



**Michał Domińczak\***

## *Ideological identity of New Urbanism*

### *Introduction*

Despite the lapse of almost 30 years since the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU) was established, and, unlike its characteristic design rules, the issue of ideological identity of New Urbanism, has remained almost entirely detached from previous research interests<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps one of the reasons is that its supporters avoid declarations that might be considered as political commitments. This allows bringing people from different backgrounds together, but makes ideological identification difficult. Such an attitude is not accidental taking into account the nature of the whole movement, which, as one of its founders claims, is a broad, unique coalition of individuals, professions and points of view of people involved in the revival of urban life [1, p. 16]. And because as Ellen Durham Jones once said: *New Urbanism is a forum, not a formula*, the differences within the CNU are perceived as an asset, not a liability. Regardless of these facts, what all its supporters have in common, i.e., certain fundamental principles, can be assessed and identified in terms of ideology.

The aim of this article is to present the above issue, which is particularly important in the context of the social role of urban planning and its impact on the culture of civic life, as well as the importance of cities as bearers of civilizational changes. The text is also an attempt to expand the general knowledge about New Urbanism as a complete idea of social life and an attitude towards contemporary development problems.

\* ORCID: 0000-0001-9599-0972. Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning, Lodz University of Technology, e-mail: [michal.dominiczak@p.lodz.pl](mailto:michal.dominiczak@p.lodz.pl)

<sup>1</sup> The term “ideological identity” is understood in the article as a philosophical and social attitude, not a belief within the theory of urban design.

### *The scope of research*

The starting point for the analysis are the official documents of the CNU, primarily the *Charter of the New Urbanism* [2], and to a lesser extent the *Lexicon of the New Urbanism* [3]. Both shall be considered complementary, even though the Lexicon is rather a manual of urban design than an ideological declaration.

The roots of the identity of New Urbanism can be found in publications of its founders, who are Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, Andrés Duany, Stefanos Polyzoides, Elizabeth Moule, David Solomon and Peter Calthorpe. Among them the most interested in the theory of a “new way of urbanization” were Duany, Calthorpe and Moule. Their direct inspiration, at the turn of the 1980’s, were texts of four people: Jane Jacobs, Vincent Scully, Leon Krier and Christopher Alexander, and a bit less – of Colin Rowe and Robert Venturi<sup>2</sup>. The ideas acknowledged by them, especially by Jacobs and Alexander, as well as their mindset, vicariously influenced the ideological identification of the New Urbanism, too<sup>3</sup>.

Since New Urbanism is deeply embedded in the history of urban planning, its roots may be found also in past theories admitted by the adherents of the CNU. In particular, it is the heritage of the Regional Planning Association

<sup>2</sup> Duany, who never hides his fascination for Alexander’s personality and his theories, created the *Lexicon of the New Urbanism* in the form of a “pattern language”. On the other hand, *A Pattern Language* was an attempt at the present praxis of the theory that Alexander had previously described in the *Timeless Way of Building*. Similarly, Duany, Plater-Zyberk, Polyzoides and others have also focused on embodying their idea of a “new way of urban development” in practice, which finally took the form of New Urbanism – considered as a set of design principles.

<sup>3</sup> Regardless of the general favor they had towards New Urbanism, it does not mean their complete identification with its ideas. And vice versa – some views of Jacobs or Alexander (e.g., negation of the necessity of existence of national states) have never been included in the catalog of CNU principles.

of America (RPAA) which was a loosely organized group including inter alia Clarence Stein, Benton MacKaye and Lewis Mumford. They were chiefly influenced by the idea of the garden city, including the works of Howard and Unwin, but above all by the philosophy of city development and urban life represented by Patrick Geddes.

The knowledge about the ideological identity of New Urbanism is also provided by various publications of CNU members and other supporters of the movement. The last, but no less important source, which also allows us to identify New Urbanism in some way, are numerous writings of its critics and opponents [4], [5].

As it was mentioned, researchers have rather avoided addressing the issue of ideological identity of New Urbanism so far. The writings of Philip Bess and Artur Zagula are an exception, as their research has repeatedly dealt with its philosophical and religious problems [6], [7].

