The Barriers of the Post-Modern City.
(Civilization of Upturned Fences)

It is easy to love the whole mankind.
It is far more difficult to bear you closest neighbour.
Dubrawka Ugrešić

Summary

The article describes the problem of dividing/fencing off the areas in the contemporary post-modern towns and cities. The author analyzes the problem of the so called “upturned fences”, by means of which he divides the urban area in Poland. He argues that the reason for such a situation is the attitude of lifting up based on the consumer metabolism which is understood in a peculiar way. This mechanism generates the phenomenon of sustained consumption which is the realization of the need of being significant. This need has been underrated by the anthropologists. However, it seems to play an important role in human life. Information metabolism (being the inspiration for conceiving such a notion) in Kępiński’s version is a biological construct, and it places the sense of security at such a level. On the other hand, consumer metabolism is a social mechanism. It is responsible for the sense of social security which depends on the position that we hold in the community and on the distance that separates us from other people. A high position gives us a high sense of security due to the subordinate position of other people and it gives us the right distance. Low position is a threat because it can mean subordination and loss of control over one’s own life. When we consume more, we achieve a high social position; when we lose this opportunity, our position becomes lower. The level of how important we are in the opinion of other people decreases. The mechanism is similar to the control manipulation of consciousness. It is, however, more complicated than the one we encounter in interpersonal manipulations. It is based on the manipulation of the human cultural environment so as to, as a consequence, make the human being – who is a product of such an environment – participate unwittingly in this practice. This mechanism itself co-founded, defended its reasonableness and, often genuinely happy, was deceived by its manipulative delusion. According to my belief, this is the way in which an upturned fence is created. It is meant to be a symbol of independence, it is a symbol of socio-manipulative influences of civilization.

Keywords: post-modern city, upturned fences, consumption metabolism.
Introduction

Organizing the space (around oneself), specifying the distances (between us), defining the mutual relations as a method of communication (between people) makes for a specifically understood projection of our own system of values, own personal understanding or recognition of one’s own place in the world, defining one’s own attitude towards other people and the world in general. In such a way we can specify and uncover our lifestyle to others, unveiling how we understand and define the quality of life, social bonds, what we understand by privacy and what makes, for instance, our social or public sphere. According to Marschall McLuhan, our territoriality is the extension of ourselves. “Our car, our armchair, our office make an integral part of our territory. «Don’t enter my bedroom!», «Don’t touch my stuff!»: I «extends to the objects»1.

I think that the way of separating one’s own space from the space of others and from social space is an important element of the space (and projection) of such a type. The city, as a place and way of life, close to one another reveals this phenomenon clearly2. Today other problems come to existence3. They are connected with, e.g. in our country, specific new way of separating from others and defining in such a way one’s place and attitude towards the world beyond the fence. The so-called upturned fence is the essence of the problem4.

City

Among the theorists of culture knowledge of culture, anthropology etc. there is a disagreement about the attempts to differentiate the scope and contents of such terms as “culture” and “civilization”5. The belief of Spengler, who thinks that the term ‘civilization’ describes decadent periods of the so-called «great cultures»6, makes an interesting suggestion. “Civilization is associated with what is mechanical, technical, bureaucratic and spiritless”7. The existence of the so-

1 Ch. Balon, X. Mignot, Komunikacja, translated by M. Sowa, Published by Wyd. Flair, Kraków 2008, p. 158.
3 I presented them in part at a conference organized by the Adam Mickiewicz University in Kalisz at the international conference “Creativity in the Arts and Educations” 21–22.05.2014, the presentation entitled Separation in artistic experience – barriers in post-modern cites.
4 In Poland fences/ railings are more and more often with the „right” gate to the farmyard and “left” to the outside – so it is against the old tradition.
called well-established civilization i.e. the culture that is practical, technologically oriented, bureaucratic, full of stiff, cultural rules and moral conventions / that does not liquidate the excessive moral liberalism\(^8\) is the indication of the decline and characterizes the decadent periods of the culture development. Generally, a good indication is comprised in the definition that says, “[…] that civilization is the culture of city life”\(^9\). Civilization means the city culture\(^10\).

The essence of the city life is based on some assumptions.

Gehlen thinks that a man of the city, that is marked with the deficit, lives in the substitute reality. He wrote: “A man as an organism is then a «being» marked with deficit […], in every natural environment he would be inadaptable, thus he has to create his second nature, i.e. artificially adapted substitute world, including unreliability of its organic equipment and does it wherever we see him. One lives in an artificially purified environment, changed in such a way as to make it serve life – and this is our sphere of culture. One can say that a man is biologically forced to rule over nature”\(^11\). Surrounding himself with the products of his own hands and mind, a man creates an artificial, though natural world for himself.

