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**In search of identity: architecture and urbanism in Opole in post-war period (1945-2018) (Working Title)**

Planned dissertation is dedicated to the topic of architecture and urbanism in post-war Opole. Opole, a city in southwestern Poland, between Wrocław and Katowice, witnessed significant changes after 1945. A new political situation, in which Opole – a pre-war German city and capital of Upper Silesian Province – became a part of Poland, was a catalyst for changes both in architecture and urban planning. Those were not only connected with post-war reconstruction, but were also caused by political reasons. In Opole, a part of Recovered Territories, architecture was often used in process of adapting the city, familiarizing its new inhabitants with a foreign place and it was a tool used in the Recovered Territories propaganda. This political aspect of architecture in post-war Opole (new investments as well as historical sites) was also reflected by narratives built around the city, its architecture and history. Their goal was to establish a relationship between new inhabitants and the city and create an image of a city that had always been Polish „at heart”, a city thriving after 1945, a „capital of Polish songs”. Tracking and analysing those narratives will establish how they have impacted processes of settling in a new city. Political aspect of architecture and urban planning became less significant after 1989, when investments became a symbol of capitalism and a new chapter in history of Opole. Opole was, and still is, a complex case of city „in between”. This status was shaped by the size of the city (it is smaller than most Voivodeship capitals, e.g. Wrocław, Katowice, Cracow or Warsaw) and by its location (between Upper and Lower Silesia and as a part of so called „Recovered Territories” – pre-war German lands that became a part of Poland after 1945).

The main goal of planned dissertation is to track and analyse how political and societal changes after 1945 were reflected (or shaped) by architecture and urban planning. The result will be an analysis and interpretation of a certain architectural and urban situation in post-war Opole rather than a catalogue of post-war investments, buildings or urban complexes, Methodology that will be used in further research proposes a different approach to urban space. Opole will not only be analysed in a formal sense (as a group of buildings or areas), but it will also be interpreted in a much broader sense, in context of ideas, politics and society. I

want to comprise a few different methodologies. Firstly, I would like to use John Archer's *social theory of space* to analyse how architecture reflects and shapes ideologies, politics, economy and society. Urban space is not a passive group of unanimated objects, but it is very much an active participant in everyday life. A concept of *thirdspace*, proposed by Edward Soja, proposes an interesting way of analysing cities (such as Opole) in relation to its inhabitants. Thirdspace - „a space we give meaning to” - depicts urban space as it is perceived by inhabitants of different social groups and backgrounds and how it is intertwined with their experiences. Certain spaces in Opole, such as Ostrówek (the oldest part of the city, where the first borough was built), can be analysed as 20th century heterotopias – places where meanings are accumulated and intertwined with power. Using post-structuralism in research can show that one objective truth about a city is a myth - it can be seen in many ways as there are many parallel stories that create a city, its history and current situation. My goal is to avoid interpretation of architecture based solely on its formal values or how it is perceived or shaped by small group of municipal authorities or people in power. I would like to analyse architectural and urban situation in post-war Opole in its relation to ideology, propaganda, politics and society.