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Miastoprojekt goes abroad: the transfer of architectural labour from socialist Poland to Iraq (1958–1989)

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When in 1962 Miastoprojekt-Kraków won the international tender for the master plan of Baghdad, this initiated two decades of intense engagement in Iraq of this architectural and planning office from the People's Republic of Poland. By choosing an office from a socialist country, Iraqi governments from Abdul Karim Kassem to Saddam Hussein not only responded to the specific geopolitical conditions of the Cold War in the Middle East, but also aimed at drawing on the Polish experience of post-war reconstruction, with the state taking an active role in the processes of urbanisation. The lessons learned from the reconstruction of Warsaw and the construction of new towns such as Nowa Huta, designed by Miastoprojekt, reverberated throughout its two master plans for Baghdad (1967, 1973). Its numerous projects in Iraq focused on the distribution of welfare (housing and education) on a territorial scale and included, in particular, the General Housing Programme (1976–1980). The attempt to mediate between the ambitions of modernisation and attention to local specificity required extensive research. This study links the increasing role of research in the Iraqi projects of Miastoprojekt both to its previous contributions to architectural culture in Poland and to the political economy of architectural labour in the Cold War.

Introduction

In an article of 1986, published in the Polish economic journal *Rynki zagraniczne* ['Foreign markets'], the author deplores the times 'when more than 12,000 Poles were working in Iraq, supplying not only their own hard-currency bank accounts but also the purse of the state, by realising a few dozen contracts, including large-scale constructions'.¹ The article offers a glimpse into the waning of what was for a long time the pride of the socialist People's Republic of Poland: the export of technology and expertise, which included the construction of complete industrial plants, roads, engineering works and infrastructures, but also services in architecture and planning.²

Iraq was a major site for such engagement in the course of the 1960s and 1970s. After the 1958 coup which toppled the pro-Western monarchy of Faisal II, the regimes from Abdul Karim Kassem to Saddam Hussein leant towards the Soviet Union and the Eastern Block, while guarding the independence of the country in terms of a political model, economic development, trade relationships and regional policy. In particular, after seizing power in 1968, the socialist Ba'ath party launched a programme of economic and social development, with a stress on national planning, agrarian reform, nationalisation of the oil industry, industrialisation, irrigation and cultural development.³ The vast sums of hard currency that became available after the quadrupling of petroleum prices after

1973⁴ allowed the regime to commission and implement large-scale projects, such as the master plans for Baghdad (1967, 1973) and the General Housing Programme (1976–1980), delivered by architects and planners from the Polish state office, Miastoprojekt-Kraków.

By focusing on the work of Miastoprojekt in Iraq, this study fills a gap in architectural historiography dealing with the transfer of architectural and planning knowledge and culture to newly independent countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia during the Cold War.⁵ Until now this record in Iraq has concentrated on the work of Western architects. It has included discussion of the 1950s' international modernism in Baghdad of Alvar Aalto, Le Corbusier, Constantinos Doxiadis, Willem Marinus Dudok, Walter Gropius, Gio Ponti, Jose Lluís Sert and Frank Lloyd Wright on the one hand and, on the other, the predominantly postmodern work of Ricardo Bofill, Arthur Erickson, and Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown, among others, in the early 1980s.⁶ While the Polish architects and planners shared with most of their Western colleagues the postulate of balancing the requirements of modernisation with attention to local climate, architectural heritage, building materials and patterns of use, this paper argues that Miastoprojekt's take on this postulate was facilitated by its extensive, long-term research carried out on the spot. This approach will be linked in this study to the experience of interdisciplinary teams working on the post-war reconstruction of Poland and to an extensive collaboration with Iraqi institutions, but also to the political economy of architectural labour in state socialism and to the uneven development of the

global architectural labour market during the Cold War, which made the socialist expert culture not only politically attractive to the Iraqi regimes but also economically competitive. The shifting role of research in the work of Miastoprojekt—from preparatory work for planning to an independent commission—was part of a broader redefinition of international architectural culture starting in the 1960s, with research becoming an increasingly important part of the practices of architecture and planning.