It means that a man must surround himself with own products. The artificial, technical and urban (cultural as Gehlen says) environment, completing a man, can be treated as some kind of inevitable prosthesis, not necessarily good but allowing a man for the penetration of previously inaccessible spheres of reality, establishing other (different) method of existence. Different from the previous traditional lifestyles. The methods which will be the result of cultural and biological evolution are later considered to be completely natural. A man, due to his universality and, at the same time, his incompleteness (as if he was an incomplete construct – Morin), openness and imperfection, must still adapt to the environment, creating new prostheses. Such prostheses are the tools that allow a man to penetrate the world within the scopes of the natural methods that are difficult to reach. However, it is not a feature characteristic for the mankind\(^12\), the specifics and intensification of the phenomenon is inevitably a unique human feature.

No doubt that the most important construct and the most significant prosthesis that separated us from the natural environment, limited the degree of freedom, is the city; a metropolis or even megapolis, a large urban, industrial and social complex that effectively isolates inhabitants from the natural environment.


\(^10\) Culture understood in such a way is composed of the suburbs and villages that imitate cities due to snobbery and unwillingness towards countryside lifestyle associated with underdevelopment. In such a sense a village is also within the area of cities culture.


The meaning and the role of the city result from some important conditionings. Firstly, the size of the cities and their effective versatility allows a man to live all his life without leaving it for a longer period. A man living in a city, especially an inhabitant of large metropolis in the industrialized parts of the world connects all his life with the city and neither feels or needs to go beyond the borders of the metropolis. Of course, we are talking about some contractual borders and some contractual crossing. The borders are specified by the specific model of life existing in such a place; the method resulting from technical, urban and social conditionings. A contemporary man, an inhabitant of a large city often cannot imagine living in another place, crossing the contractual borders. Most probably living beyond the borders indicated by the city civilization is an abstraction for the inhabitant of the contemporary, industrial world.

Large cities were created as a consequence of the change of Nomads’ lifestyle, who at a certain moment of their history decided to settle down. At present the development of cities has been connected with vivid industrialization and the establishment of certain civilization formation based on heavy industry, that A. Toffler called the Civilization of the Second Wave. Thus it is the natural environment of a contemporary man of the 21st century, at least the one who lives in the civilization mainstream. This is the first feature of the environment.

The second is the reason for which the city was established. According to Jonas, the city was set up to make the method of man’s limitation. Expansion, that is characteristic for the world of Nomads, was replaced with limitations, indicating exact borders of existence and expansion at the same time. Indicating the constraints that specified the borders of a new style of life. It is not only limitation (as it is seen externally); it is also specifying (underlining) in a most visible way, the place where we are, where our concept of conquering and creating our own world is placed.

The walls of the city stress the uncertainty of human existence and instability of his products. It is an attempt to separate from the natural world, to escape from it. The escape is apparent to a large extent. A coincidence, fortune or madness, as Jonas says, can consequently lead to the cancellation of all human achievements and may destroy the city, similar to entropy that can order energetic levels to the neutral scale (i.e. natural) balance.

This limitation resulted in some changes. It is also the internal world inside the city walls that is changing. A man takes responsibility for that area, though

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15 There, p. 51.
17 There, p. 25.
even within the city he is not able to engulf everything\textsuperscript{18}. The external world, intuitively closer to nature, becomes unfamiliar to the man of a city, more unfamiliar than the one he lives in. One does not want and does not take the responsibility for what is outside the city.

Life within the surrounds of walls is characterized by certain features. The first is separation from the outside world, the second – specific proportion of interpersonal relations that are created inside the city. Morin calls it ‘over-complexity’ and defines it as soothing the compulsion, soothing the strong environmental determinism that the people living in the natural environment are surrendered to. In nature, the margin of biological safety (biological degree of freedom) that has to be regarded by people is minor. The more natural the conditions of existence are (in a way – primary), the closer to the natural ecological environment, the smaller the possibilities of a man to design his own life and go beyond the culturally established and checked borders. In very difficult conditions the possibilities of specifying new life strategies equal zero\textsuperscript{19}. It is the consequence of the scope of risk that accompanies human undertakings. Non-standard actions, operating within social and decision making degree of freedom, are burdened with the risk of an error. The risk results from the excessive lack of knowledge (too big deficit of knowledge\textsuperscript{20}), inability of specifying the results and aim that is beyond the range of our planning. The aim, in the new situations that are at the margin of the degree of freedom is never precisely specified. Due to the above, when undertaking an action, we undertake the risk of making a mistake and crossing the barrier of safety indicated by the degree of freedom (e.g. indicated by acceptable level of anatomy). That is why, with too little margin of safety (especially the biological one), people do not take the risk of new solutions, as they are afraid of losing that can be too risky in their situation. Thus, living close to the natural environment they are so determined, they are conservative by conviction. The margin of error, connected with reference to ignorance, counting on the fact that it will surprise us positively, and the profit of the non-standard behaviour will be bigger than we assumed, does not happen too often. People, not separated with prostheses from the nature are not revolutionists; they act schematically and along with old tradition\textsuperscript{21}. They are afraid of acting within the area of innovative degree of freedom.

