

HANNA GRZESZCZUK-BRENDEL  
Poznań University of Technology

PIOTR MARCINIAK  
Poznań University of Technology

## Images of the City. Urban Jungle—Urban Desert—Urban Meadow

Cities emerge as a result of diverse social, economic, political and ideologic processes, which, in turn, creates a varied network of interrelations. These interrelations are revealed in city spaces, the architecture, in the interactions of their residents, as well as in the *imaginarium* created by them. The question regarding the importance of the urban form for those inhabiting it has been posed by prominent urban planners (Lynch 2011), and the image of the city has been interpreted by the most renowned scholars (Łotman 2008, Sennett 2015). A separate city studies have already emerged from cultural studies (Rewers 2005), creating a new area of examination of space.

One might wonder, whether the need for metaphorizing the city is not being suppressed by the multifaceted studies of the city and its reception, as well as the increasingly complex issues connected with it. Perhaps it is also influenced by the overproduction of images, ubiquitous recording of messages? Here, the metaphor is understood as an attempt to comprehensively define the nature of the city, which in previous centuries was exhibited by such terms as organism, machine, house, way of life, fossilized history/memory or theater (Hnilica 2014, Abbasy 2010).

The terms from the title are situated on different levels. “Urban jungle” is one of the metaphors for describing existence in the city; it expresses almost a demonic life force present in nature and urban sensuality. Essentially, it refers

to the dark, dangerous back alleys of the city, where cultural and moral inhibitions are forsaken and people reveal their primal instincts. The city becomes a setting that allows for or even triggers such reactions.

The concrete “urban desert” is an image of unfriendly spaces, which arise from modernist decisions made in urban planning: residential blocks constructed with precast concrete panels or squares and streets located in the city center, stripped of greenery and hostile to the residents. Large areas laced with impassable expressways soon became synonymous with social alienation and life deprived of access to the rhythm of the central district.

The opposite of the “urban jungle” and the “urban desert” seems to be the “urban meadow” related to the initiatives of the residents; therefore, it is the level of action, not only the metaphor. The urban meadow is an emblematic example of pro-ecological practices in urban spaces—including those in design, as well as social and individual practices—which implement the ecological worldview of the era. Thus, nature becomes a mirror in which the culture of the Anthropocene is reflected, as is evidenced in art, urban planning and alternative activities. It also appears in projects of ecological houses and future cities with a new paradigm of space. One may wonder whether the contemporary idea of urban nature has taken on different, additional meanings.

As it seems, urban metaphors referring to nature often carry negative connotations; the reception of nature-related city projects, however, is undoubtedly positive. This raises questions: what jungle, desert and meadow are we currently referring to—natural or urban? What are they for? Do they remain in opposition to technological visions of the city, or do they complement them? Are these metaphors still valid? Do they help to understand the qualities of the city and/or nature? Interpreting the images of the city is not an endeavor reserved only for their creators—architects or urban planners—it becomes a task for philosophers, painters, writers and a wide range of researchers and observers.

The proposed subject proved inspiring for researchers of numerous disciplines, who have submitted their articles for the new issue of the “Comparisons” journal, presenting diverse approaches to urban spaces and their impressions in various contexts of nature.

The introductory article (*Urban jungle – urban desert – urban meadow*) tackles the variety of the threads of thought arising from the current issue’s leit-motif of a metaphor. It aims to identify topics and indicate further areas for new associations, rather than give an exhaustive analysis. The observations made by the authors of the introduction are provided in separate paragraphs and alongside the discussions of individual texts.

Some confusion arises when reviewing literature on non-literal associations with the city: there are remarkably few publications about this topic, despite the fact that metaphors describing the city are very diverse and one might regard them as exhibiting the worldviews of individual eras (Hnilica 2014), with the connections to nature appearing to be remarkably enduring. This is indicated by the studies of the issues of individual cities, for example, Berlin (Schürings 2009) or Saint Petersburg (Abbasy 2010) and—in a slightly different area of study—creating the myth of the city in literature, as shown by, for instance, the studies led by Vladimir Toporov (Toporow 2000).