Poles in Iraq: geopolitics and economy

The export of architectural expertise and labour from socialist Poland followed the political backing of the regime in Warsaw for newly founded states, which included the support for the economic development of Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Iraq, Libya and Syria: countries that were gravitating towards the Eastern Block in various periods of their tumultuous histories from the 1960s to the 1980s.⁷ While reflecting the Soviet policies of Khrushchev (1953–1964), which embraced the independence movements in the 'Third World', and later the more pragmatic position of the Brezhnev years (1964–1982), the policy of Warsaw was also instrumental as a means of stabilising the post-war order in Europe, as well as for internal propaganda.⁸ Yet with West Germany's recognition of the western border of Poland in 1970 in the framework of *Ostpolitik*, which averted, in the eyes of the Polish regime, the imminent German threat, the political objectives were considered less pressing. For the Polish government—in constant need for hard currency—the economic aims of export contracts

were becoming increasingly important, and these were exacerbated by the need to repay the loans obtained from international financial institutions in the course of the 1970s.

This growing importance of economic objectives was particularly visible in Polish export of expertise and technology to Iraq. Hard on the heels of the 1959 trade treaty between the two countries, by the early 1960s there were already fifty Polish engineers working in Iraq on large infrastructural projects, including the construction of water treatment plants, irrigation facilities, bridges, dams, roads, as well as factories of various sorts, some of them of considerable architectural quality.⁹ The trade relationships grew in the following years and Poland was the first country to be granted the inclusion of oil into barter contracts by the Iraqis in 1973.¹⁰

At the same time, beginning with the mid-1970s, the export of Polish technology began to suffer from incongruence between the requirements of international trade and the inefficient bureaucracy and organisation of Polish firms; the lack of modern financial instruments; and the increasing technological backwardness of the industrial plants ('our factories weight 1/3 more than those offered by our competitors' notes an author in 1980).¹¹ By the early 1980s, as Poland was undergoing a harsh economic crisis and international isolation in the wake of martial law declared in 1981, Polish state firms were competing not only with Western, Indian and South Korean enterprises, but also among each other, increasingly forced to enter into subcontracting agreements with companies from capitalist countries.¹² With the withdrawal of the Polish state from underwriting credits for

foreign contracts, the share of the available markets was significantly reduced. Among these Libya and Iraq were the most important, although the latter was marked by financial and logistic difficulties caused by the war with Iran (1980–88) and the protectionist policies of the Ba'athist regime. Simultaneously, the receding gains from the export of technology contrasted with the rising numbers of Polish experts traveling to Iraq, among them architects and planners.¹³ By 1986 the representative of the Polish government was forced to admit, in a public debate, that what was formerly called 'building export', 'verges on being not much more than the export of labour power'.¹⁴

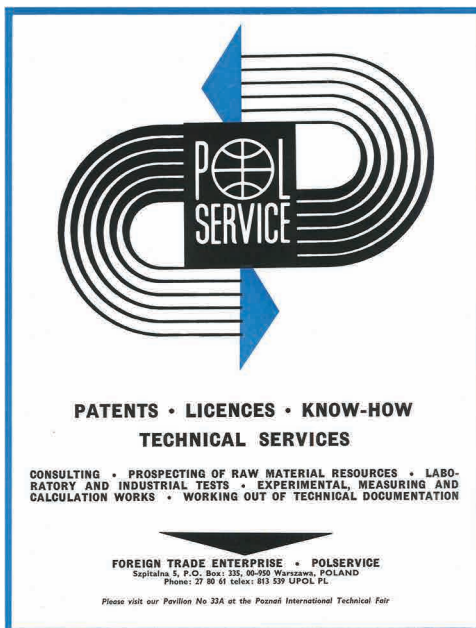
Why Polish architects and planners?

The export of labour had been profitable to the regime in Warsaw because of the fees paid by the experts to Polservice, the state firm acting as an intermediary (Fig. 1). Polservice was one of the 'central agencies of foreign trade', that is to say companies which operated all foreign trade contacts of Polish transactors during socialism. The first were established during the immediate post-war period with the aim of importing technologies necessary for the reconstruction and industrialisation of Poland, but they soon offered export services, in collaboration with BISTYP (Office for Research and Typical Projects of Industrial Architecture) founded in 1951, followed by CEKOP in 1954 (Central Export Agency of Complete Industrial Plants) and its offshoot, Polservice, founded in 1961. Polservice established a network of representatives residing in the countries which were Poland's trade partners, including Iraq and with Polservice's logo

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Figure 1. Advertisement by Polservice, the central agency for foreign trade which coordinated the export of labour from socialist Poland, including that of architects and planners; Polish Fair Magazine, 3 (1973), p. 39. (Courtesy of the Archive of the Międzynarodowe Targi Poznańskie.)



put on every document, Miastoprojekt's planning projects in Iraq were usually referred to as Polservice's.