The city changes that model. Being a considerably large prosthesis itself, it screens the world of nature, takes us away from nature and allows forgetting about its influence. Due to the above reasons, people living in the cities believe that they have effectively (sometimes finally) freed themselves from the determinism of nature and the degrees of tolerant freedom and connected risk genera-

\textsuperscript{18} There, p. 25 and 26.
\textsuperscript{19} J. Bronowski, \textit{Potęga…}, p. 64 and on.
\textsuperscript{21} J. Bronowski, \textit{Potęga…}, p. 59 and on.
ted by it. Such liberation really takes place, is real, though it does not have a final and unconditioned character. Softening the compulsion takes place; as Morin says: “Due to city civilization progress, determinism of rigid programming and social and cultural ritual in many fields becomes inferior to economical game, emotional and sexual drives. The statistical determinism of such movements, being similar to Brown’s movements, tries to replace the mechanical determinism. In such outbursts of apparent lack of order of individual movements, the origins of over-complexity are revealed; they create the spheres of personal, physical, economical, sexual, intellectual and maybe also political freedom”22. A man of the city does not have to predict the results of his action with hundred percent certainty, does not have to be sure that he will achieve his aim. He does not have to know it. He can allow himself for a mistake, imprecision, fault. The city, separating him from the world of nature, protects him from the most negative consequences of mistakes, compensates ignorance and takes responsibility for it. This is the second, (after limitation) feature of the city. It is incredibly liberating and creative. It allows a man to develop himself over the determined scale, cross biological conditionings, construct a new-type strategy of life.

Maybe the upturned fence is the visualization of such a new strategy, the strategy based on building inside the city (this term I understand in a wide scope, it concerns the suburbs and the so-called new villages) new organization, new complexity, new order. It is a mini-city inside a megacity. It is a new wall and new over-complexity. It is a private field of own risk inside a safe and very large area of the megalopolis. The area that is so big that it can be approached by the minds that are not completely shaped (or idealised) as representation of the whole world. Such a version of new over-complexity seems to be the most positive and friendly depiction of the phenomenon. It results from the assumption that people inside the city, inside the megapolis organize themselves with a new division, new order and new space. Maybe it is the reaction to excessive development of the city; the city is too big to reveal the advantages of its limitation to its inhabitant and effectively open safe ways for his individual development. Thus, it is not a safe place – and this was the reason of its establishment and does not guarantee certain individual promotion, resulting from the developed biological safety margin.

This interpretation is not necessarily true. In the western societies, that are more rooted in the city culture (as this is where it comes from), we do not observe such an aggressive and xenophobic separation from others. Private space is only marked there and characterizes of significant transparency. The further to the east, the clearer the outside borders, higher walls are; the demarcation line between what is mine and not is more evident, life is more covered. (It does not concern the cultures and civilizations of Asia; this is a separate issue).

Attitude towards other (unfamiliar)

The main internal problem generated by life in the city is our attitude to a neighbour. This is someone who lives close but remains a stranger. We cannot isolate from him completely, as we would lose the benefits resulting from common life / creating the city. At the same time we do not want him to be too close, as we are afraid of loosing privacy/autonomy. The attitude, the essence of which is smaller or bigger difficulty in accepting the other, in the acceptance of his otherness and the acceptance that he can expose of his otherness.

These difficulties and overcoming them or changing them evolutionally results from different reasons.

First of all, the definition always means negation. The subjectivity of relating to others is fully revealed and stressed though the contact with other. With such a perception of the world we can see the binary dualism of the world, the dialectic fight of the opposites, as well as an analogue way of thinking, known as the rule of contrast.

Secondly, one must overcome the things we do not tolerate in each other but we do not necessarily want to overcome it in ourselves. It is safer to overcome something bad at someone else. A stranger seems to be ideal for such a purpose, personifies what is ‘other’, thus, even with the extended tolerance, bad. The bad cumulates in him, not in us, so that in such a way it is washed away from us for the first time.

Thirdly, our fight with the bad that the stranger has in him purifies us. In such a way we fulfil the need of fight with the bad, not violating our status quo. It is a very safe attitude, having its own tensions but realizes them beyond us, only conveying its positive effects on us. They do not have to be only good, they often are not good. As every social and psychical phenomenon, is generates effects that are not always favourable.