### *The premises of New Urbanism*

#### *Ideological presumptions*

The *Charter of the New Urbanism* has been an official declaration of New Urbanism as a social movement since 1996. It consists of two parts. The first one is a general preamble that establishes the vision of development. The second one consists of 27 principles where more detailed design demands are depicted<sup>4</sup>.

The basic declarations are included in the opening six paragraphs of the preamble. In the first one, and thus, as it may be assumed, the most important, the attention is drawn to the statement presenting the various problems and pathologies of contemporary urban development *as one interrelated community-building challenge* [2]. It is hard to more strongly or emphatically define the hierarchy of importance: all design activities are to serve a community.

Another reference to a community can also be found in the next paragraph, although it is primarily a declaration of respect for the natural, cultural and built-up resources: *We stand for [...] the reconfiguration of sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhood, [...] the conservation of natural environments, and the preservation of our built legacy* [2].

The third paragraph emphasizes the indispensability of good urban planning for the successful life of human communities, and consequently affirms the need for a holistic approach to spatial planning issues. This view is also confirmed in the following text, where one can find yet another declaration of compliance of social policy and development practices with the needs of a community, as well as the affirmation of a [...] *design that celebrates local history, climate, ecology, and building practice* [2].

The last two paragraphs refer to civic participation in spatial planning and thus also indirectly to a community. In the fifth paragraph, a declaration is made which seems

to be a synthesis of the goals of New Urbanism: *We are committed to reestablishing the relationship between the art of building and the making of community* [2].

In the second part of the Charter, which takes the form of more practical postulates, one may also find many references to the previous declarations. These are inter alia the issue of community as the basic factor and goal of the design process (points 13, 19, 23), affirmation of a town life and walkability (points 5, 12, 15, 16), natural social diversity (points 12, 13), protection of cultural heritage (points 6, 27), and the role of the natural environment and the problem of keeping its resources (points 3, 4, 18, 21, 26) [2].

Taking into account the aforementioned premises of New Urbanism included in the Charter, as well as the declarations of its founders [1, pp. 17, 18], [8, pp. 16–26], [9], [10] and research results [11], [12, pp. 45–78], [13], the following main ideological features can be associated with New Urbanism if considered as a complete idea of civic life and an attitude towards social progress. Firstly, these are traditionalism, communitarianism, diversity and pragmatism supplemented with the respect for nature, environmentalism, regionalism, inclusiveness, smallness, slowness, incrementalism and, last but not least, frugality.

#### *New Urbanism as a conservative idea*

The above-mentioned assumptions and declarations allow for the thesis that New Urbanism arose and was developed as a conservative, or to be precise, traditionalist movement, which focuses on a creative transmission of civic art and town planning praxis. It also aims to restore and ensure the continuity of cultural and spatial development of local communities<sup>5</sup>.

New Urbanism is a complete philosophy of a city or, even more precisely, an idea of a community which lives in defined urban conditions. This diverse community, based on a family as the primary social unit is the basic point of reference for urban design.

There is no doubt that New Urbanism emerged in response to the pathologies of modernism. As an opposition against the modernist revolution, and thus a conservative counterrevolution, it was supposed to eliminate the negative effects of revolutionary changes, but not to reconstruct the past. So, New Urbanism respects civilizational achievements and uses modern technologies to accomplish its goals. It affirms the pursuit of order just like conservative and traditionalist movements. As a trend in contemporary urban planning, New Urbanism has attributes of an incremental approach that is based on a bottom-up activity and aims for the best use of existing resources. Therefore it was, and it is, a modern, conservative response to the challenges of the present day.

The conservative approach is characterized primarily by a deep respect for the achievements of our ancestors (traditionalism) and a distrust for total change (anti-revo-

<sup>4</sup> These 27 principles are divided into three equal parts. Peter Calthorpe is the author of the first one, whereas the second part was written by Duany and Plater-Zyberk. The third part is the work of Mule and Polyzoïdes.

<sup>5</sup> Conservatism and traditionalism are more attitudes or mindsets than ideologies, as they occur in different cultures and times almost independently of temporary political forms of government.

lutionism). It does not mean to preserve the old but rather expects the new to be time-tested<sup>6</sup> [14, pp. 10–12], [15, pp. 6–10]. Contrary to some opinions, the conservative mindset is not related to any politics, as it can be defined without identifying with any partisan program [14, p. 4]. Moreover, it is not associated with religion because it does not stem from any religion.

