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The public sphere is the site where struggles are decided by other means than war.
Alexander Kluge (1993)

*The Minaret asks where we - Poles - are in the process of opening ourselves
towards strangers, aliens, and people [who are] not from here.*
Joanna Rajkowska (2009)

**THE MUSLIM QUESTION IN A POLISH CITY:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF JOANNA RAJKOWSKA'S
MINARET (2009) AND THE USE OF THE CITY SPACE**

Abstract: The structural transformation of the Habermasian public sphere from the salons to the streets is directly related to understanding the boundaries of the city and the dynamics among its inhabitants today. The process of “transnationalization” via the mass media results in further “deterritorialization”, which brings with it the ambivalence of locality and universality within the same city. As the “counter-publics” continue to lack material means to rational-critical debate in envisioning the links between the city and its inhabitants, questions remain on what institutional arrangements can best facilitate participatory parity among the citizens. Joanna Rajkowska’s *Minaret* (2009-2011) bears a critical relationship to the city of Poznań as a site of play upon heritage, time-space relations, as well as religion. Who is the city really for - the inhabitant, the investor... the artist? Following Lefebvre’s definition and work conducted by such organizations as the UN-Habitat (2005), “the right to the city” suggests that all urban dwellers are equal participants. Does Rajkowska’s *Minaret* employ the best means that can ignite counter-public mobilization for Muslim minorities in Poznań, or does it simply make itself a victim to the postmodern Other?

Keywords: contemporary public art, contemporary Polish artists, cultural heritage, public sphere, city space, minorities.

The story of the Polish contemporary artist Joanna Rajkowska's unrealized project, *Minaret* (2009-2011), began after the city of Poznań's mayor invited the artist to prepare a public art project in 2008. Rajkowska decided to transform an unused industrial chimney into a minaret, at the crossing of Estkowskiego and Garbary streets in Poznań. Rajkowska's proposal soon stretched beyond the city's local territory and divided the Polish public sphere in two. It inevitably spurred speculation in light of the then-recent Swiss referendum on banning the construction of minarets, as well as the overarching socio-political context of post-9/11 global media operations.

Even though the project was never realized, throughout the public uproar that came with it, Rajkowska remained very verbal about asking for people's attention, and she published an opinion piece in *The Guardian* that same year, titled "Building my own 'minaret'", in which she claimed the campaign to demolish her proposal for the minaret before it was even built was based on arguments designed to "reinforce the wall of ignorance and prejudice against Islam".¹ Different from Rajkowska's argument in her article, the following discussion proposes to focus on the spatial concerns raised by the two opposing voices pertaining to the project: the local architects and councilors objecting to it argued that "the project was 'culturally foreign,' and due to its visibility within the line of sight of a cathedral and former Synagogue, it could be read as a 'religious provocation'".² Meanwhile, the supporters responded by embracing the argument that "Poznań is not a closed homogenous zone where anything different crossing its borders is 'a foreign cultural element' and therefore damaging and threatening".³

I chose the form of the minaret because I know it well from working in the West Bank town of Jenin in Palestine. (...) My aim was to allow this run-down fragment of Poznań to become a mirage of the Middle East. I wanted to convey to the residents of Poznań, not just my own enchantment with Middle Eastern culture, but also to ask them a question: are you ready to accept a foreign element - of another religion, ethnicity and culture - in your midst?⁴

¹ J. Rajkowska, Building my own 'minaret', *The Guardian*, 19 December 2009, accessed 10 January 2015, available from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/dec/19/Minaret-poznan-joanna-rajkowska>

² Ibidem.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Ibidem.

Situating *Minaret* inside the context of the post-9/11 global village, this paper aims to go further than pointing at public art's potential role in the ongoing public debate surrounding the Muslim minorities. Instead, the following discussion will evaluate the *Minaret* from a theoretical perspective, on the basis of a deconstructive approach, defining the fundamental factors that make this artwork worth discussing in the first place. A hopeless fantasy or a post-modernist apparition, Rajkowska's *Minaret* will appear to our eyes as the ghost of a failed spatial attempt in engaging the Polish public sphere in a debate on who owns the city of Poznań.