Fourthly, it is the totalisation in the understanding of the world; totalisation, i.e. globalization in the anthropological sense, that is caused by a human openness to the world that Gehlen made the basic term of his anthropology. According to this term, a man is the only creature living on Earth who can, without any limitations, cross the ecological niche in such a way that finally, in the universal sense, the niche covers the whole planet. The whole world becomes ours in this meaning. In such a world there is no space and cannot be the space for the other, as its existence would be a continual existence in us would still be at us, inside, not outside as outside it does not exist.

The problem with accepting the other has also personal dimension and is inscribed into the individual private life strategy, the object of which is man’s life success. It is understood differently but reaching the aim that is crowning the efforts is regarded as an extremely important thing.

Regarding one’s own life as aiming at the target and being successful, is inevitably connected with the background that extinguishes the success. In case of
life strategies, the background is made of other people. The measure of our success is not only what we achieve, what we come up to but also that others come up to and how we are presented in comparison with them. We contrast positively – we achieved success, negatively – we did not achieve it. We do not stand out – such a situation can be, to some extent, accepted as positive, to other extent as negative. Generally, in respect towards the closest man’s surrounding, it is not seen as success or only success at the lowest level of self-tolerance. The role of contrast that governs such a situation tell us that for a man the measure of success is the contrast he sees while comparing himself with his social environment. Success makes a relative notion.

The contrast can be achieved acting positively, using, for instance, the rule of uplift. It can also be done negatively, interfering the social background and lowering its standard reference points. Such a method, ethically unworthy, can be more effective for many people. That is why it is often and eagerly used.

An upturned fence makes an explication of such a method. Its aim is to limit the significance of a neighbour, make building his personal contrast more difficult for him – or, at least, not facilitate it. We can, as the builders say, do nothing that would allow him to take advantage over us and contrast us at his own benefit. This is the upturned attitude of the uplift. Success is not measured from the starting point towards today’s condition; it is measured with the use of the difference that is between us and our neighbours. I think this is the most significant reason of the upturned fences.

The distance between people, as Bauman says, is the function of knowledge. When the load of knowledge, common experience is big, we have a chance to reach intimacy of the other man. When the load of experiences becomes smaller, our knowledge about the other diminishes, the other becomes more other and, finally, at a certain point, may become completely nameless other, someone beyond our social sphere. Then the range of our ignorance becomes the biggest, we know the least. The other becomes a person far away from a human being and is not completely a man. We tolerate him only when he functions outside, when we have nothing in common with him, we do not have to meet him. “The further from the pole of intimacy, the more frequently other people change in strangers (and, finally, they disappear completely, reaching the pole of complete namelessness). We know too little about «strangers» to start the relations that are not superficial and common. Being together with «strangers» is expressed mainly through avoiding contact”\(^\text{23}\). Social space that a man builds around himself, the space that allows us for a safe and good life, is based on getting to know common rules and aims of the people around us. The ground for building such a contact is made of common experiences, knowledge, also including the one

that concerns the world of values, the world of things that are important for us, that, being common, construct positive social space and allow us to predict our behaviour and our countrymen’s behaviour. Such a prediction, the common prediction that will not surprise us with an unexpected turning point, strange and anxious behaviour, makes the basis of our social feeling of safety, forms the basis of trust we credit to others. The trust, resulting from the certainty, that a stranger making with us our common social space will behave in a way we expect him to do and that we accept, is not only the measure of him and our world but makes the basis of tolerant acceptance and bearing him in our social space. Bauman thinks that such a role is best fulfilled by neighbours. We know them best, they make the partners of our common experience, and they are close to us. The closeness that is associated, to a certain extent, with knowledge about other, is also considered to be the measure of the accepted presence of others in our social space. Close, means – I know, far – I do not know, close – that someone is known, accepted, maybe even liked, someone who is already with us, at our intimate sphere, the presence of whom we accept and tolerate positively, so it is not only necessity but also the need, representing something important for us.

In such a sense the unturned fence does not only exemplify our isolation but it also exemplified our eagerness to build new complexity of the city and is rather the picture illustrating our unwillingness towards the neighbour, our antagonism, our unkindness or even hostility. Hostility that results form an aggressive attitude towards the world and other people. There is no space here for common social/public space, there is no community. Some kind of conflicting interests’ game is explicitly visible here, based rather on some form of manipulation, rather than common aims. In such a sense the space made of unturned fences is architectonically closed, unfavourable towards others and even aggressively hostile. It is also the exemplification of little knowledge of the people following such a pattern of behaviour, the knowledge concerning not only our neighbours but knowledge as such. An upturned fence is the symbol of badly educated people. As: “An educated man can appreciate, be delighted, with no fear that in such a way he discredits himself. It is an exact opposition to a man who is driven by resentment that Nietzsche talked about, a man who has to diminish everything so that he does not seem too small for himself. He can also, without the feeling of jealousy, appreciate the values that he himself is devoid of, as he does not take his confidence from being compared with others. That is why he is not afraid that through gratitude he can fall into dependency. What is more, he has nothing against being dependent on the people he trusts. He prefers to risk being disappointed by friends than being so mean as not to trust them at all”.