In a 1974 interview, the director of Polservice said: 'the master plan of Baghdad was for us the first big consulting commission, which we won in an international tender in spite of strong competition. Beside the financial conditions, the reputation of Polish planners also played an important role.'¹⁵ While Iraq's general orientation towards socialist countries was a precondition for this contract, the reputation of Polish planners as offering good value for money was decisive. Other factors might have played a certain role as well, including the

Polish experience with nation-building in the twentieth century, a fact stressed by authors from the Middle East.¹⁶ Of influence also was the presumed sensitivity of a 'country without colonies', stressed by a range of authors, from Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) to Ryszard Kapuściński (1932–2007): a Polish self-perception which reflected neither the colonial fantasies expressed during the II Republic (1918–1939) by organisations such as Liga Morska i Kolonialna ['Maritime and Colonial League']; nor the centuries of Polish presence in territories in today's Belarus and Ukraine.¹⁷ Also, the march of the Polish army through Iraq during the Second World War allowed for many personal contacts which were then remembered in the 1960s—and the teaching of several painters serving in the Polish army during the war was instrumental for the emergence of modern art in post-war Iraq.¹⁸

The reputation enjoyed by Polish urban planning stemmed from the international appreciation of the reconstruction of Poland after the Second World War. In particular, it was the rebuilding of Warsaw according to the principles of equal living conditions for all inhabitants, facilitated by the communalisation of property and the direct involvement of the state in economic and spatial planning, coupled with the reconstruction of the old town, which had been systematically destroyed in a planned German operation after the Warsaw Uprising of 1944. The resuscitation of the 'spatial proportions' and 'general atmosphere' of the old town was combined with an overarching modernisation of the city in the course of which the old town was 'merged with the current of the city's daily life' (figs 2, 3).¹⁹ This is how the effort was



Figure 2. 'Warsaw. Housing and industry in the six-year plan', in, B. Bierut, 'The Six-Year Plan for the reconstruction of Warsaw' (Warsaw, 1951), plate 6. (Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal.)

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Figure 3. 'Centre of the City', in, B. Bierut, 'The Six-Year Plan for the reconstruction of Warsaw' (Warsaw, 1951), plate 12. (Collection Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal.)



explained by Adolf Ciborowski, the head architect of Warsaw between 1956 and 1964, whose international publications and public lectures (including one in Baghdad in 1962) contributed to the visibility of Polish planning at that time, as did his involvement with several UN projects, such as his supervision of the planning of Skopje after the 1963 earthquake.²⁰

It was Ciborowski who was first approached by Polservice to participate in the tender for the Baghdad master plan. Most of the architects and planners working in Baghdad before the Miastoprojekt master plan project were employed by or passed through the Warsaw Urban Planning Office. They included Stanisław Jankowski and his team, which completed in 1962 the master plans of Mosul, Basrah, Kerbala and several other cities;²¹ Jerzy Hryniewiecki, who designed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad;²² and Jerzy Baumiller, who served as the Chief Architect for the Building Department at the Ministry of Municipalities (1960–63).²³ Stanisław Dylewski of the Warsaw Urban Planning Office was appointed as the first head of the master plan's office in Baghdad, but not without tensions between the Kraków and Warsaw teams.²⁴