In addition to being concerned with a spatial divide, this paper argues that the tension surrounding the insertion of the minaret inside a space that is "foreign to itself" is only an emulation of a previously underlying tension – the lack of clear reasoning and conceptual subject matter for a public art project that barely holds any artistic value at all. This underlying lack is a result of Rajkowska's own groundless interest in creating a "mirage" based upon a fleeting personal affinity. In order to outline Rajkowska's project's conceptual and artistic failures, this paper will focus on its direct relationship to spatial concerns, experienced through the factors of time and distance, as well as through the literary divide between the terms 'space' and 'place.' Moreover, a brief remark on the global impacts of post 9/11 media operations in creating a mass consciousness concerning, particularly, Muslim minorities is followed by an introductory note on the spatial significance of the Habermasian public sphere. The elements acting upon the work in terms of revealing its lack of artistic or critical subject matter are discussed through reflections upon a few fundamental theories of space and spatial practices.

Images of Islam in the post-9/11 context

The *Minaret* asks where we - Poles - are in the process of opening ourselves towards strangers, aliens, and people [who are] not from here. Why we have come to identify Islam with terrorism, what are the sources of our fear of Islam, and what image of Moslems we have created for ourselves? As well as silently agree to the presence of Polish troops in Iraq or Afghanistan.⁵

⁵ J. Rajkowska, *Minaret* (2009-2011), project website, available from <http://www.minaret.art.pl/index.php?lang=en>

Before entering into an analysis of Rajkowska's *Minaret*, it is relevant to reference some common-sense media influence upon creating hostile imagery. For the purposes of this analysis, in order to roughly outline the global post-9/11 socio-political context in which Rajkowska's *Minaret* should be evaluated, it is fair to take a quick glance at the position of Muslim minorities as represented by the mainstream North American and European media. To this day, the symbolic patterns utilized by the mainstream media feature a major theme of representation: the Muslims are the ultimate Girardian scapegoat of the post-9/11 "War on Terror".⁶

The Americans had no doubt that the war in Iraq had something to do with the terrorist attacks on September 11, and that it was "a war on those terrorists" as expressed by George W. Bush numerous times in his Presidential Address after the incident in 2001.⁷ Ever since, the war on terror doctrine has consequential and continuous influence upon American and European global foreign policy and media, resulting in what is now commonly regarded as "Islamophobia".⁸ Likewise, the specter of what is now known as "fear of Islamic terrorism" continuously feeds itself off the shocking imagery that globally circulates via mass media, as well as the derogatory analyses made by various academics, resulting in a rise in public hate crimes against Muslims and Islam at large throughout the world.⁹

Following up on the current Islamophobic debate, during her lecture at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw on 30 November 2014, Dr. Monika Bobako defined what she termed "the Muslim question" as "an example of counter-public mobilization in determining the political and social value of Islamic presence in non-Muslim regions".¹⁰ Likewise, Bobako also defined the problematic rejection of Rajkowska's *Minaret* as a result of what she terms "the Minaret Effect" - which appears to be a universalization of a caricature image of Islam. Indeed, within the scope of

⁶ See R. Girard, *The Scapegoat* (Le Bouc émissaire), transl. Y. Freccero. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

⁷ G.W. Bush, *Presidential Address*, CNN/US, 2001.

⁸ N.R. Menon, "Islamophobic: New Styles in Reporting" in *Uncommon Media*, *ISIM Review* 2007 no. 20 (Autumn).

⁹ Y.J. Progler, "Islamic Imagery and American Policy" in *Covering Islam: Challenges & Opportunities for Media in the Global Village*, edited by S.F. Alatas, The Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs (RIMA), Singapore & Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF), Singapore; 2005, available from http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_7863-1522-2-30.pdf?090211042544.

¹⁰ Notes from the public lecture held on 30.11.2014 at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw: „Art in Public,” discussion held by Dr. Monika Bobako (Interfaculty „Boundary Questions” Research Group, at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland) and Joanna Rajkowska (artist, Warsaw, Poland).

Rajkowska's *Minaret*, "the Muslim question" tends to focus on Poland and the European Union in particular, however "the Minaret Effect" should rather be understood in the global context of an all-engaging public sphere.

While the media misrepresentation of the Muslim minorities is not the only factor in the negative response given by the Polish public to Rajkowska's project, *Minaret*, it is this global socio-political context through which Rajkowska's piece gains critical relevance, and it is from this perspective the artist's and the work's intentions should be evaluated.