The trust that is the basis of good relations between people is responsible for building the

\[24\] Z. Bauman, *Etyka ponowoczesna*, p. 204.
social capital. In reference to it, a low social capital of people characterizes people who are badly educated and they are the builders of unturned fences.

City aggression

In a traditional biblical image a mankind experiences happiness in a garden. Eden is a garden. The place where there are no borders, fences and railings. People live in an open space of a garden, are happy and unlimited physically. The only limitation is made by God’s ban of eating fruit from the tree of the good and evil. Thus the ban of having the knowledge concerning moral choices, ethical dilemmas. This is the world in which a man does not have to make ethical valuing, is free from it.

Breaking God’s rules means being banned from the paradise garden, sent to the world full of the borders of fences, walls and abatises. At the same time, it is the world in which we constantly have to make moral choices and ethical assessments. This moral space is open. There are not such situations in our lives that are free from assessment. Recognizance and valuing (emotional, axiological and paradigmatical) these are the actions that are connected with one another. It is not a comfortable situation for the people. We try to escape from such a privilege/duty. The city, freeing us from environmental determinism and distancing us from unhappiness caused by the promise of freeing from troublesome moral choices. It really is like that. Separation of moral experience makes a common phenomenon that exists in the city civilization26. A fence is, to some extent, the symbol of such a separation, an unturned fence – separation connected with violence i.e. aggressive separation.

The question if we can talk about the city violence enmeshed or revealed through its space organization or aesthetic (artistic) expression – the fence can also play such a role as “[...] the performance of violence causes aggressive behaviour, teaching violence through the presented patterns and their effectiveness results from the function of emotional impulse”27. It is, of course, an aesthetically important question if ugliness is also the expression of violence or, if ugliness is a certain form of violence – it can be like that in the case of an upturned fence in the most gentle manner. There is no single answer to the question and the dispute is interesting28. Talon-Hugon thinks that “City violence [aesthetic – A.T.] is something more than violence as it means self-affirmative weakness of a social group”29. The

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26 A. Tarnopolski, Niewiedza i jej rola w świecie późnej nowoczesności, AJD, Częstochowa 2011, p. 49 and on.
28 There, p. 219.
29 There, p. 219.
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weakness of a social group that means, as I think, minimalism, and finally, actual cancellation of local environment that is included into the area of the so-called human natural environment\textsuperscript{30}. The educational environment i.e. the one that is responsible for educational mechanisms of shaping the proper, pro-social space. The space in which people not only get to know each other (gain knowledge about each other, approaching each other), but also take responsibility for others, constructing in such a way the moral space. Violence and aggressive isolation, symbolized by upturned fence, is the manifestation of the weakness of the group that cannot construct a good public (social) space and sentencing people for xenophobic close-down in a mini-world indicated by an upturned fence. Being inside, we are outside, being at our own place, we are not there, we construct the private space, destroying, at the same time, the attributes that it has, that define it, being an outcast at our own home.

It is important as in the first stage of constructing such a world, we excessively expose and, in a way which is not necessarily honest (even for us), the rule of contrast. In such a way we upturn the rule of uplift. The upturn is associated with exposing dishonest comparison between us and others. Upturning the fence, we hinder or make it impossible for a new public/social space to be created, as we diminish or reduce the rule of contrast considerably. Private space is created due to contrast that is comparing it with public/social space. If the second one does not exist or, if it is limited and its borders are vague – we have problems with the private space as there is nothing it could stand out from.

Cancellation of the local environment atomizes people and individualizes their explorative activities, starting up certain protective mechanisms. Violence and aggression that is connected with it, expressed with aesthetic form of upturned fence (aesthetic ugliness), makes an example of such excessively individualized protective strategies. There is no good communication here. Violence destroys communication. As Speamann says: “Violence destroys communication that is the medium of all justification”\textsuperscript{31}. He thinks that sometimes violence can be justified but not directed against neighbours, destroying communication, but directed against the people who destroy good communication and divide people. It happens when “[…] the ability for communication i.e. understanding of the other man is at such a low level of development that other people must then interpret his intentions and realize them against his will. Here we assume the later agreement of a partner for violence that is used against him. This is the case of an under-aged carer”\textsuperscript{32}. I think that Spearmann would agree with the opinion that the people, building the upturned fences, are somehow immature (under-grown) and that their opinions should not be taken into consideration, as they do not know what they do.


\textsuperscript{31} Speamann, *Granice…*, p. 232.

