, however, is not about creating a compromise solution; rather, it embodies a critical approach countering modern urban design assumptions. Customarily, viaducts do not serve pedestrians and are used to run rail lines through cities or to increase the automobile capacity of streets, e.g. through the elimination of surface intersections.

Walking around a city should not entail the constant sense of danger that accompanies pedestrians when they attempt to join the flow of traffic: “A man who goes for a walk ought not to have to concern himself with any hazards he may run into or with the regulations of a city. If an amusing idea enters his head, if a curious shopfront comes into view, it is natural that he would want to cross the street without confronting dangers such as our grandparents could not have imagined.” Yet the pedestrian overpasses once recommended by modernist urban designers were born not so much from a concern for pedestrians (in Warsaw they remain all but inaccessible to the elderly, physically disabled and mothers with baby carriages) as from a desire to improve the fluidity of automobile traffic. Daily life in the city has taught us that rushed pedestrians will break the law and dash across wide, busy thoroughfares, even in the vicinity of pedestrian overpasses.

Transfer counters modern urban design strategies by clearly favoring walking, wandering around the city, and by elevating pedestrian traffic instead of embarrassingly concealing it underground. Pedestrian underpasses, built in the name of road safety like overpasses, indicate that we have reconciled ourselves to the omnipotence of the automobile. Idolizing Paris's above-ground arcades, Walter Benjamin, as if for contrast, collected materials on the city's subterranean life: "Sewer: 'Paris ... called it the Stink-Hole ... The Stink-Hole was no less revolting to hygiene than to legend. The Goblin Monk had appeared under the fetid arch of the Mouffetard sewer.'"¹⁵ The city is experienced with all the senses, though the previously cited tramp of Lisbon, Fernando Pessoa, thought vision and hearing to be the only refined ones and saw the remaining senses as plebeian and corporal. With city life, however, the sense of smell proves essential, and this is well known to all who enter the underground passageways of Warsaw's Central Railway Station or the pedestrian underpass beneath Dmowski Circle – the meeting point of Warsaw's two chief thoroughfares: Jerusalem Avenue and Marszałkowska Street.

MAN AND HIS CAR

"We want to praise the man who holds the steering wheel," declared poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in his famous *Futurist Manifesto* of 1909. "A racing car whose hood is adorned with great pipes, like serpents of explosive breath — a roaring car that seems to ride on grapeshot is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace."¹⁶ The Futurist vindication of the automobile returned later in the vision for a new architecture formulated by Le Corbusier, who devoted an entire chapter of his *Vers une architecture* (1923) to comparing the Parthenon's classical proportions to the modern beauty of an automobile.

In his comments on urban planning, Sigfried Giedion states that the basis for any urban design is one's concept of life and immediately mentions modern road traffic. It is no accident that Giedion then devotes himself to considering the American *parkway*, a park-like avenue designed above all for automobiles, a roadway that "humanizes" the highway concept: "... But only at the wheel of the automobile could one feel what they really meant – the liberation from unexpected light signals and cross traffic, and the freedom of uninterrupted forward motion, without the inhuman pressure of endlessly straight lines pushing one on to dangerous speeds. ... Freedom was given to both the driver and car."¹⁷

Delirious New York (1978), Rem Koolhaas's vindication of the culture of congestion, presents a futurist vision of a city where the horizon is dominated by bridges and skyscrapers, while skywalks link urban towers.¹⁸ Passers-by look upon this future city from viaducts and overpasses, automobiles speed by below, aircraft fly up above. This modern blend of city and machine results in upward movement, verticalism, in experiences of height and speed. It is this vision of the ultra-modern city that films like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner* or Luc Besson's *The Fifth Element* have led us to accept.

Jarosław Kozakiewicz's *Transfer* is not a vindication of the city in the machine age. Unlike the Futurists and other modernists, the artist wants to praise the individual sauntering about the city, at most holding the handlebars of a bicycle. His network of elevated walkways for pedestrians and cyclists presupposes a change in the rhythm of city traffic but avoids glorifying an acceleration of everyday life. In the context of the contemporary culture of congestion, slower and faster are time-relative concepts. Kozakiewicz moves around Warsaw on foot and by car, but he is convinced that one can traverse distances more quickly and healthily by walking than by standing in colossal traffic jams. What is more, walking between home and work we expose ourselves to different stimuli, looking upon the city not only as its frustrated inhabitants but also as relaxed tourists strolling amidst unknown sites. This transfer network of walkways for pedestrians and cyclists thus changes our viewpoint on the city as the site of our everyday experience.