New Urbanism represents at least five of the six fundamental attributes of the conservative mindset defined by Russel Kirk [15, pp. 8, 9]. These are: realism in the judgment of reality expressed, inter alia, in recognition that *there are great forces in heaven and earth that man's philosophy cannot fathom*; affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of traditional life, as *distinguished from the narrowing uniformity and egalitarianism*; faith in prescription and conviction that *man must put a control upon his will and his appetite, for conservatives know man to be governed more by emotion than by reason*; conviction that civilized society requires orders and classes; acceptance of the apparent principle that *change and reform are not identical, and that innovation is a devouring conflagration more often than it is a torch of progress*<sup>7</sup>.

### New Urbanism – analysis of the idea

#### Traditionalism, progress and the past

Traditionalism and respect for the achievements of past generations are the fundamentals of New Urbanism. It is not only the dominant attitude but, as it was stated in the Lexicon: *neo-traditionalism permeates New Urbanist technique* [3, p. 11]. The rules promoted and implemented by New Urbanists are nothing more than the principles of traditional town planning, applied and cultivated in the economic, legal, social, political and cultural context of post-war spatial planning [16, pp. 9, 10]. This is by no means a reconstruction of the past.

The true meaning of traditionalism and conservatism, however, should be explained. Traditionalism does not strive to revive what definitely passed by, and conservatism is not a conservation of the past. As Victor Pradera depicts it: *Tradition is not all that passed. What is in conflict with the principles derived from the nature of a man and his social life cannot be considered traditional, since [...] Tradition must be animated. [...] Tradition is the past that sufficiently qualifies the doctrinal foundations of human life in relationship to abstraction; it is, in other words, the past that survives and has the virtue to become a future*<sup>8</sup> [17, p. 33].

<sup>6</sup> The desire to conserve is compatible with all manner of change, provided only that change is also a continuity [14, p. 11].

<sup>7</sup> The last, sixth attribute is the belief that private property guarantees personal freedom. This issue is absent from the rhetoric of New Urbanism due to its obviousness in the contemporary world [15, pp. 8, 9].

<sup>8</sup> *Tradición no es todo lo pasado. No puede ser tradicional lo que esté en pugna con los principios derivados de la naturaleza del hombre y de su vida de relación, puesto que [...] la Tradición ha de estar por éstos animada. [...] La Tradición es el pasado que cualifica suficientemente los fundamentos doctrinales de la vida humana de relación, en abstracto considerada; es, en otras palabras, el pasado que sobrevive y tiene virtud para hacerse future.*

Similarly, the problem is perceived by Philip Bess, one of the CNU supporters: *The very meaning of a tradition is the pursuit of a shared telos over time, and the handling over what is good* [6, p. 203]. The past is everything that has elapsed and never comes back, whereas real tradition never dies. So, the only suitable adverb of time is: “always” [18, p. 22]. Consequently, it may be claimed that seeking, researching and discovering of “what never dies” or “should never die” in urbanism have always been the objectives of Geddes, Jacobs, Alexander, Duany, Plater-Zyberk and the work of many other New Urbanists.

Tradition, if understood as above, does not stand against progress. On the contrary: Tradition is what prevails over time and no more. It's that which lasts forever [18, p. 31]. So, the tradition is a kind of a starting point, an essence, a base for improvement. Making progress means to change something, and morally also to improve something. This “something” is contained in the inherited tradition. Without a subject for change, progress is impossible, since any “unchanging tradition”, understood as just conserving the past, would be absurd [19]. This kind of reasoning is represented by Roger Scruton who, using the example of “musical tradition”, proves that *a real tradition is not an invention; it is the unintended by-product* [emphasis – M.D.] *of invention, which also makes invention possible. [...] A tradition really is not a custom or a ritual but a form of social knowledge* [14, p. 31].