\textsuperscript{32} There, p. 233.
A separate issue is the fact that it can be an objection against the city represented by the public government or unkindness/dangers derived from the outside. As Giddens says: “One can find other connections between the choices of the lifestyle and global interactions. Let us take the mutually connected issues of global ecology and aspirations to lower the risk of nuclear war [...] Part of the answer lies in the gathered evidences for the fact that the material environment of a man has become deeply destroyed, more than it was thought before. The change of people’s attitudes towards the matter is more vital here. The awareness of the fact that the «end of nature» took place is not limited to professional spheres. It has become common. The conviction that upturning the fences of natural environment degradation depends on accepting new lifestyle models makes an important element of the increase of ecological awareness”\textsuperscript{33}. New lifestyle patterns mean revolution. Among the people who are badly educated this slogan can evoke certain fears; the anxiety concerning own fate and the place that it takes in a new social structure. In Poland it is still a vital problem, as quite recent solidarity revolution has changed the social structures, depriving people (including not well educated proletariat and labourers) of their exposed social position. Remembering the changes they look at further changes reluctantly, afraid that they can be also inconvenient for them. They close behind and upturned fence, isolating from the influences of the outside world, convinced that in such a way the changes will not concern them and also signalizing that they will take care of themselves. Individually they will deal with the storm of the history- and other, their neighbours – let them deal with it on their own. In this sense an upturned fence is the signal/symbol of the increasing level of anomy that signalizes upcoming changes. In this concept anomy deregulates i.e. reaching certain level (tension) causes social changes\textsuperscript{34}. An upturned fence will symbolize excessive anomy of social relations and will signalize upcoming changes.

**Consumption metabolism**

It seems that the mechanism deciding about the development of civilization formation that is called late modernity (cities civilization) is controlled and self-reflexive consumption. The phenomenon of consumption, so natural for man-kind and, due to it not evoking any negative connotations, would be quite suitable for such an aim (i.e. the controlled mechanism of knowledge and authority). Basic postulate of good manipulation (at the same time being within basic assumptions of multimedia civilization) – the postulate of hiding and secretiveness.

\textsuperscript{33} A. Giddens *Nowoczesność i tożsamość*, translated by A. Szulżycka, PWN, Warszawa 2002, p. 301.
Consumption (consuming) is defined as: “final use of goods and services that are not intended for further production”, as such does not cause any bad associations. In the basic version means using all the goods that are inevitable for a man to survive. In the societies based on excessive production economies and the exchange of goods and services caused by the division of work and specialization, consumption makes a constant and inevitable element. A man must consume and expand his consumption to new goods and new services; in a way starting up and maintaining the movement and development of economical systems the member of which he is (self-reflexivity). Economic development and consumption make two sides of the same mechanism. We think that it is a positive mechanism. Sometimes it is the best mechanism. The only one, due to which our civilization develops.

The problem is not the phenomenon of consumption itself but consumptionism as a certain kind of ideology. Consumption as a way of life and all consequences that cause such thinking. Real, that have economical dimension but also psycho-social consequences, connected with the sphere of needs and the problem of excessive using (possessing) of civilization goods resulting from it.

“Consumptionism (sometimes the name «consumerism» is also used) is the consumption unjustified by any human needs and neglecting its economical, social and cultural costs. [...] this term is used to specify the excessiveness of consumption, damaging for the spheres of reality: for the natural environment, social environment and human spiritual development”. E. Fromm distinguished possessing that is functional, useful and non-functional.

Functional possessing results from authentic existential needs of a man. We must possess certain things as our life depends on it literally and the quality of this life in the basic meaning. Non-functional needs do not reveal in a natural way, do not result from the natural needs of a man. They have to be artificially awakened, as we do not possess them by nature, we do not feel the lack of them. The lack as a discomfort must be somehow procured. If it happens, a man – a consumer will buy the things that he does not need, that are not necessary for his normal life and the lack of which he feels as a considerable inconvenience. Thus, he buys certain goods and very often gets rid of them immediately, as the mechanism of consumptionism is not adjusted to fulfilment but constantly awakening further, non-functional needs. The mechanism does not satisfy but stimulates. It is not adjusted to finish the process but its further continuation. It happens like that, as the mechanisms of consumption are connected with produc-

37 K. Waloszczyk, Planeta..., p. 163.
tion and the ideology of consumerism makes the clone of the technocratic ideologies. Along with these ideas: “The dynamics of production requires at least artificial stimulation; new consumption needs that stimulate the increase of production and its scientific and technical back-up. In such a way a closed circle of economical and social reasons and results is created. It has influence on shaping the world of values and leads towards considerable shifts within their hierarchy. Material goods lead. They make the indicators of life aspirations and criteria of social meaning.” The change of the structure of values takes place. The lower values replace the higher values and the higher values move to the position of lower values. “Consumptionism is such a life attitude in which an individual subordinates values to the lower values or provides the lower values with the rank of the higher values. It reverses the hierarchy of values.” This mechanism, being an inevitable feature of industrial multimedia civilization, is also the basic, as it seems a driving feature of such a civilization, allowing, thorough self-reverse quality that is not seen by consumers, for a very effective control of their behaviour. It is, first of all, thinking.