The spatial transformation of the public sphere

Rajkowska's *Minaret* oscillates between the private and the public spheres as it merges the definition of 'sphere' with that of 'space;' and yet it appears to be neither. While proposed as a public art project for the public space of the street, *Minaret* – simply by way of being a religious architectural element – inherently holds the senses of privacy, pertaining to intimate or domestic spaces, and emitting a kind of rhetoric on privacy that has been historically used to cast subjects like religion as personal or familial rather than public or exposed. Considering that prayers are made 'inside' the space of churches, synagogues or minarets, this particular rhetoric stands out as contradictory to the public terrain of the city space for which the project was initially intended. Admittedly, while making religion a private matter is already a problematic gesture that allows for the failed universalization of the notion of the public and the politics of exclusion, it is quite unclear whether Rajkowska herself is critically aware of this very problematic.

Another well-known piece by Rajkowska, *Oxygenator* from 2007 can be regarded as dealing with similar notions of urban space and play. *Minaret*, on the other hand, is far from taking a clear position. The artist's somewhat personalized and privatized objective in aiming to transform a piece of land, as she calls it, into a "mirage," seems unconvincing and bleak to say the very least. On another occasion, Rajkowska also remarked that the project was merely the result of a "personal affinity" aroused by the coincidental look and likeness of an actual minaret in Jenin, Palestine and the minaret at hand in Poznań.¹¹

¹¹ J. Rajkowska, *Minaret* (2009-2011), project website, available from <http://www.minaret.art.pl/index.php?lang=en>

In evaluating the lacking elements of this work and whether or not it holds a public or a private position, it becomes necessary to investigate further the definition of the historical term ‘public sphere’. Interestingly enough, Jürgen Habermas’s key text, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) directs our attention to the commercialization of cultural relations via the transformation from a “culture-debating” society to a “culture-consuming” one, and demonstrates how “rational-critical debate” is replaced by mere consumer behavior.¹² Habermas’s diagnosis of the historical relationship between the bourgeois class and ideology bears major parallelism with today’s elite-ruled business and media corporations. However, today it has become more difficult to define the concept of the Habermasian public sphere in terms of national boundaries. As can be gathered from Negt and Kluge’s *Public Sphere and Experience* (1993),¹³ the accelerated process of “transnationalization” – via the mass media and the new types of publicity they bring – results in a newer affair of “deterritorialization,” which brings with it highly ambivalent spatial forms of ‘locality’ and ‘universality,’ sometimes within the same city, and mostly concerning multiple localities and nationalities all at once.

We must note that Habermas’s contribution to the debate surrounding the public sphere rests precisely in his attempt to define it as a historical category, fundamentally linked to the historical transformation of emerging liberal capitalism and to the emerging bourgeois sphere’s political engagement with the city space. Another major contribution by Habermas is his recognition of the term ‘public’ in addition to and different from the state, the marketplace, and the rather intimate sphere of the family, which inherently carries a clear distinction from the term ‘private’. Even if not in the form of a spatial argument, Negt and Kluge question the Habermasian public sphere for its rather problematic “principle of generality,” which results in a territorial divide that excludes minority groups from entering into the ideally shared space of the public sphere.

Precisely this problematic becomes an entry point for the later studies on the notion of the public sphere and its direct interrelation with spatial concerns. Negt & Kluge’s notion of the “proletarian public sphere” and their emphasis on the questions of interests, conflicts and the use of power are parallel, for instance, to Michael Warner’s discussion on the formation and the

¹² J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, The MIT Press, 1991, p. 159.

¹³ O. Negt and A. Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward and analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public*, University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

role of the “counter-publics” in challenging the exclusionary power structures that define territorial borders.¹⁴ As also observed in “Rethinking the Public Sphere” (1992) by Nancy Fraser, moving away from the private space of the bourgeois salons to the public space of the streets stands out as an act that can empower the voice of the “subaltern” and “subordinate” groups. Likewise, as a rather contemporary phenomenon, the notion of “counter-publics” concerns itself with what institutional solutions can best help “narrow the [spatial] gap in participatory parity between the dominant and the subordinate groups”.¹⁵

While it becomes apparent that the historical transformation of the public sphere is a key ingredient in situating Rajkowska’s *Minaret* as a project that is clearly concerned with territorial divisions within the city space, and that directly concerns the Muslim minority’s position in the city, a few very basic questions remain yet to be answered: What are some of Rajkowska’s primary artistic goals? How does she intend to facilitate the visibility of the Muslim minorities? And is she successful in this venture? In order to suggest some answers to these questions, it is most relevant to turn to a theoretical ground, discussing the major elements of spatial practice that closely relate to Rajkowska’s project. These include the factors of time and distance, as well as the literary oscillation between the terms ‘space’ and ‘place’.