From Nowa Huta to Baghdad

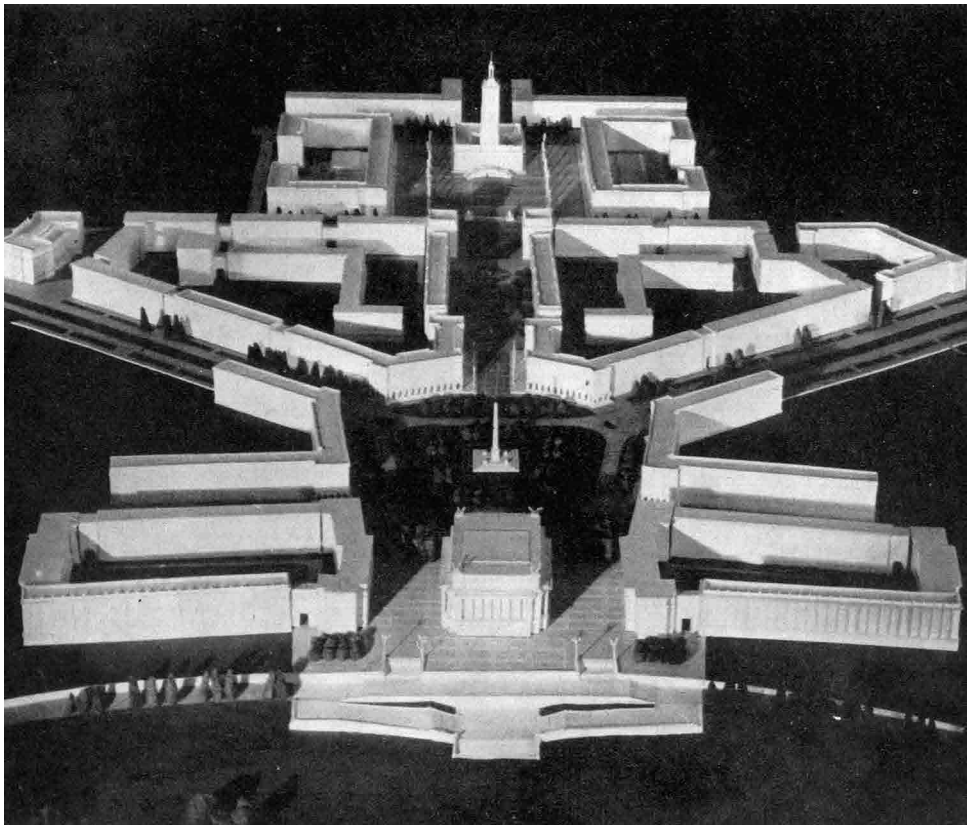
Ciborowski recommended the architecture and planning office Miastoprojekt-Kraków to Polservice for participation in the 1962 tender for the Baghdad master plan. Miastoprojekt was created in 1952 under the leadership of Tadeusz Ptaszycycki, the head designer of Nowa Huta, 'the first socialist city in Poland', in order to deliver full documentation of this new town for 100,000 inhabitants (Fig. 4).

Looking back at this experience, Kazimierz Bajer, the long-time head of Miastoprojekt's export department responsible for all Iraqi projects, said that 'the planning of Nowa Huta was for us an experience of designing a city as a whole—and it was the same in Baghdad'.²⁵

With the stabilisation of the size of Miastoprojekt from the late 1950s at the level of 370–400 employees and the definition of its profile ranging from architecture to planning services, the contract in Baghdad, which would start almost twenty years of Miastoprojekt's project work in Iraq, was welcomed as a part of the office's effort to expand its activities beyond the region of Kraków.²⁶ From thirty international teams invited by the municipality of Baghdad to participate in the tender, in the final round Miastoprojekt was competing with two West German offices, a Swiss and a Swede. The contract, signed in 1965, included the master plan of the city until 1990, directives for local plans, a conceptual design for a model housing unit and a proposal for a modification of urban planning regulations.²⁷ After the plan had been delivered in 1967, Miastoprojekt received the commission to map the urban territory of Baghdad and to deliver its more detailed master plan. This was officially accepted in 1973 and guided the development of Baghdad in the years to come, as a comparison with the later plans of Baghdad from the 1970s and 1980s shows, influencing in particular the layout of the road system and the introduction of multifamily housing.²⁸

Work on the master plan was preceded by the analysis of previous planning for Baghdad, including two plans drawn up by foreign firms which influenced the development of the city and the decisions

Figure 4. Miastoprojekt-Kraków (head designer: Tadeusz Ptaszycski), the design of the centre of Nowa Huta (model), in, B. Garliński, *Architektura polska 1950–1951* (Warsaw, Państwowe Wydawnictwa Techniczne, 1953), p. 80.



of the municipality: namely, the 1956 master plan by Minoprio & Spencely and F. M. Macfarlane²⁹ and the plan by Doxiadis Associates (1958).³⁰ In contrast to these two plans, criticised both by local³¹ and Polish voices as 'detached from the socio-economic situation of the country and possibilities of realisation',³² the representatives of Miastoprojekt

stressed their hands-on approach which, based on the mapping of Baghdad, allowed them to preserve 90% of the substance of the city.³³ Such an approach required an interdisciplinary team, assembled in cooperation with other Polish architectural offices (from Lublin, Warsaw, Częstochowa and Wrocław) and research institutes.³⁴ These