This mechanism can be referred to as consumption metabolism, through the analogy to informative metabolism suggested by A. Kępiński. The similarities that occur between them are striking though they have analogical character, reveal all faults of such thinking.

Informative metabolism makes specific and constant exchange of information that happens between a man and his surrounding. “To make the man’s system start the energetic exchange with his surrounding, he has to be oriented to it. That is why in the early stages of phylogenies, besides energetic metabolism, there is an informative exchange, i.e. the so-called […] informative metabolism. In the case of a man […] it considerably exceeds energetic metabolism.” At the biological level (energetic metabolism), the mechanisms that drive the exchange is the relation of pleasure and grief and satisfaction and insufficiency; pleasant feelings, connected with satisfaction of needs e.g. basic biological needs (unpleasant when the lack of satisfaction). The positive ones weaken fast; when the state of satisfaction is unchanging and lasts too long – then the unpleasant feelings come to existence. In consequence, the activity and control are based on oscillation of pleasant and unpleasant feelings, continual building and destroying. Kępiński calls it ‘the rule of changeability’. In the informative metabolism emotional conditions are connected with information; with its amount and quality (if it is ordered, harmonious, within the system – adjusted to the system or chaotic, incoherent, incomplete). When informative entropy increases, it results

in negative feelings, while when it decreases – it results in positive ones. When the amount of information is small (insufficient), it results in negative feelings. In the case of such metabolism the rule of changeability functions. The condition of informative order, stagnation and stillness result the lack of satisfaction and boredom. A man expects change and knock-down of the existing order and reconstructs it for the new. Similarly to energetic metabolism, the drive mechanism of changes is the unstable energetic balance (man-surrounding), same as in the case of informative metabolism, the mechanism of changes is steered by our feeling of control over the outside world, relation: I rule – I am ruled\(^{43}\). This relation is also in the state of instable balance in which a man thinks he controls the outside world, in order to feel (know) that he is only an inert counter in a game and the mechanism of control is beyond it. The feature having an impact on the relation depends on the degree of man’s isolation from the surrounding but, first of all, the system (hierarchy) of values that we have. The reason is the necessity of selecting informative impulses that reach us. The amount of impulses is considerable and far beyond our needs. In such a situation we make the selection of impulses, separating the important ones from less important, less important from unimportant. As Kępiński writes: “The selection of signals makes a vital element in an informative metabolism. Only the minimal part of the signals, acting on the system, will be assimilated and only a minor part of the functional structures being created in the system will be realized in the shape of specified psychical, verbal or motional activity. What is to be absorbed and what is left outside in a ready shape depends to a large extent on the hierarchy of values. The more important signals are privileged over less important”\(^{44}\).

The reaction of a man for the outside impulse makes a resultant of the force and meaning of the impulse and our outside conviction based on the system of values. It is even more, even reading the basic features of an impulse depends on the system. The relationship is multilateral and, as one can think that the internal system of man’s values has a decisive meaning.

Finally, as a significant number of impulses and their construction can unable their proper assessment, due to the point of view of a man, we are forced not only to select impulses but also use ready systems – schemes that allow us for the efficient assessment of impulses and classifying them in the proper categories. The exchange of information in informative metabolism is based on the following rules:

— The rule of changeability, that says that in the scheme of information exchange between a man and his environment, there must be a constant movement and such a scheme, being in the state of unstable balance, requires constant novelties that make it be in movement and assure relative stability. Sta-


\(^{44}\) There, p. 186.
gnation, hold-up of the change is inevitably the sign of illness and requires, as Kępiński said, treatment.

— The rule of impulses selection, the selection done by a man based on his system of values. The system divides impulses for important and less important. It rejects the ones that a man considers unimportant.

— The rule of behaviour reduction (including informative behaviour connected with metabolic exchange), to ready schemes, cultural patterns. The reduction is supposed to simplify the process, reducing it to safe, as we think, patterns. Safety results from tradition (has cultural background) and popularity of the applied patterns that, as we commonly think, are safe and we eagerly copy them (psychical settlement).