The factors of time and distance

Louis Marin proposes the concept of “utopic degeneration” through a meticulous spatial study on Disneyland. Marin’s argument is that “a degenerate utopia is ideology changed into the form of a myth” or an example of modern imperialism and collective fantasy, which carries out a certain “process of neutralization” removing the spatial gap between a utopia and reality, and between the Freudian double and the other.¹⁶ A great example of this process is the use of Disneyland money by the visitors to purchase goods and take part in the “utopian life” – something that cannot otherwise be done with real money. The exchange of money is also a symbol of entering into the utopian space and time.¹⁷ Umberto Eco similarly reflects upon Marin’s study by moving from California’s Disneyland to the city of Los Angeles, and by analyzing the particular sense of fake

¹⁴ M. Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, Zone Books, 2002

¹⁵ N. Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”, *Social Text*, 1990, No. 25/26. In this regard, see also R. Deutsche, “Art and Public Space: Questions of Democracy”, *Social Text*, 1992, no. 33, p. 66.

¹⁶ L. Marin, *Disneyland: A Degenerate Utopia*, 1977 (pdf copy), p. 239-257.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 243.

illusion resulting from the collapse of time and space, and stimulating the desire for illusion in “the space of a few seconds”.¹⁸

This particular “space of a few seconds” is comparable to Rajkowska’s Palestinian *Minaret* appearing, as if accidentally, in the middle of the Polish city of Poznań. It is also associated with her act of provocatively promoting the project in the form of a coincidental Disneyland. Here, it may occur that the argument is as basic as: Hey! There is something fishy about the highly private and arbitrary Jenin – Poznań likeness, a quality which seems to be ruining the oh-so-progressive idea behind the artwork! Nevertheless, there is more to the argument. The criterion of likeness becomes a major issue, in that it cannot be applied at the level of the subject matter (i.e. the *Minaret* as a conceptual piece); instead, it can only remain a personal testimony at a certain point in time. According to Rajkowska, the main argument is simple: the two *Minarets* look alike; therefore, one can be persuaded that they are alike. In order for this to work, the locals of Poznań should be always already accepting of this supposed likeness, especially because it is an idea proposed by a popular and recognized local artist. This is possible, considering that most of the locals of Poznań have never been to Jenin anyway, and so Rajkowska’s personal testimony gone public on the legitimacy of the likeness between the minarets in Poznań and Jenin is the only resource available.

In trying to evaluate such a naïve, if not shallow, claim it is relevant to refer to Westphal’s project on “geocriticism” (2007) in order to be able to make a connection between the notion of time and the notion of distance. Even though it deals mainly with the ways in which literature interacts with the world, and tries to understand imaginary spaces constructed by fictional writing, Westphal’s study can also ring a bell when we try to evaluate Rajkowska’s artistic attempts at giving form to “personal affinity” via the experience of “spatiotemporality”. The notion of “spatiotemporality” is proposed by Westphal in the form of an overlapping collapse or “an overwhelming sense of compression of our spatial and temporal worlds” within the same “spatial pocket”.¹⁹ Rajkowska strives for a Middle Eastern “spatial pocket” inside the city of Poznań, so that the locals can experience an artist-generated form of “spatiotemporality.” The main problem here is, however, that this form of an artistic spatiotemporality or a spatial pocket had not been sought after by the Poznań local community in the midst of their daily lives, or by the Muslim minorities of Poznań for any practical purpose.

¹⁸ U. Eco, “*Travels in Hyperreality*” in *Travels in Hyperreality*, Harvest Book, 1990, pp.1-59. In this regard, see also G. Debord, *Theory of the Dérive*, Les Lèvres Nues #9, November 1956 (accessed November 2015), available from <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/theory.html> and G. Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*. Black & Red, 2000, p. 43.

¹⁹ B. Westphal, *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*, Palgrave Macmillian, April 2011, 1e. 2007 (pdf), p. 29.