A similar perception of innovation and progress is represented by Leon Krier: *In traditional cultures, invention, innovation, and discovery are the means to modernize proven and practical systems of thinking, planning, building* [20, p. 49]. *Tradition and progress are not antinomial notions* [20, p. 65]. Krier sees no contradiction between tradition and modernity, if the latter is perceived as fulfilling the needs of contemporary times, not as an ideology or style of modernism [20, pp. 43, 65–75]. The tradition is similarly understood by Calthorpe, who thinks that *there is a fine but important difference between tradition and nostalgia. Traditions are rooted in timeless impulses while being constantly modified by circumstances. Tradition evolves with time and place while holding strong to certain formal, cultural, and personal principles* [9, p. 23].

However, New Urbanism which supports what already exists and has been proven in the past, opposes the cult of modernity: *New Urbanism seeks a counter-response to the celebration of innovation and novelty at the expense of context and historical tradition* [11, p. 32]. Such an approach is in complete opposition to the typical to modernism and affirmed by, e.g., Giedion and Hegelian, paradigm of the spirit of the times (*Zeitgeist*), which – purportedly – permeates architecture. The already quoted Codón Fernández sums it up like this: *Tradition is not identified with time, much less with the passed time. It is the survival of culture through time. It is the substance of the present and the impulse of the future*<sup>9</sup> [18, p. 27].

<sup>9</sup> *La tradición no se identifica con el tiempo y mucho menos con el tiempo pasado. Es la pervivencia de la cultura a través del tiempo. Es la sustancia del presente y el impulso del future.*

The process of urban development planning is perceived closely enough by Benton MacKaye, whose heritage is particularly important to the New Urbanist. He focuses rather on finding, not contriving since *planning is discovery and not invention* [21, p. 349]. This approach is shared by Christopher Alexander whose research since decades has been serving the purpose of discovering and defining a universal, timeless, intercultural building and planning tradition [22].

*Tradition is not a state, it is a process [...] it is both evolution and permanent actuality*<sup>10</sup> [18, pp. 28]. *Objectively, tradition is the cultural heritage that is **acquired, accumulated and transmitted***<sup>11</sup> [emphasis – M.D.] [18, p. 27].

In New Urbanism, research and critical studies on the history of urban planning serve the acquiring, creative design and codification help the accumulation, and in turn the projects that will be evaluated by the future generations serve the transmission. However, Plater-Zyberk pays attention to the problem of the broken continuity in education and the suspended transfer of knowledge (“tradition”) that occurred after World War II as a result of the victory of the modernist revolution. She raises the problem of “lost wisdom” – fading into the oblivion of civic art of urban planning [13, pp. 159, 160]. The works of Howard, Sitte, Wagner, MacKaye and Perry, which were neglected at the best American universities in the 1960s and 1970s (sic!), had to be “discovered” in the following decades<sup>12</sup>.

Proponents of New Urbanism believe that urban patterns should be adopted whenever possible as conventions, a kind of architectural etiquette [23, p. 269], whereas strictly legal rules are supposed to be the culmination of a long-term, and initiated in the past, process of accepting these conventions [8, p. 27]. The convention should be perceived as a standard of conduct, a synonym of voluntary agreement: *a pattern, which having acquired substance and meaning through long-term common use in a long period of use* [3, p. 16]. As such it also seems to be a reminiscence of the common law still present in Anglo-Saxon countries, which is rooted in medieval *feodum*<sup>13</sup>. The effectiveness of conventions must stem from its testing in the past, and thus also from social acceptance.

The issue of the ideological identification of New Urbanism can also be explained by the evolution of the term “new urbanism”. There is no doubt that the movement of urban reform that originated at the turn of the 1990s was perceived by observers as a traditionalist one. Before the present term appeared and was disseminated, the denotations like “neo-traditional urbanism” or “new traditional urbanism” were most often used. In 1991, Polyzoïdes pro-

posed a shorter name, i.e., “new urbanism” where only the newness of traditional urbanism in the contemporary, dominated by modernism world was emphasized. But as Plater-Zyberk wrote: *The qualification “new” is only relative, as the goals and methods for building regulation have evolved over centuries* [24, p. ix]. Skipping the adjective “traditional” was intentional but served a persuasive purpose rather than an ideological one. It resulted in two effects: the proposed idea of urbanism started to be perceived not through the prism of the past (“traditional”), but through modernity (“new”).

*New Urbanism is a recovery and extension of “what-ever works best in the long run”* [3, p. 76]. This depiction from the Lexicon of New Urbanism is a precise definition of the tradition, which finally is, as it was said, “an inherited progress” stemming from life [19].