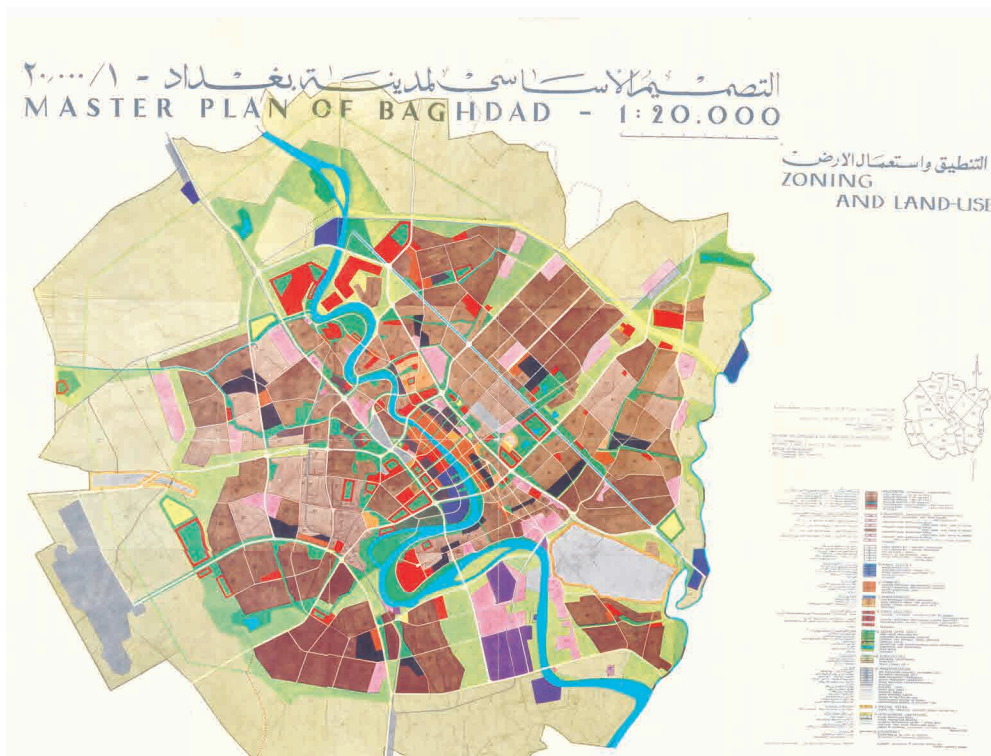


Figure 5. Miastoprojekt-Kraków, 'Master-Plan of Baghdad', 1967. (Miastoprojekt Archive, Kraków.)

teams were divided between the Urban Planning Office set up by Miastoprojekt in Baghdad and their headquarters in Kraków. Preliminary research for the 1967 master plan included a study of the historical development of the city; the geography of social stratification; soils, climate and water, in particular in relation to flood protection; infrastructure; traffic-flow diagrams based on empirical quantitative studies; classification of roads; bus routes,

volume of passengers and time contours of traffic; railway systems; functional structure of the city; land use—all presented in maps and diagrams delivered to the municipality of Baghdad.³⁵ These studies were carried out at regional and urban levels as well as, partially, at the level of the historic centres (Rusafa, Karkh, Kadhemiyah); they were specified and developed in more detail in preparation for the 1973 master plan (Fig. 5).³⁶

Whilst emphasising the experience of Polish post-war planning, the master plan of Baghdad nevertheless revised some of its premises according to local specificities highlighted by on-site research. The main decision of the plan—supported by studies in regional economy—was to limit the size of the population, from the 5 million inhabitants forecast for 1990, at 3.5 million (in the mid-1960s the city had 1.5 million people).³⁷ The division of the city into structural entities was based on a climatological study, developed in cooperation with the Łódź University and in consultation with UN experts advising the municipality of Baghdad.³⁸ The study proposed a system of open water reservoirs, ameliorating the microclimate and used as retention basins, and a system of windbreaks of tall trees to shield the city against the dust from the desert. The plan defined the river Tigris as the functional and compositional axis of the city, and organised the layout of the metropolis in three belts paralleling the river. The river belt concentrated the main political and administrative, commercial, business, cultural and touristic functions of Baghdad, while the exterior belts comprised residential complexes. They were connected to each other by means of a comprehensive system road system, differentiated by scales and standards (Fig. 6).³⁹