As Michel de Certeau notes in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, mass transportation vehicles in today's Athens are referred to as *metaphorai*.¹⁹ When going to work or returning home, the city's inhabitants use "metaphors," "transferences," "conveyances" – i.e. buses, automobiles and subways. Jarosław Kozakiewicz's *Transfer* both criticizes a specific situation by isolating pedestrians from the congested city and retains the ambiguity of a metaphor by "transferring" them into another dimension of city life.

THE MIRACLE OF THE ROAD

The main component of the exhibition at the Polonia Pavilion is a projection (measuring some 14 x 4 m) of a panoramic visualization of the walkways against the background of more than a dozen sites in Warsaw. Some shots present the walkways from the side; others place us on the walkways looking at the city from about seven meters off the ground, above tram traction lines. The city thus becomes an observed object in a situation reminiscent of 19th century panoramas in which, from an elevated platform, visitors would view an urban landscape painted on a cylindrical wall. Paris, Toulon, Rome, Naples, Amsterdam, Tilsit, Wagram, Calais, Antwerp, London, Florence, Jerusalem and Athens are the city panoramas by Pierre Prévost that Walter Benjamin mentions in *The Arcade Project*.²⁰ In technical terms, Kozakiewicz's *Transfer* is not a 19th century panorama, and yet it offers a change of one's visual experience of the city.²¹ What is more, by isolating pedestrians from automobile traffic, the walkways offer a "softening," separating us from street noise and vehicle exhaust.

Transfer was preceded by an idea to conceal one of Warsaw's main thoroughfares, Marszałkowska Street, in a kind of tunnel, its roof covered with grass. Street traffic would be hidden and in the congested city center one would feel as if in a park – ambling through the center without encountering automobiles, pausing and, on a hot day, laying a blanket out on the grass and resting. This initial idea of concealing street traffic below a green area developed into the concept of a network of elevated walkways linking the city's parks. The gardens "faithfully reflect the vast sentimental countries through which the wild dreams of city-dwellers roam," sighed Louis Aragon during an excursion to Paris's Buttes Chaumont Park.²²

A recreational path linking some of Warsaw's green areas can be seen in the animation of sections of the network on view at the Polonia Pavilion. We begin on the right bank of the Vistula, follow the walkways from Bródno Wood, pass alongside Praga Park and the zoo, where from the height of the walkway we might find ourselves face to face with a giraffe. The path leads us further, across the Vistula and west in the direction of the Bemowo Forest Park. In the center we pass the Saski Garden, once a part of the city's Baroque-era urban axis, and we turn south toward Mokotów Fields. From there we return east to the district of Praga and to the pride of Warsaw in the inter-war years – the picturesque Skaryszewski Park.

The animation proceeds to offer another option – an historical path evoking the city's past: destroyed townhouses, streets and districts that in their new form are no longer significant historical sites and transportation hubs. In one shot we see a typical tourist site – Castle Square with its pseudo-historical Royal Castle in the background. We venture on towards Bank Square, dominated by the work of Classicist-era architect Antonio Corazzi. Gazing into modest Orla Street we gain a surprising perspective on the distant silhouette of the Palace of Culture and Science. The walkway then leads toward the district of Mirów, to cobblestone Chłodna Street where a gangway linking the Little Ghetto and Big Ghetto stood during World War II. We return to Mirów Market Hall, one of Warsaw's most beautiful late 19th century trade halls, and to the old Iron Gate Square. From there, at some distance and down the street, we see the Saski Garden, visually delineating the city's old urban axis.