The urban revival movement, which took the name of New Urbanism in the early 1990s, was a backlash against the phenomena that resulted from modernistic re-evaluation of traditional ideas of civic life. There is no doubt, therefore, that it was a kind of rebellion against the established order, which seems to be contrary to the conservative attitude. It must be remembered, however, that New Urbanism incited a revolt against the destructive output of modernism, and therefore, by definition, as opposed to the revolution caused by modernists, it was counter-revolutionary.

#### *Communitarianism – Diversity – Pragmatism*

The idea of a community supported by New Urbanism is deeply rooted in ancient philosophy and in the heritage of medieval “communes” (“townships”) [6, pp. 11–14]. Not so distant in time, but no less an important source of inspiration were Patrick Geddes’ reflections. His personality eludes simple definitions, and although he cannot be unequivocally considered a traditionalist, his ideas of decentralized development and social life based on small communities are undoubtedly conservative. The basis of Geddes’ philosophy, which applied equally to the built environment and human development in said environment, is the affirmation of community and cooperation as the fundamentals of each social system. It is an apparent inspiration from Plato and Aristotle and recognition (after Le Play) of the key role of “place, work and family” [25, pp. 3–11], [14, pp. 21, 22]. In this way Geddes revives the ancient idea of *polis* and connects it with the natural environment. Therefore, the goal of New Urbanists is to build local communities by means of appropriate planning, design and investment activities.

The model of the community was implied by the origins of New Urbanism. Firstly, the idea of a small neighborhood determined by a five- or ten-minute pedestrian shed, i.e., a type of *polis*, derives directly from the writings of Aristotle [7, pp. 157, 158]. Secondly, self-governing and diverse communities were the basis of late medieval civilization in Europe, when sovereign cities obtained the right to “make their own air free”. And the size of such a model community, which should have approximately several thousand inhabitants [22, pp. 3–5], [20, p. 140],

<sup>10</sup> *La tradición no es un estado, es un proceso [...] es evolución y actualidad permanente.*

<sup>11</sup> *Objetivamente, la tradición es el patrimonio cultural que se **adquiere, acrecienta y transmite*** [emphasis – M.D.].

<sup>12</sup> Plater-Zyberk and Duany studied at Yale and Princeton, Polyzoïdes and Moule at Princeton, Calthorpe at Yale. Plater-Zyberk’s remarks are confirmed by Polyzoïdes: [8, pp. 17, 18].

<sup>13</sup> Feodum, fief (celt.): the privilege of /entitlement for using a property, a synonym of a system based on mutual dependency.

corresponds to the scale of a typical medieval and renaissance small town. The idea of the aforementioned community is also reminiscent of a *habitat*, which, according to Zbigniew Bać includes from 3 up to 150 families (households) where children know each other and adults know each other by name.

One may risk the statement that the “urbanism” of New Urbanism is the pre-modern or pre-Enlightenment one. However, it must be understood not as a rejection of the achievements of technology or empirical sciences, but in terms of scale and self-governance. Efforts to create small, republican communities also hark back to the best American traditions of decentralized democracy, especially in its pre-1865 edition. Such a kind of “provincialism” was supported by Gilbert Chesterton – one of the most important conservative thinkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who defended an “ordinary life” of a “common man” in his journalism [26].

Associated with building strong communities is regionalism, or more precisely, a “regional approach”, as Calthorpe calls it, this attitude fits in with the idea of subsidiarity, which, inter alia, means leaving as many matters as possible up to the local communities. It requires cooperation and abandonment of particular interests [1, pp. 17–19].

According to the followers of New Urbanism, social, functional, architectural and environmental diversity is necessary for healthy and viable communities. The diversity is also related to the idea of social inclusion, which means understanding a city as a place where all classes should intertwine, regardless of their status and income. Social inclusion can be realized through the availability of a broad range of housing options on different price levels, a choice of forms of transport and mixed-use development. All of these elements in a traditional city were easily available, but today require a special urban and architectural design to be achieved.