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Images of the city manifest themselves as metaphorical references. Metaphors are a means of storytelling as well, opening up possibilities in relation to architectural drawings or urban plans—they refine them, but also introduce additional meanings. Creating a relationship between the phenomenon and its functioning as a linguistic fact is the focus of Johannes Dahm's article (*Geokritische Perspektiven auf urbane Räume vor dem Hintergrund der kognitionslinguistischen Blending-Theorie*), which presents descriptions of the city in different relationships by referring to geocritical paradigms. These include transgressivity, spatio-temporal relations and extralinguistic reality (referentiality), which allow for examining the creation and functioning of mental images of the city in between fiction and reality. Special attention is paid to concepts of the conceptual integration theory and thereby the focus is not on specific metaphors or analyses, but on the linguistic mediation of the city. The author postulates greater interdisciplinarity by referring to methodology/methodological issues, as well as theoretical models and the function of language in discovering new worlds in literary works. Furthermore, the author seeks to examine the extent to which representations of the real existing urban spaces differ from fictional representations of imagined spaces in literary works.

This methodological examination serves as a framework for analyses devoted to individual cities depicted in literature. Since antiquity, the city has been juxtaposed with an idyllic communion with nature, whose gentleness harmonized with the serene, simple life of man. Such idyll was described by Theocritus (Teokryt 1973) and later by Virgil (Wergiliusz 1953) who, in his collection *The Bucolics*, creates the concept of Arcadia—a land of happiness. Thus, they praised nature rather than criticized the city which, despite its different way of life, was spatially close to the surrounding nature.

The rapid growth of cities since the mid-nineteenth century has revived the myth of nature as a source of human spirituality developed with a sense of

oneness with the cosmos, as depicted by the romantics, especially in German philosophy. The idealization of nature occurred when the alienation of the urban man, deprived of daily contact with nature in the cultural world he has created, was recognized. Such a juxtaposition of civilization and natural life was proposed earlier by, for instance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (Rousseau 1955).

The yearning for contact with nature can be considered one of the basis for the establishment of parks and parks being open to the public in European metropolises (Łupienko 2019; Grzeszczuk-Brendel 2024). Accessible to an increasingly wider social group, these parks have improved the aesthetics and urban hygiene, but also offered a chance to escape from the “seething mob” (Słowacki 1974: 52; Trans. Kraszewski). The enclaves of greenery have allowed people to explore their own experiences, and the contact with nature has restored the illusion of freedom and the connection to the spiritual world. The denouncement of the park as a product of nineteenth-century culture rather than a natural environment was tackled by Marcin Leszczyński (“*This garden, London’s Arcadian dream*”: Juliusz Słowacki and St. James’s Park against the backdrop of cultural history of the city park). The park serves as a background for the protagonist’s coming of age, but it also accompanies his gradual disillusionment with life, the realization of his presence in history and the recognition of the transience of the world. The analysis of both the protagonist’s and the author’s consciousness against the backdrop of London parks has become an opportunity to show the maturation of the lyrical subject and the author himself. Furthermore, the city park in the then capital of the industrial world is an expression of Kordian’s nostalgia for the passing world order, juxtaposed with the vision of inevitable changes in the new world. The park is also the imagined space for a series of discourses related to the development of the modern society and the democratization of the city.

A smaller, in comparison to the parks, enclave of greenery is the urban garden discussed by Sylwia Nowak-Bajcar (*Post-Ottoman Belgrade’s gardens as an element of own tradition in Serbian discourses of the first half of the twentieth century*). Private by design and isolated from public spaces, Belgrade’s post-Ottoman gardens were entangled in both the history and the identity discourse. Along with the transformations of the growing city, they disappeared as traces of Ottoman rule were discarded and the society modernized. An analysis of these traces in literary discourses dedicated to Belgrade’s urban space helps to affirm the tremendous aesthetic impact and integrative significance evident also in the cultural dimension.