The planning of the residential districts was based on investigation of the social structure of the city, carried out by sociologists and Arabists from the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, which showed that 97% of inhabitants preferred a detached rather than a multifamily house.⁴⁰ Thus, the planners decided to keep the traditional, low-rise individually owned housing as the dominant typology. The 1973

plan foresaw eight residential districts organised hierarchically, from the residential unit, through to the neighbourhood unit and then to the community (Fig. 7). While the concept of the neighbourhood unit was key for the design of Nowa Huta, its socialist-realist architecture was not envisaged for Baghdad, in line with Miastoprojekt's general embrace of modernist forms since the mid 1950s. Accordingly, two projects of model houses accompanied the master plan. The first, developed by Miastoprojekt, consisted of the composition of pavilions whose forms emphasised the differing qualities of the materials (brick, wood; Fig. 8). The second, designed by Tomasz Mańkowski's team at the Faculty of Architecture in Kraków, focused on volumetric studies of strict geometric compositions, influenced by Mańkowski's education under Louis Kahn at the University of Pennsylvania.⁴¹ At the same time, the master plan argued for the necessity of a gradual introduction of multifamily housing (20% of the housing stock until 1990). On the top of economic reasons, this recommendation was based on the planners' conviction that higher blocks of flats would add weight to the centres of districts, enriching the silhouette of the city and its 'townscape', mapped in the 1973 master plan.

While according to the Minoprio master plan there were 'few buildings worth preservation' within the old city of Baghdad,⁴² preservation was a key concern for Miastoprojekt. The 1967 master plan had already suggested preserving the historical neighbourhoods of Karkh and Rusafa, and containing them between four major streets, rather than piercing through them as in the Doxiadis master plan: heavy traffic was redirected around Kadhe-

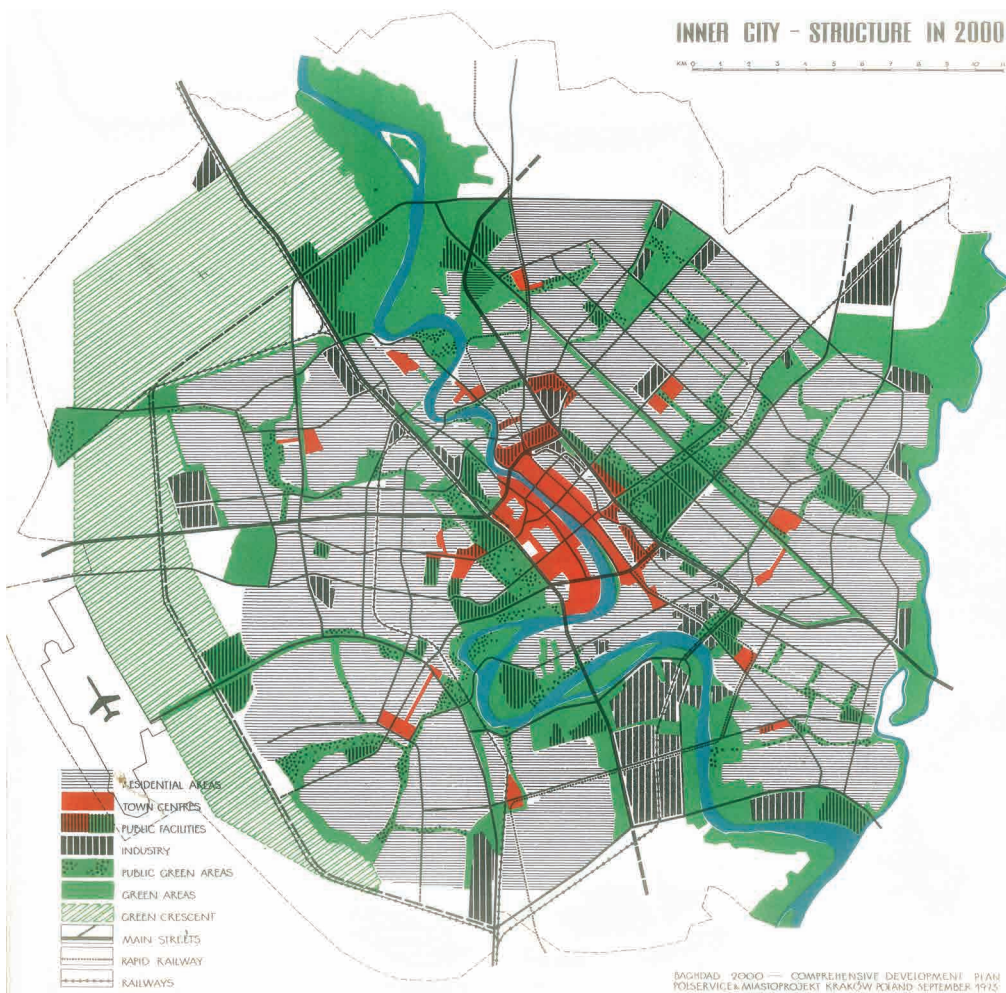
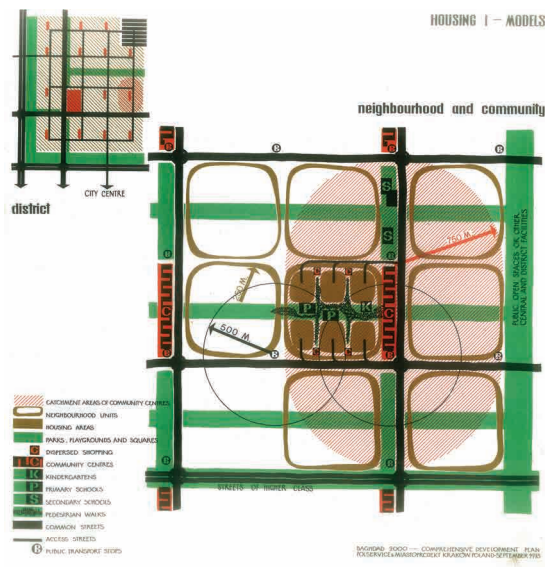