— Finally, the last thing to be mentioned—the rule of the feeling of control. It makes the basic reason and, at the same time, the aim of informative metabolism. We exchange information with the environment, as better information allows us to control the outside world better. It is also our aim. Reaching it, we strengthen out feeling of control, we feel safe and certain. The world seems to be ordered along with the rules that we understand and accept. It is controlled by us and subordinated to our will. Kępiński’s considerations concerning the informative metabolism belong to most interesting in the Polish humanitarian thought and medicine (psychiatry). They concentrate on the individual dimension of a man and his uniquely unrepeatable fate. For a doctor, such a dimension is most important, it is obvious. Informative metabolism can reveal other faces when, looking from a broader perspective, we consider environmental and social conditions. Not only does a man try to control the world in an individual relation. He also does it using institutions, formal and social structures created by him. Due to them, he wants to control the world and other people better, as, due to the rights of metabolism, others make an element of the world that is difficult to be measured and inevitable. They can diminish our feeling of control; they should be subordinate to this mechanism. The institutions can do it immediately, imposing the control with violence. Such an immediate interaction, however effective, has its faults. The mechanism of control is in such a situation open. Due to the above, it is exposed to controlling activities. Secret or traumatically self-reflexive mechanisms are better for such an aim.

Such mechanism is, I think, consumption metabolism that makes, in my concept, the modification of informative metabolism. Its essence is a constant exchange of the consumption of goods (goods and services) between the consumers and producers (institutions producing consumption goods).

It is based, analogically to informative metabolism, on four rules:

— The rule of changeability. It is based on the exchange of consumption goods, endless supply of new goods to the market and constant purchase of these goods by people-consumers. Such a mechanism that in such a society cannot
be stopped, as it would endanger with crisis and economy collapse. As a consequence, human tragedies and lowered feeling of safety (indirectly – control) of the people.

— The rule of immediate modification of the systems of values. As selection happens based on the systems of values, in order to control it, we must control (and change) the systems of values. Production institutions do it manipulating with the human needs, as they are first generated, so that later they can answer with a new market proposal. As the supporters of such a strategy write: “[…] providing consumers with different solutions, unknown before, technology created a need that had not existed before. There was no demand for a waterproof mobile phone that would useful at the swimming pool, as the telephones producers had not made such a device yet. Then, suddenly, each house and swimming pool owner had to have it.” Such a need is created artificially. As it did not exist before, as there was no such a good, such a need had to be evoked, so that, later, it had to be met launching a new, this time expected, and good. Such needs are being created, building the properly awakened pro-consumer behaviour in clients. In particular it is about shaping and modifying the system of values due to which a man will assess the world, its proposals and its value. The systems of values that a man has are strongly culturally established and make the consequence of the influences of culture, tradition, upbringing and teaching. The modification of the approach of people to consumption can be done through making changes in the system of cultural impacts (e.g. through experience separation). It will be an immediate interaction (so hard to be seen) and also effective, as with a little chance for counteractive reaction.

— The rule of reduction of behaviour for ready schemes and cultural patterns. It reveals in eager copying of the ready and commonly applied patterns. Beside the feeling of safety, it can realize the feeling of social community. Consumptive copying of the commonly accepted patterns (imitating community in its consumptive behaviour) can be approached as pro-social behaviour with a more positive approach. Such a rule, similarly to the previous one, has deep cultural roots. Modifying and steering the approach of consumers at that place takes place also in an immediate way though developing and changing the environment (cultural environment). It is also an effective immediate mechanism that is difficult to be noticed by consumers.

— The rule of building the need of meaning. In the informative metabolism the reason for the exchange of information is the feeling of control. A man gets new information, as it allows him to build his feeling of control. Due to the above, it seems to him that he controls the outside world and, at the same ti-

46 There, p. 76.
me, does not surrender to its influences. In the consumption metabolism, the reason for a constant consumption is the realization of the need of meaning— it is underestimated by anthropologists and plays a vital role in the life of a man. The meaning (position in a society) builds such the feeling of control, our safety, but at a different level. Informative metabolism, in Kępiński’s version, is a strong biological mechanism and, at such a level, it allocates the feeling of safety, while, the consumption metabolism is a definitely social mechanism. It is responsible for the feeling of social safety that depends on the position we have in a society.

Conclusion

A high position gives us a high feeling of safety resulting from the subordinate positions of others. A low position is a danger, as it can mean the subordinate position and loss of control over one’s life. The need of meaning is realized through consumption. While consuming, we reach a high social position; when we lose such possibilities, our position also lowers. The meaning reflected in the opinion of others about us — lowers. Such a mechanism resembles the manipulation — control of consciousness — maybe it is its version. The construction itself is much more complicated that the one that we encounter with interpersonal manipulations. It is based on manipulating the cultural environment of a man in such a way as, as a consequence, a man – being the product of such an environment- participating in such a procedure. This mechanism co-created, fought for the sense and, often authentically happy, allowed for being deluded by its manipulative delusion. This is how an upturned fence is being created. It is the symbol of independency, the symbol of social and manipulative influences of civilization.

Bariery ponowoczesnego miasta.
(Cywilizacja odwróconych płotów)

Streszczenie


Słowa kluczowe: ponowoczesne miasto, odwrócony płot, metabolizm konsumpcyjny.