Experiencing the city as a means of self-discovery is the subject of Anna Sobiecka’s article on Gabriela Zapolska’s stay in Paris (*Zapolska’s Paris*), in which

the author considers issues related to writing about the city and the city in the text itself (Rybicka 2003: 11). The city is presented not only as a backdrop, but also a part of personal experience. Parisian spaces traversed by Zapolska become a record of sensory experiences: the hustle and bustle, the crowd, the smell and sensations caused by them. The author's attention is drawn to the contrasts between wealth and poverty, an experience which shapes her worldview. Anna Sobiecka also pays attention to the development of artistic erudition in dealing with works of art as a result of discussions with artists. In direct contact, however, with growing immersion in Parisian life and crystallization of opinions, disillusionment and weariness with the world metropolis increase. This weariness, according to Sobiecka, is connected with the pace of modernization, although Zapolska herself succumbs to this transition towards modernity. Focused on the increasingly hostile city, she "forgets" about nature as a means of reprieve.

Nature is present in the city not only as a metaphor, but also as its integral part, an urban ecosystem. Such statement challenges the culture-nature opposition and forces one to notice, for example, the subnature; that, which has so far been eradicated by man as weeds, rodents, pests.

This theme appears in several articles, for instance, in the analysis of the poetry by Władysław Sebyła (Magdalena Kokoszka, *Urban subnature and dirt: On poetry by Władysław Sebyła*). The selectively exploited subterranean nature is devastated by the industry, which in turn destroys those employed to carry out the exploitation. An example of nature which has lost identity due to human activity are mining deposits. That is why the land is "dirty", does not evoke sympathy from the outside observer and, turned upside down, forces a change in perspective. According to the author, the entanglement of man in the urban space [industrial cities – H.G.B., P.M.] can be considered a derivative of the enslavement of the earth itself. Devastated nature can destroy man, as expressed by the hordes of rats invading the sterility of urban civilization. These animal signals indicate the evil born in human minds, as well as mindless greed. They are also a sign of humans being an invasive species capable of undermining the rules of the civilized world.

Paweł Tomczok in his article *Literary discourses of industrial cities: On the examples of the Dąbrowa Basin* shows how the nineteenth century estates with high poverty rates and the negation of their existence served as a kind of a flywheel for the Communist propaganda of progress and was expressed in the reshaping of urban space at the expense of socio-spatial "relics". A distinctive feature of this article is the juxtaposition of the old disorder and the new order. Negative image of the industrial city dates back to the rapid urbanization of the nineteenth century—and yet, in this context, it is not the image of the jungle,

but rather of the swamp, and after World War II that of a barren desert. Such poverty-stricken cities are characterized by the lack of greenery, but even more so by the lack of beauty, the ugliness of pitiful nature.

The idea of an unwanted or hostile nature seems somewhat troublesome in the contemporary ecological concerns of the posthuman discourse. Andrzej Nowak (*Urban cloaca—between closeness and denial*) shows the biological layer of the city, with which the average resident wants to have as little to do as possible: the waste produced by the residents, which must be disposed of, expelled from the city as quickly as possible. The new solutions initially caused objection to the waste being “wasted”, since it was used as natural fertilizer, which in turn formed the foundation of the city-village-city exchange. However, the issue of waste could no longer be denied. It was the stench and the odor of the city that became the reason for the construction of water and sewer systems. The struggle for cleanliness and hygiene was an indispensable part of the development and progress of civilization, and the devices that improved health conditions allowed for the emergence of metropolises that could not exist without them. The overlooked, or even shamefully hidden, layer of urban waste became the starting point for the creation of a system that allowed daily life on its surface.