Figure 6. Inner-city structure in 2000, in, Miastoprojekt-Kraków, 'Comprehensive Development Plan for Baghdad', 1973. (Miastoprojekt Archive, Kraków.)

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Figure 7. Housing models, in, Miastoprojekt-Kraków, 'Comprehensive Development Plan for Baghdad' (1973).



miyah. Miastoprojekt was developing various scenarios for Kadhemiyah,⁴³ but the 1973 master plan affirmed that it was to be preserved as a whole. (Despite this recommendation, clearance of the southern part was carried out by local authorities in violation of the master plan, an action that caused the head of the Miastoprojekt team in Baghdad to resign in protest.)⁴⁴ This preservation of the whole ensemble in combination with a contemporary traffic layout resembled the solutions used in Warsaw, where the East-West route was laid out under the Castle Square, and reflected Polish post-war debates on mobility in historical centres.⁴⁵ In continuation of the Warsaw experience, the Baghdad plan introduced several

categories of preservation, from complete preservation of individual buildings and their groups; through the integration of archaeological sites into the system of public spaces; to the replacement of groups of dilapidated houses by 'structures modern in standards but traditional in scale and character'(Fig. 9).⁴⁶

General Housing Programme for Iraq

In the wake of the 1973 master plan, Miastoprojekt submitted a range of proposals for Iraq. To the more successful ones belonged the commission for the General Housing Programme for Iraq (GHPI) which aimed at assessing the current and future housing condition in Iraq and its housing needs; and