This project was not created in a contextual void. Poznań has a sizeable Muslim minority, estimated at about 1,000 people. *Minaret* also poses the question of whether we, Poles, want to notice the presence of this minority – and how we do it.²⁰

While Rajkowska insists that her intention is to support the Muslim minorities in Poznań for better visibility, there is no legitimate source suggesting that the thousand or so Muslim minorities in Poznań actually strived for better visibility in the first place. In her article for *The Guardian*, Rajkowska cites the local leader of the Muslim League of Poland, Sheikh Mohamed Saleh, who is said to have confirmed that her proposed work, *Minaret*, is just a building and has no religious meaning, but it deserves support, as it can “compensate for [the Muslim minority’s] invisibility”.²¹ On the other end of the spectrum, the committee of Polish architects and councilors who rejected the project were quoted to have argued that the project was “culturally foreign,” and that “due to its visibility within the line of sight of a cathedral and a former Synagogue, it could be read as a religious provocation”.²²

By pointing to a recognizable place, fiction allows itself to reference a real place, and transforms that place into a kind of fictional space. In the case of Poznań transforming itself into a mirage of the Middle East thanks to Rajkowska’s proposal, an artistically mediated spatiotemporality becomes an especially excessive and unwanted attempt, not even desired by the local community. Rajkowska’s attempt is perhaps closer to what Soja (1996) defines as the “spatial turn”²³ which had taken place as part of the postmodernist approach, and is therefore comparable to the increasing mobility of the 20th century tourist-traveler. Rajkowska stands out in the form of a ‘flâneur’ artist, for whom the temporal markers have already vanished.²⁴

On this note, it is necessary to highlight the direct relationship between the elements of time and distance, a close connection that dates back to the structural

²⁰ J. Rajkowska, *Minaret* (2009-2011), project website, available from <http://www.minaret.art.pl/index.php?lang=en>

²¹ J. Rajkowska, “Building My Own Minaret,” *The Guardian*, 19 December 2009, accessed 10 January 2015, available from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/dec/19/Minaret-poznan-joanna-rajkowska>

²² *Ibidem*.

²³ E.W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Blackwell Publishers, 1996 (Pdf copy).

²⁴ W. Benjamin, *Return of the Flâneur*, 1929 (pdf copy). In this regard see also Ch. Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, 1863.

transformation of spatial practices directly following the industrial revolution. The 19th century travelers gradually got accustomed to what at first seemed frightening: the demolition of traditional time-space relationships and the dissolution of reality from one train station to another.²⁵ Also understood in light of Simmel's "metropolitan system" (1908),²⁶ the demolition of time-space relationships furthermore reduces the majority of sensory relations between people to mere sight. Likewise, abstraction in its utmost state in the utilization of the railway system, appears in the form of an intensive experience of the sensuous world, terminated by industrial and scientific means, ultimately transforming into a new institution of photographic, panoramic and metaphoric value. In a way, spatial immediacy surrenders to abstract temporality.

The most interesting dilemma lies in the relationship between the construction of a photographic and imaginary conception of a particular 'place' in Rajkowska's mind as an artist, and soon after, her attempt in representing this as a fictional 'space' in the real physical setting of the city of Poznań. This particular overlap resonates closely with Soja's discussion of the notion of "conceived space" or in other words, "re-presentations of human spatiality in mental or cognitive forms".²⁷ In this regard, also borrowing from Lefebvre, we understand that "(Social) space is a (social) product (...) the further claim [is] that the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, or power; yet (...) it escapes in part from those who would make use of it".²⁸

A perfect living example of such production of social space according to power relations is most likely the American city of Chicago's long-lasting territorial divides and housing problems, which stem not from mere racial prejudice, but are also rooted in the historical tradition of dismembering black communities from an efficient mortgage system that has been however made available to the white communities all along.²⁹ Keeping the living example of Chicago in mind

²⁵ W. Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century*, University of California Press, 1977; 1st ed. 1986.

²⁶ G. Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life" (1903) in: G. Bridge and S. Watson, eds. *The Blackwell City Reader*. Oxford and Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002. http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/BPL_Images/Content_store/Sample_chapter/0631225137/Bridge.pdf

²⁷ E.W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Blackwell Publishers, 1996 (Pdf copy).

²⁸ H. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 1974, p. 26.

²⁹ C. Smith, *The Plan of Chicago: Burnham and the Remaking of the American City*, The University of Chicago Press, 2006, and "The Case for Reparations - discussing Chicago's long lasting territorial divide & housing problems", *The Atlantic* 2014, available from <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

we should note that one of the major problems posed by Lefebvre is that the social space is revealed in its particularity to the extent that it is “indistinguishable” from mental space (as defined by philosophers and artists) and the physical space (as defined by actual perception). Such an “illusion of transparency” or what Soja calls a “double illusion,” results in the reduction of physical and mental space to either strictly materialist or strictly idealist means, and this is the inevitable syndrome encountered in most social theory concerning space.