It should be emphasized that a great advocate of diversity was Jacobs. She stood for a variety of small businesses in a city, defending them against international moguls or government domination. As a supporter of grassroots activities, she questioned gargantuan public programs that preempt private entrepreneurship [27]. Basically, she defended everything that is the essence of a traditional city life.

Diversity in New Urbanism has been accurately embodied in practice through the rural-to-urban transect (*Transect*). The idea is based on the Geddes’ *Valley Section* and the assumption that planning should serve to strike a balance between the man-made and the natural environment. The rural-to-urban transect, which was invented by Duany and Plater-Zyberk, is an emanation of the traditionalist idea of living in harmony with nature. It involves all users and tolerates all ways of civic life, but arranges them separately along the Transect [2, p. 9], [11].

The Transect, like the *Valley Section*, is a perception of “appropriateness” in social life. According to it, what “should” be done in a specific place does not stem from a magical or an irrational premises, but from the experience of past generations, common sense and simple observation. Such rejection of global, one-size-fits-all solutions, in favor of the appropriateness and the reverence for

variable conditions of place and time, is in essence deeply anti-modern and conservative [14, p. 27].

Another, indicated by Moule, traditional feature of New Urbanism is the slowness – the celebration and contemplation of life in opposition to the incessant rush, which de facto praises provincialism and town life. This attitude is related to the precision and meticulousness in architectural and spatial design [8, pp. 22, 23]. Next, smallness (the belief that “small is beautiful”) and walkability of the New Urbanism are a consequence of the affirmation of indigenouslyness and respect for the human scale. On the other hand, grassroots actions and incrementalism fit in with the typical conservative distrust for revolutionary changes [15, p. 9], [20, p. 65].

The concept of social and urban development taken from Geddes, implies the necessity of natural and cultural resources preservation, as well as the affirmation of diversity [1, p. 17]. Geddes, like his close conservative thinkers, namely Gilbert Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc [28, pp. 69–72, 82], completely rejects social Darwinism, both in its capitalist and socialist incarnation. The development has to be incremental, not revolutionary [25, pp. 11, 12]. This, however, requires a certain order, including the spatial hierarchy [22, pp. 3, 4, 557–564] and legibility of both public space and urban regulations [8, p. 22].

New Urbanism is characterized by pragmatism and realism, which are also features of a conservative mindset [15, p. 9]. It emerges in three aspects: the advantage of praxis over theory, focusing on activities that bring tangible results and respecting market requirements and customer expectations [1, pp. 17–19]. This pragmatism is strongly emphasized by Polyzoides, who thinks that reducing New Urbanism to neo-traditionalism gives a definitely incomplete impression of reality. He claims that a much better and more accurate term would be “neo-realism”, since the mission of New Urbanism is [...] *engagement with real places, real people and real institutions* [8, p. 18]. It is the pragmatism that orders the New Urbanist to strive for elaboration and adaptation of certain common values and rules of development [8, p. 27]. *New Urbanism celebrates the appropriate and the beautiful, to the near-exclusion of the willful* [3, p. 76]. Extreme individualism, which resulted in many negative phenomena in urban development (including sprawl), is a threat to the order, necessary for the preservation of natural human rights [7, pp. 148–150].

Finally, the thesis that New Urbanism is characterized by an immanent conservative attitude is also confirmed by researchers who are critical of its declarations. Their assessment, made most often from the neo-Marxist or the so-called “critical theory” positions, explicitly accuses New Urbanism of conservatism, communitarianism [4] and “orderism” (fondness for order) [12, p. 45] and blames it for its lack of revolutionism and progressivism [5, pp. 202, 203].

### *Identification problems*

The vast majority of researchers perceive New Urbanism as a movement that arose in opposition to modernism, as a reaction to its harmful results. An exception in

academia is the view of Michael Vanderbeek and Clara Irázabal, who try to identify New Urbanism as a neo-modernist movement [29, p. 53]. However, this thesis has at least four weaknesses.

Firstly, they attempt to compare the postulates of the *Athens Charter* and the *Charter of the New Urbanism*<sup>14</sup>, but draw a bizarre and contradictory conclusion – since CIAM and CNU both aimed to reform cities, so New Urbanism must be a continuation of modernism, because it appeared later (sic!).

Secondly, using the false antinomy: progress vs. conservatism indicates a complete misunderstanding of these ideas [29, p. 42].

