

BIOS AND MODERN CITIES

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We all have the right to live in an unpolluted environment under healthy living conditions. Most of us live in large cities polluted by fumes and smog. After work, people return to their apartment which fails to provide recreation facilities. New cities, whether in East, West, North or South, create a similar surrounding: large numbers of apartments and the necessary means for modern living. These apartments are built without regard for those who will live in them. One may easily spend hours close to the Acropolis and not feel comfortable when surrounded by huge concrete buildings.

In the West, modern cities have gained their stereotyped appearance since it is faster and cheaper to build blocks of apartments in limited areas with the use of heavy machinery and advanced technology. The same applies to socialist countries but profit is of less importance. More emphasis is placed on the availability of homes. The results are similar in both cases. Those in charge of urban planning are not always considerate of the people who will live in such blocks.

Poland is no exception to the above. However, like many other European countries, Poland was destroyed during the Second World War. Some cities were damaged by 80%. Most major cities were destroyed by more than 50%. After the war, there was no choice but to build rapidly in order to secure basic housing for the people. Another factor accentuating the growth of cities in Poland was the immigration of people from the country to the cities. The country/city ratio has been reversed from 60/40 to 40/60%. Because of the urgency of house shortages, buildings were constructed without regard to future implications.

Many countries in Europe use big slab technology developed in the Federal Republic of Germany. Some socialist countries adopted the same techniques in order to produce "house factories". Big slab technology proved useful for a while. All the elements needed for construction are produced at one site; the materials are then transported to the construction area and the pieces are put together like a Leggo model. However, this method is expensive due to the large amounts of steel needed. People living inside such apartments are literally spending their lives within steel cages. Such apartment blocks, over a period of time, gain a radioactivity level much higher than is permitted by law.

In the Housing Cooperative of Warsaw, there are more than 7,500 apartments with another 3,000 being built. Thus, there are 230,000 people living in a total area of 45 hectares. Only big slab technology is used for the entire area. The result of living in such conditions has been the following:

- the rate of miscarriage is 37.8% higher with respect to women who live in traditionally-built houses;
- Childhood sickness is higher by 17.3%;
- Children from these areas feel tired at school, lack energy, and are disinterested in sports. This could be due to the use of chemicals in construction;
- Residents often feel alone and isolated;
- Suicide rates are much higher in comparison to rural areas;
- Neighbourhood ties, always of importance in Polish culture, have started to weaken.

The British say that "one's home is one's castle" but even in a castle, one needs neighbours. Although the present situation in Poland cannot be changed, plans should be made for the future. For example, the older and more experienced constructors could be asked to use their knowledge for the building of new houses.

It is for this reason that Biopolitics can serve as a valuable aid to construction experts. Ideals of Biopolitics should be promoted among urban planners, civil engineers and architects. Instead of their interest being solely in profit rates, they could include consideration for the quality of life of residents. The Housing Cooperative of Warsaw has decided to construct a Bios-City with due regard to the needs and comfort of inhabitants. Such cities may represent a return to nature for the next millennium.

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