This is precisely what Rajkowska’s *Minaret* struggles with – trying to promote a Lefebvrian form of social space (in which the working class is an equal participant in deciding who owns the rights to the city) via a failed attempt in depicting a certain kind of physical space (in this case, her lived experience in Jenin) in the form of a conceived and imaginary mental place (in this case, her proposal to bring a reflection of Jenin to Poznań).

Space vs. place

The chaotic layout of the buildings resembles a Middle Eastern city, especially the two blind walls facing the street. (...) If the *Minaret* materializes, the character of the whole area will change in a surreal manner. The familiar will become strange. The red-brick buildings, the empty walls, the surrounding wall and the billboards will present themselves in a different way. One will have to make an effort to recognize this place again, to understand and assimilate it. The *Minaret* will give the whole area an exotic flair, to turn it into a Place. This Place will be created by the tension between the familiar and the strange, the obvious and the puzzling.³⁰

Rajkowska’s testimony cannot go farther than a personal affinity aiming to raise a public debate, and her description of the site in Poznań bearing likeness to a Middle Eastern city with a “chaotic layout” proves ignorant, simply because it reiterates a very simple proposition: Jenin is in the Orient, and the Orient is chaotic. In this regard, it would not be a harsh criticism to position Rajkowska’s proposal within the perimeters of Said’s definition of “the Orient” (1978).³¹ Said observes that one aspect of the electronic postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which “the Orient” is viewed. Accordingly, the character of the Oriental remains an “image,” because the falsity of this image is part of a general theatrical representation contained in the totality of a particularly spatial word, “the Orient”.³²

³⁰ J. Rajkowska, artist’s website, available from <http://www.rajkowska.com/en/projektyp/86>

³¹ E.W. Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Books Limited (UK), 2003.

³² *Ibidem*, p. 66.

As we gather from Rajkowska's own words, it becomes apparently significant to consider the two terms as we experience them through her presentation: 'space' and 'place.' *Minaret's* superficiality is not only the result of art surrendering to the double illusion identified between the materialist and idealist means or a residue of collapsing time and distance; rather, it is also an inevitable consequence of an assumed, imagined, or better yet, underestimated linguistic moment. Another related suggestion is that *Minaret's* dilemma traces a transition from a Bergsonian conception of space (and time), which is always moving to a rather phenomenological understanding of place, which is always composed of points and distances.

Referencing once again Bobako's definition of "the Muslim question", Rajkowska's *Minaret* tends to bring visibility to the invisible Muslim minorities in Poznań. In this regard, it is assumed that the right to the city space for these minorities is a right to visibility. On the other hand, Henri Lefebvre's "The Right to the City" (1968) suggests that all urban dwellers – those who inhabit the city regardless of their legal or national status as citizens – have a right to participate in urban politics and to be included in the decisions that shape their environment. Lefebvre's original concept aims to protect all urban dwellers, and especially the members of the particularly threatened groups including poor or low-income groups, the homeless, women, victims of violence, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, youth, children, ethnic minorities, displaced persons, immigrant workers and refugees. Contemporary expansions of Lefebvre's concept by such organizations as the UN-Habitat also include the protection of "individuals and groups who are diverse on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, race, gender, age, physical mobility, resident/citizen status and sexual orientation, in addition to class" (Habitat International Coalition website).³³

Most interestingly, it is essential to note that Lefebvre formulates the right to the city as a transformed and renewed right to urban life, thus presuming an integrated theory of the city and urban life. To do this, Lefebvre suggests using the resources of science and art. He suggests that art in particular brings to the realization of urban society "its long meditation on life as drama and pleasure".³⁴ Rajkowska's *Minaret* is far from successfully combining these elements as an influential art piece that can generate counter-public mobility. On the contrary, it remains controversial and restricted to the artist's own biases and projections upon an imaginary "enchantment" with the so-called Middle East.

³³ "Urban Policies and the right to the city", UNESCO-UN-HABITAT-ISS. Discussion Paper for the Seminar: *Urban Policies and the Right to the City*, Paris, 18 March 2005. Last accessed online: 10 January 2015 <http://www.hic-net.org/articles.php?pid=1686>

³⁴ H. Lefebvre, *Production of Space...*, 157.