Thirdly, from an objective observation (e.g., Jacobs: “eyes on the street”) that certain urban forms and types of buildings influence social behavior, Vanderbeek and Irázabal conclude that New Urbanism supports social engineering, ergo, continues modernism. This is at least an overinterpretation, which stems from misunderstanding the rule “design affects behavior”.

Fourthly, the formal or even semantic similarities between the CNU and the CIAM, and between its Charters, do not prove a slightest ideological relationship between modernism and New Urbanism. All the more, since the practical effects of these allegedly similar theories are completely different. Indeed, the founders of the CNU were undoubtedly impressed by the effectiveness of CIAM, especially in reevaluating the perception of architecture and urbanism. For them, however, the Athens Charter and the CIAM itself were only a *modus operandi*, a means of communication. Driven to learn from the successes of their predecessors, they just used an effective “weapon of the enemy” without any ideological references [8, p. 22].

Finally, attention should be paid to the following problems: the unclear self-identification, or rather the lack of it, of New Urbanism followers and the ongoing ideological evolution of the CNU as their main representative. A simplification was not even avoided by Calthorpe, who once stated that New Urbanism [...] *is misinterpreted simply as a conservative movement to recapture the past while ignoring the issues of our time* [30, p. 280]. Certainly, as shown in this text, there is no contradiction between conservatism and undertaking the “issues of our time”. Quite the contrary: the quoted opinion results simply from misunderstanding the definitions.

A separate issue is the evolution of the CNU, an organization established by the founders of New Urbanism and representing its ideas. For several years now, the CNU activists have been turning towards up-to-date issues, such as, for example, global warming or revitalization [24,

p. 159]. Increasingly, however, fighting racial and social inequalities is also presented as the main goal, which is, unfortunately, the result of the CNU’s involvement in current American politics. This calls into question not only the so-far apolitical nature of the Congress, but also the ideological coherence of the entire movement<sup>15</sup>. So, New Urbanism may evolve in a completely different direction than the conservative one, which seems to foreshadow a number of recent initiatives [31].

## Conclusions

As it was proven, New Urbanism can be identified as a kind of conservative attitude that affirms a community-based way of life, diversity and the development of traditional urbanism. However, a popular misconception of conservatism/traditionalism as an attempt to preserve the status quo is keeping many New Urbanists from considering it a conservative movement. Some are afraid of being labeled, others really want a revolution, confusing the ideological attitude with political commitment.

It must be strongly emphasized that objective ideological identification does not mean political identification, and the personal views of the founders and followers of New Urbanism, as well as their goals, may differ significantly from one another. It does not mean either that the so far implementation of these conservative assumptions always brings satisfactory results. It should also be noted that the recent changes of the CNU, which take up the current problems of the modern world, confirm the permanent evolution of New Urbanism.

The intention of this article was to trigger a discussion, especially among New Urbanists. That is because they, just like Molier’s Jourdain, may be surprised to realize they “have been speaking prose” and are conservatives/traditionalists without even knowing about it or more importantly, agreeing to it. But it would be a true, creative traditionalism much different than how partisan politics see it. Since there is no progress without tradition and no tradition without progress.

Translated by  
Michał Domińczak

<sup>14</sup> The comparison is extremely selective: the authors compare diagnoses ignoring the recommendations and leave out the key postulates of modernism (protection of cultural heritage, the method of shaping public space and transport, etc.) [29, pp. 44, 45].

<sup>15</sup> In 2009 a group of the CNU members, including two of its founders, adopted and signed the Canons of Sustainable Architecture and Urbanism. It was supposed to be an unofficial supplement of the *Charter of the New Urbanism*. The document places particular emphasis on the issues of climate change, renewable energy sources and public transport.

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## Abstract

## Ideological identity of New Urbanism

The article is devoted to the issues of ideological identity of New Urbanism and it is an attempt to expand the general knowledge about this particular phenomenon of contemporary urbanism and a complete idea of social life. It also undertakes, to a lesser extent, a polemic with some of the theses of its critics.