These transformations are reflected not only in literature, but also in photography, which accompanied the development of the city in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as discussed by Lech Lechowicz in his article *Photographic image of cities: from admiration to anxiety* with a focus on the movement of recording urban life. It is worth noting that initially technological limitations resulted in photographs capturing a motionless, deserted city. Perhaps this is why numerous nineteenth century frames emanate a peculiar air of nostalgia, although it is also the result of a conscious effort by artists to record the changes and the transient character of the city. Over time, photography also became a means of documenting the lives of its residents and, to a large extent, their misery. Photography made it possible to see the city in different aspects—from the full dynamic of the people’s existence to the dystopian space of the poverty-stricken estates. This approach changes in the early twentieth century along with the increasing fascination with progress in [some] avant-garde circles, which was accompanied by artistic experimentation. Photography also became an space for reflection on the city as a source of threats to nature.

As it turns out, the natural world, nature and biology can have different connotations: just as we do not want to see and smell sewage, so—with all due respect—we do not want to think about the fact that under our skin there is simply flesh. The biological imagery of the city became more common at the turn of the twentieth century, when the negative effects of the metropolitan

development were noticed. The nature in these associations was hostile, unwelcoming to man and defined an environment unsuitable for life. The urban jungle evoked images of depraved dive bars, poverty, dark alleys, the margins of society and suspicious entertainments that both shocked and tempted the bourgeois. Inner spiritual decay appears in Berent's novel *Próchno (Punk wood)*, and its title further emphasizes the barrenness of urban decay—punk wood cannot become a lifegiving humus and will at most be trampled under the feet of inattentive passerby. The urban setting in the paintings of Ludwig Kirchner also reveal the degradation of man and his surroundings—which is especially evident in a juxtaposition with the joyful snapshots captured in Paris by the impressionists (Grzeszczuk-Brendel 2016).

The excessive, almost cancerous vitality of the jungle with hostile creatures lurking in the thicket is connected to spiritual depletion, which links the two metaphors with seemingly disparate connotations. The vegetative overabundance of the jungle and the seemingly devoid of life desert are not hospitable environments for “ordinary” people. The two metaphors refer to the exotic, which both tempts and frightens. It is worth to take into consideration how these exotic associations relate to the imperial policy of European countries, represented in the colonies by not only their officials, but also those not fully subservient—seemingly indispensable and admired, but nevertheless somewhat suspicious.

The negative evaluation of the exotic is worth noting in connection with its later handling by the Nazis: the term “Arab village”, when used to refer to the avant-garde Weissenhof estate, was an invective, emphasizing its incompatibility with “wholesome” values symbolized by the “typical for Germany” woods. The mythos of Germanity, built around the concept of woods, was the original source of identity and strength for the German people and later became the framework for the extermination of the Other, who did not fit into the prescribed norms. These norms encompassed not only human races, but also the landscape and the architecture, as reflected in the concept of *Stadtlandschaft*—the urban landscape. In the Third Reich, the reconciliation of then opposing concepts was aimed at empowering metropolises, which were blamed for the degradation of man. Issues related to the interpenetration of the city and the landscape in Nazi ideology are described by Hanna Grzeszczuk-Brendel (*Around the concept of urban landscape: Stadtlandschaft*).

The metaphor of the jungle is still used today to describe the sociological phenomena of the big city, chiefly the mechanisms of exclusion (Blum 2002), related to the question of whom the city “wants” and accepts within a designated range. The metaphor of the jungle can thus extend to other disciplines, for instance, to the laws of the capitalist housing market. This issue is described by

Erika Brandl in her article “*Survival*” of the fittest, “*sheltering*” of the mightiest: *competition and regulation in contemporary urban housing markets*. The major issue of manufacturing unaffordable housing provokes a discussion on the housing environment in urban spaces. The author writes about a competitive landscape in which companies and individuals compete fiercely for access to urban resources. This analysis relates to the image of urban jungle, where only an evolutionary fight for existence can ensure survival, and society cannot experience a sense of stability, safety and peace.