In terms of a conclusion, it should be emphasized that Rajkowska's unrealized public project, *Minaret*, is unsuccessful in its artistic attempt in facilitating more visibility for the supposedly invisible Muslim minority of Poznań. This conclusion is a bit more critical if not pessimistic than the ideas which welcome everyday spatial practices that successfully undo the readable and the metaphorical surfaces of the planned city for purposes of creative engagement.³⁵ Rajkowska's *Minaret* is a failed attempt at such an engagement, because it actually maintains a clear divide between the 'them' and 'us'. By intending to turn the particular street in Poznań into a "Place" - a word intentionally and oddly capitalized by the artist - Rajkowska's *Minaret* does nothing more than the capitalization of the word Other, and hence, scapegoating and persecuting this imaginary place (the Orient) and its inhabitants (Muslims) over and over again, while leaving unanswered the question of who owns the rights to the city and why.

Trapped in a collision between elements of time and distance, as well as a linguistic overlap between space and place, the story of "the *Minaret* that never happened" remains a superficial representation of mere likeness at surface level. The superficiality arising from these conflicting features of Rajkowska's piece continues to unfold itself in the form of a somewhat populist, commonplace and self-directed speculative show, which holds an awkward position in the career of an otherwise fairly sensible artist.

Borrowing from both a postmodernist (particularly a Baudrillardian) apocalyptic hyperreality that has almost become a cliché,³⁶ as well as a post-modernist spatiotemporal turn stretched across the real and the imaginary, Rajkowska's *Minaret* remains an attention-seeker in the post-9/11 context, where Islamophobia is exhausted to the point of being outworn, and yet where we still insist staring in awe at distant Oriental lands from the limited space of our touch-screens and our impermanent, live-streaming temporalities.

³⁵ Arguing for a positive image of society that is continuously written and read by the social subjects who are able to contribute directly to the creation of the everyday social system that they live in, from a surprisingly psychoanalytical perspective, de Certeau concludes that walking in the city, and hence the act of practicing space is "to repeat the joyful and silent experience of childhood: it is, in a place, to be other and to move toward the other" (p 110). M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, University of California Press, 2011; 1st ed. 1984.

³⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *America*, Verso 2010 (1st ed. 1989).

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KWESTIA MUZUŁMAŃSKA W POLSKIM MIEŚCIE: KRYTYCZNA ANALIZA MINARETU (2009) JOANNY RAJKOWSKIEJ I WYKORZYSTANIA PRZESTRZENI MIEJSKIEJ (streszczenie)

Strukturalna transformacja Habermasowskiej sfery publicznej z salonów na ulice jest bezpośrednio związana ze zrozumieniem granic miasta i dynamiki zachodzącej pomiędzy jego mieszkańcami. Proces „transnacionalizacji” poprzez mass media skutkuje dalszą „deterytorializacją”, która niesie ze sobą ambiwalencję jednoczesnej lokalności i uniwersalności w ramach jednego miasta. Ponieważ „kontr-publiczności” (*counter-publics*) nadal nie dysponują środkami materialnymi umożliwiającymi racjonalną i krytyczną debatę dotyczącą wizji łączących miasto i jego mieszkańców, pozostaje pytanie, jakie rozwiązania instytucjonalne mogą najsprawniej ułatwić zapewnienie mieszkańcom równego dostępu do uczestnictwa. W *Minarecie* Joanny Rajkowskiej (2009-2011) widać silne związki z Poznaniem jako miejscem gry dziedzictwem historycznym, relacjami czasu i przestrzeni, a także religią. Dla kogo jest miasto: dla mieszkańca, dla inwestora, czy... dla artysty? W myśl definicji Lefebvre'a oraz działań podejmowanych przez takie organizacje, jak UN-Habitat (2005), „prawo do miasta” oznacza, że wszyscy mieszkańcy miasta są jego uczestnikami w równym stopniu. Czy *Minaret* Rajkowskiej używa najlepszych środków, które mogą zainicjować kontr-publiczną mobilizację mniejszości muzułmańskich w Poznaniu, czy też po prostu staje się ofiarą postmodernistycznego Innego?

Słowa klucze: współczesna sztuka publiczna, współczesna polska artystka, dziedzictwo kulturowe, sfera publiczna, przestrzeń miejska, mniejszość.

**With special thanks to Weronika Boruc for the Polish translation of the abstract.*