The article adopts a method of deduction. First of all, the official declarations of the Congress for the New Urbanism (CNU), including, in particular, the Charter of the New Urbanism were analyzed. Then, the writings and publications of the precursors and founders of New Urbanism were examined. A mention was also made of the theories presented by various groups, which are now the point of reference for New Urbanists as their mentors. The conducted analyses allowed us to lay out the thesis that research conclusions are sufficient to identify New Urbanism as a conservative, or more precisely – a traditionalist movement, which aims for creative improvement of the good habits in town planning and restoration of the continuity of cultural and spatial development of local communities.

New Urbanism is a defined, comprehensive philosophy of a city, understood as an idea of a diverse and family-based living community set in specific spatial conditions. This idea of local "urbanity" – a concept of social life represented in New Urbanism, fits in with the ideal, Aristotelian republican system (*politeia*).

New Urbanism represents at least five out of six fundamental attributes of a conservative mindset: realism in the judgment of reality; affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of traditional life; faith that man must take control of his anarchic impulses; conviction that a civilized society requires order and classes; and acceptance of the apparent principle that change and progress are not identical. Striving for an equilibrium between the freedom of choice and the social responsibility is fully in line with a conservative mindset, too. Thereby, New Urbanism became a counterbalance to both the neoliberal, consumer-driven exaggerated individualism and neo-Marxist collectivism.

**Key words:** New Urbanism, conservatism, traditionalism, communitarianism

## **Streszczenie**

### ***Identyfikacja ideowa Nowego Urbanizmu***

Artykuł poświęcony jest zagadnieniom identyfikacji ideowej Nowego Urbanizmu (*New Urbanism*) i stanowi próbę rozszerzenia wiedzy na temat tego szczególnego fenomenu współczesnej urbanistyki. Podejmuje także, w niewielkim zakresie, polemikę z niektórymi tezami jego krytyków.

W pracy przyjęto metodę dedukcji, analizując w pierwszej kolejności oficjalne deklaracje *Congress for the New Urbanism*, w tym przede wszystkim Kartę Nowej Urbanistyki. Następnie zbadano pisma i publikacje prekursorów oraz twórców Nowego Urbanizmu. Odniesiono się także do teorii prezentowanych przez osoby i środowiska, do których jako do swoich mentorów i wzorców ideowych odwołują się współcześnie zwolennicy tego ruchu. Przeprowadzone analizy pozwoliły na przyjęcie wniosków badawczych, wystarczających do identyfikacji Nowego Urbanizmu jako ruchu konserwatywnego, a właściwie – precyzyjnie rzecz ujmując – tradycjonalistycznego, który za cel stawia sobie twórczą kontynuację dobrych zwyczajów planowania miast, służących razem przywróceniu ciągłości rozwoju kulturowego i przestrzennego lokalnych społeczności.

Nowy Urbanizm reprezentuje co najmniej pięć z sześciu głównych cech postawy konserwatywnej: realizm w osądzie rzeczywistości; przywiązanie do różnorodności tradycyjnych form życia społecznego; przekonanie, że człowiek – skłonny do kierowania się bardziej emocjami niż rozumem – wymaga reguł i zasad postępowania pozwalających na okiełznanie anarchicznych impulsów jego natury; uznanie, że cywilizowane społeczeństwo może rozwijać się wyłącznie według przyjętego porządku oraz akceptację zasady, że pojęcia zmiany i postępu nie są tożsame.

Nowy Urbanizm to zdefiniowana, całościowa idea miasta, rozumianego jako koncepcja wspólnoty żyjącej w określonych warunkach przestrzennych. Jest to wspólnota zróżnicowana, oparta na rodzinie jako podstawowej komórce społecznej. Idea lokalnej „miejskości”, którą reprezentuje Nowy Urbanizm, jako koncepcja życia społecznego wpisuje się w postawę republikańską w rozumieniu idealnej, arystotelesowskiej formy ustrojowej (*politeia*). Dążenie do równowagi między swobodą indywidualnego wyboru a wymogami społecznej odpowiedzialności w pełni wpisuje się w postawę konserwatywną. W ten sposób Nowy Urbanizm stanowi przeciwwagę zarówno dla neoliberalnego, opartego na konsumpcji wybujałego indywidualizmu, jak i dla neomarksistowskiego kolektywizmu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Nowy Urbanizm, Nowa Urbanistyka, konserwatyzm, tradycjonalizm, wspólnotowość