The concrete “urban desert”<sup>1</sup> is an image of hostile spaces which are the result of modernist decisions in urban planning: residential blocks constructed with precast concrete panels or located in the center of squares and streets, stripped of greenery and hostile to the residents. The poverty of these spaces became particularly apparent after the political transformation in 1989, while today, in the face of pathologies in the housing development, the former estates are redeeming their “good name”. Renovating apartment blocks, upgrading the apartments through departures from norms, maintenance of the extensive green areas and the infrastructure change the reception of these estates. Research on the current condition of late-socialist block housing is presented by Marek Nowak, Lucyna Błażejczyk-Majka and Sławomir Palicki (*A “concrete desert” that has become a green meadow? Questions about late-socialist block housing in the context of the phenomenon of their socio-economic vitality based on the case of Poland*), who focuses on the analysis of the established socio-spatial relations, housing cooperative in capitalist economy and the context of the trends in the real estate market. In doing so, the author points out the role of management efficiency and the empowerment of socialist molochs, which enabled their existence in the transformed market economy.

Monika Bildy (*Der platte (?) Alltag in der Platte. Zur Umdeutung eines Architektur-Monsters in der neueren deutschen und polnischen Prosa. Zwei Fallstudien*), presents the issue of living in residential blocks constructed with precast concrete panels from a different point of view. She refers to the functioning of these spaces in the prose of two authors on the opposing sides of the former Iron Curtain: Tomasz Różycki and Katja Oskamp (Różycki 2023; Oskamp 2019). Here, the motif of the estate as a new type of urban space is relevant. It organizes the world of the residents and coexists/competes with the traditional areas of the old town or the city center—examined in Michel Foucault’s category of heterotopia. These estates emerge as completely new areas in which not only

1 While the concept of the urban desert has entered the colloquial language, research into this phenomenon is underdeveloped.



the individual stories, but also the collective memory recorded in space play a dominant role. According to the author, the estate habitat is a block and the space—a box in which individual stories mix and overlap. This reading brings a completely different meaning to familiar places.

The urban desert can function not only as a metaphor, but also as a kind of a starting point after, for instance, the devastation of war, as is the case with Königsberg/Kaliningrad. As opposed to a desert existing separately from human life, the emptiness here becomes a story, recording in the city itself and in the accounts of it, as showed by Roman Bobryk (*A crippled city? The image of Königsberg/Kaliningrad in Polish literature and journalism*). The physical deterioration of Kaliningrad after World War II was sealed by political decisions, its nearness to the border, military significance and exchange of residents. This results in the main impression of the quoted stories to being one of unfamiliarity and incoherence of the oppressive space, which points to the loss of past glory and conjures shadows of emblematic monuments—no longer existing, but still recalled. The crippled urban structure escapes definition. It is merely a prosthesis of the city, where the survival strategy refers to the image of the former Königsberg. For its residents, it is an irrevocably lost ideal state, the negation of which is the new Soviet order.

The development of modern technology pushes the desert to try to become a place to live, as discussed by Magdalena Matysek-Imielińska (*The Line—a city in the desert: A laboratory of hyper-modernity and two visions of the future*). As the author correctly states, the modernist arrogance in thinking about the concept of progress is exposed in *The Line* project, implemented as a utopian vision of the future in Saudi Arabia. It is a mirror in which the modern image of settling/utilizing the desert, based on money, technology and the paradigm of modernity, is reflected. The confidence in conquering forces of nature leads to fighting a losing battle. Surprising here is the mythologization of the chronic human yearning to assign meaning to spaces formed by time and forces of nature. The futuristic dream of conquering the desert echoes the already familiar inequalities and dramas of the capitalist city. The sterile, seemingly independent of its environment, self-sufficient city of the future is the opposite of the pursuit to harmonize with nature. This pursuit was presented at the 18<sup>th</sup> Venice Architecture Biennale (2023). It is noteworthy that various exhibitions presented the view that leveling the playing field gives equal opportunities to both nature and man—for instance, in Africa, which still struggles with extreme climate threats and the legacy of colonialism.