Warsaw's contrasting architecture and urban layouts also feature in the film, which takes us through the crowded center and minutes later shows non-touristy districts where development has been chaotic. Strolling atop the walkways, we see the Socialist Realist Marszałkowska Housing District, sections of the modernist Eastern Wall (1958–1968) – its towers once the capital's tallest housing – as well as the results of the post-1989 architectural transformation, or Warsaw's "Manhattan," consisting of skyscrapers, near the Central Railway Station and UN Circle. The current construction craze in the city center might be contrasted with the disurbanization on the city's outskirts, where the sad housing projects of the 1970s dominate.

In spite of all this, the walkways are not designed to transform the city into an interesting tourist site. An alternate transfer network, they are there above all to serve the city's inhabitants, enable them to move about without encountering road traffic, encouraging us to stroll around the city we inhabit everyday. In his famous essay *Bridge and Door*, Georg Simmel describes a certain architectural phenomenon: "Path building, one could say, is a specifically human achievement; the animal, too, continuously overcomes a separation and often in the cleverest and most ingenious ways, but its beginning and end remain unconnected, it does not accomplish the miracle of the road, freezing movement into a solid structure that commences from it and in which it terminates."²³ Jarosław Kozakiewicz's *Transfer*, a network of surface and elevated walkways that delineates new, unexpected links, bestows upon city traffic a specific form and attempts to reveal the miracle of the road.

Translated by Borys Pugacz-Muraszkiewicz

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 - 2 Edgar Allan Poe, "The Man of the Crowd" in *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe – Volume 5*, Project Gutenberg Etext of *The Works of Edgar Allan Poe* – Volume 5 of the Raven Edition, Etext-No. 2151, <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2151>.
 - 3 Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*, trans. Alfred MacAdam (New York: Pantheon Books, 1991), p. 266.
 - 4 Louis Aragon, *Nightwalker (Le paysan de Paris)*, trans. Frederick Brown (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 94.
 - 5 See Fernando Magallanes, "Landscape Surrealism" in *Surrealism and Architecture*, ed. Thomas Mical (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 222.
 - 6 Ferdinand Lion, *Geschichte biologisch gesehen* (Zurich, Leipzig: 1935) quoted in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland, Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 435 [M9.4].
 - 7 Dorota Masłowska, *Paw królowej* (Warszawa: Lampa i Iskra Boża, 2005), p. 45.
 - 8 Lewis Mumford, *The City in History. Its Origins, Its Transformation, and Its Prospects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd. UK, 1966), p. 407.
 - 9 Ibidem, p. 599.
 - 10 See Marta Leśniakowska, *Architektura w Warszawie 1945–1965* (Warszawa: Arkada Pracownia Historii Sztuki, 2003), p. 3.
 - 11 Grzegorz Stiasny, "Centrum wzdłuż ulicy," *Architektura-Murator*, no. 5, 2001, p. 42.
 - 12 Grzegorz Miecugow, "Warszawa to nie są polityczne konfitury," *Dziennik* (24–25 June 2006), p. 4.
 - 13 "Izba Urbanistów. Rozmowa Joanny Szperling z Krzysztofem Domaradzkiem," *Architektura-Murator*, no. 10, 2001, pp. 66–67.
 - 14 Edmond Jaloux, "Le dernier flâneur", *Le Temps* (22 May 1936), as quoted in W. Benjamin, op. cit., p. 435 [M9a.3].
 - 15 Victor Hugo, *Oeuvres complètes*, novels, vol. 9 (Paris: 1881), pp. 166, 180 (*Les Misérables*, "L'Intestin de Leviathan") as quoted in W. Benjamin, op. cit., p. 412 [L3a.4].
 - 16 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Manifesto of Futurism" (1909) in *Let's Murder the Moonshine: Selected Writings*, trans. R. W. Flint, Arthur A. Coppotelli (Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Classics, 1991).
 - 17 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 825.
 - 18 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York. A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1994), pp. 84, 124.
 - 19 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 115.
 - 20 Emile de Labeolliere, *Histoire du nouveau Paris* (Paris: 1860) as quoted in W. Benjamin, op. cit., p. 532.
 - 21 See Christine M. Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994).
 - 22 L. Aragon, op. cit., p. 99.
 - 23 Georg Simmel, *Bridge and Door in Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. Neil Leach (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 66.