The need for redefining the city, its character, reception and relationship with the environment is felt on many levels, especially in the face of global

urbanization and climate change. “New European Bauhaus” is one of many attempts at establishing new ways of thinking about the city, which would lead to substantial political decisions. Paweł Kubicki (*New Urban Narratives and the New European Bauhaus*) outlines its key ideas in relation to the existing urban forms. Associations with the historic Bauhaus should not evoke the obsolete modernist ideas, but rather—as emphasized by the author—creativity of thinking and maintaining of social ties. One of the proposals is to strengthen the city’s capacity to withstand crises, which requires identifying mechanisms of social and interspecies exchange within a holistic habitat. Paradoxically, this new European initiative has triggered the activity of urban conservative movements. Their growing influence stems not only from the contestation of official progressive narratives, but also from the pursuit of a new vision of functioning in the environment. Today they exert a growing influence on the public discussion of the future of the city.

The new relationship between man and the world is linked to the study of happiness in the new, emerging future within the framework of the interdisciplinary project “Laboratorium and szczęściem. Życie po komfortoocenie”. The project is presented in the article written by Maciej Kowalewski, Marek Ostrowski, Marta Sobolewska, Dorota Kowalewska, Natalia Predel and Katarzyna Kordas (*Embassy of Nature: On the importance of overgrowth and other relationships with plants*). The article is the result of posing new questions about the relationship between humans and nature, a consideration of the possibilities of dialogue with biological organisms from a position of equal subjectivity.

The concept of befriending the beings around us seems tempting, and, in addition, it can alleviate the feeling of “remorse” for the abusive relationship with the non-human world. While it is necessary to establish new rules for these relationships, new questions also emerge in the process, including those of man’s separateness and safety. Nature is not a teddy to be cuddled, as it can also be a menacing bear. It seems somewhat puzzling that in an effort to outline a state of harmony, none of the articles discuss the catastrophic visions and anxiety caused by man’s destruction of nature. Such sentiments were expressed, for example, by Nicolas Groszpiere and Kobas Laksa at the Polish Pavilion exhibition in Venice in 2008, which presented a post-human world in which nature drowned out the traces of human activity. When considering other species, one cannot regard the natural universe as an idyll without recognizing its power and destructive potential. Against the backdrop of negative imagery of the jungle and the desert, the urban meadow may seem like a state of harmony, a nonantagonistic relationship between man and nature, which flourished thanks to the initiatives of citizens and activists.

This is an enticing vision, in which a lasting relationship between the city and the forces of nature is crucial.

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These associations indicate the richness and diversity of city/nature concepts related to urban planning, shaping, experiencing and describing. The dangers of the urban jungle were the source for urbanistic concepts of healing the city and transforming the jungle into an orderly urban landscape and into a sterile concrete space. This coincides with changes in the social and moral functioning of the city and its residents, as well as the philosophical questions on the relationship between man and nature, man and the city, the city and nature. They are a new outlook on the man's place in the world, stemming from a sense of threat of climate change and the prospect of destroying the planet. The existing metaphors appear to be losing their relevance and new metaphors are no longer being created, which could confirm the conviction—reiterated in several articles— that the man-city-nature paradigm is changing and that creating metaphors gives way to substantial action. Undoubtedly, a new chapter is opening in the post-industrial and post-modern era, changing the functioning of space and the relationship between man and nature, which will lead to the creation of new metaphors and connections between worlds. A description of this relationship can be found in the articles featured in this issue.

*Translated by Barbara Konieczna*

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## | Abstract

HANNA GRZESZCZUK-BRENDEL, PIOTR MARCINIAK

**Images of the city. Urban Jungle—Urban Desert—Urban Meadow**

The article *Images of the City. Urban Jungle—Urban Desert—Urban Meadow* constitutes an introduction to the journal volume of the same title. It is a discussion of the main issues raised in the volume. The metaphors of the title are discussed in relation to literature, urban planning and real-life activities. Each of them describes changes in the social functioning of the city and its inhabitants. It also defines philosophical questions about the relationship between man and nature, man and the city, the city and nature. Particularly relevant is the question about contemporary metaphors of the city and discourse about culture and nature it evokes.

**Keywords:** metaphors of the city, urban studies, architectural humanities

## | Bio

Hanna Grzeszczuk-Brendel – prof. dr hab. na Wydziale Architektury Politechniki Poznańskiej. Historyczka sztuki po studiach w Instytucie Historii Sztuki UAM w Poznaniu, pracowała w Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, obecnie zatrudniona jako profesor TU Poznań. Jest członkinią ICOMOS, polsko-niemieckiej grupy roboczej historyków sztuki i konserwatorów.

Jej zainteresowania badawcze obejmują przemiany miasta europejskiego w XIX i XX wieku, architekturę i urbanistykę Poznania w kontekście kulturowym oraz aktualnie w największym stopniu problematykę architektury i planowania przestrzennego w okresie III Rzeszy. Najważniejsze publikacje: *Mieszkanie w mieście. Poznań w kontekście europejskich reform mieszkaniowo-urbanistycznych* (Poznań 2018), *Eine Stadt zum Leben. Städtebau und Wohnungsreform in Posen in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Oldenburg 2018), *Glass houses and glass architecture* (2011), *Private Memory in Public Space* (2022), *Ciało ludzkie – ciało ludu w przestrzeni nazistowskiej* (2020), *Third Reich architecture in Poznań and issues of interpretation* (Kraków 2021). Współkuratorka międzynarodowej wystawy *Poznań – Straszburg. Od miasta rezydencjonalnego do współczesnego* (Biblioteka Raczyńskich w Poznaniu) w ramach XXIII Międzynarodowego Kongresu Nauk Historycznych w 2022 roku. E-mail: hanna.grzeszczuk-brendel@put.poznan.pl

ORCID: 0000-0003-4467-8975

Prof. dr hab. inż. arch. Piotr Marciniak jest architektem, historykiem architektury, konserwatorem oraz pedagogiem. Studiował architekturę na Politechnice Poznańskiej, teologię i filozofię na Papieskim Wydziale Teologicznym (UAM) w Poznaniu oraz konserwację zabytków architektury na Uniwersytecie Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu. Stypendysta w Instytucie Herdera w Marburgu. Jest profesorem na Wydziale Architektury Politechniki Poznańskiej oraz kierownikiem Zakładu Historii, Teorii i Ochrony Dziedzictwa.

Jest autorem ponad 150 publikacji, w tym książek *Doświadczenia Modernizmu. Architektura i urbanistyka Poznania w czasach PRL (2010)* oraz *Konteksty i modernizacje. Studia z dziejów architektury i urbanistyki w PRL (2018)*. Twórca blisko 200 projektów architektonicznych, urbanistycznych i konserwatorskich. Kierownik projektu badawczego „Strasburg i Poznań: różne spojrzenia na dzielnice cesarskie w dobie Cesarstwa Niemieckiego” oraz jeden z kuratorów wystawy „Poznań – Strasburg. Od imperialnych do europejskich powinowactw” prezentowanej w Bibliotece Raczyńskich w Poznaniu (2022). Jego zainteresowania badawcze koncentrują się na architekturze współczesnej w Polsce i Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej, ochronie dziedzictwa kulturowego oraz transgranicznych i międzykulturowych uwarunkowaniach ochrony współczesnego dziedzictwa architektonicznego w Europie.

E-mail: piotr.marciniak@put.poznan.pl

ORCID: 0000-0002-4404-1184