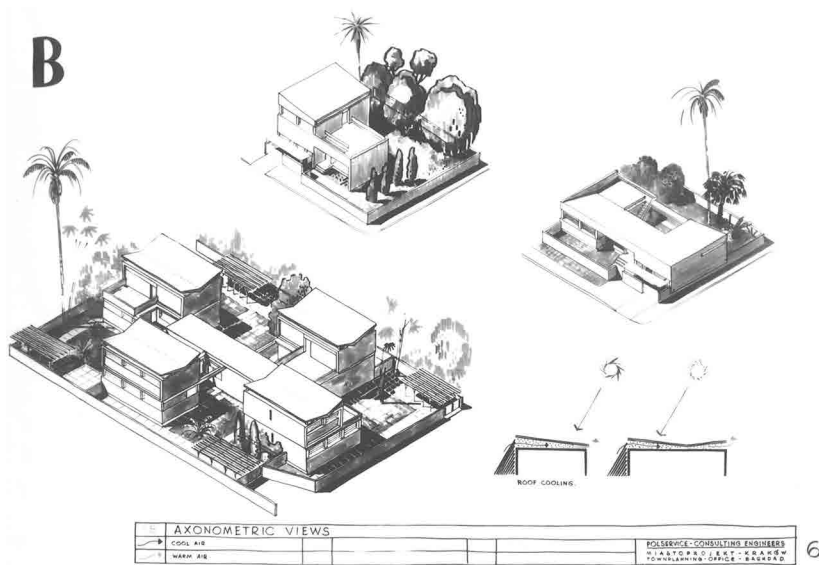


Figure 8. Housing models, in, Miastoprojekt-Kraków, 'Mieszaniowa Jednostka Modelowa dla Bagdadu', 1966. (Miastoprojekt Archive, Kraków.)

suggested housing policies up to the year 2000.⁴⁷ The project was a part of the Second National Development Plan (1976–80) and it was presented by the Iraqi regime as a solution to the housing crisis.⁴⁸

Miastoprojekt was working on this 'contract of the century' between 1975 and 1980 in cooperation with the Iraqi planning office Dar al-'Imarah, with the Kraków Construction Consortium as the general contractor, mediated by Polservice. This was paralleled by the 'Complementary Study to Housing Standards for Iraq', carried out by the team of Miastoprojekt between 1981 and 1982, and approved as binding for architectural practices

in Iraq.⁴⁹ The socialist tone of enthusiasm for production output seems very appropriate in this context to convey the scale of the programme: it was presented in 21 volumes which were produced by 59 employees of Miastoprojekt (planners, architects, landscape designers, construction and traffic engineers, accountants, economists and others) and 53 external experts, including sociologists and Arabists from various universities in Poland, but also computer specialists who programmed software for processing the results of the socio-demographic study of 10,517 families in 35 settlements; and 914 urban housing stock surveys in 64 settlements.⁵⁰

Figure 9. Miastoprojekt-Kraków, design of the restructuring of the Kadhemiyah neighbourhood in Baghdad, mid-1970s, drawing by Andrzej Basista, in, A. Basista, 'Plany przekształcenia Kadhemiyi, zabytkowej dzielnicy Bagdadu', *Kwartalnik architektury i urbanistyki*, vol. XXI, no. 4 (1976), p. 351. (Courtesy of Andrzej Basista.)



The GHPI report argued that in order to meet the needs of the growing population, the construction of housing was to be speeded up by five times by the end of the century. This required a new financial policy, aiming at a mixture between state-financed social housing (40%) and state-supported private initiative (60%); as well as the densification of housing both in existing neighbourhoods and on their outskirts, with the aim of reaching 51% multi-family houses in cities over 100,000 inhabitants by the year 2000.⁵¹

The GHPI specified the size of flats and their functional relationships according to occupancy numbers. The dimensions of particular rooms and the requirements of climatic and socio-psychological

conditions were determined in relationship to traditional typologies, local building materials and technology. Beyond the scale of the flat, the Programme developed norms for the distribution of schools, technical infrastructure, social facilities, landscaping and climatic concerns.⁵² These were based on countrywide sociological and demographic studies; research on natural resources and production technologies, both traditional and industrialised, their capacities and potentials; as well as on the mapping of architectural and urban typologies and morphologies in Iraqi cities and rural settlements. The results of the programmatic part were applied and tested in the comprehensive design of six pilot neighbourhoods, to a larger or smaller



Figure 10. Housing neighbourhood in Mahmudiyah, developed in the framework of the General Housing Programme for Iraq, 1976–80. (Courtesy of Danuta Mieszkowska.)

extent realised, such as the Al-Kadisiyah neighbourhood in Mahmudiyah for over 15,000 inhabitants (Fig. 10), smaller neighborhoods in Mosul, Amara, Irbil, Samawa and the rural settlement, Al-Zuhairi.⁵³

Among the GHPI reports, report no. 3 on 'Model Design', November, 1978, can be seen as conveying a specifically architectural approach to research methodology. This report, displayed in a form of a 'Grid of model designs' in the vein of the post-war CIAM grids, was produced by Tomasz Mańkowski and his team at the Faculty of Architecture in Kraków (Fig. 11).⁵⁴ Besides accounting for the local climate, materials and building technologies, and social needs and aspirations—standard postulates of the post-war 'tropical architecture'⁵⁵—the

study suggested 'formal determinants' of housing architecture, differentiated by geographical regions in Iraq. They included a typological research of housing structures; a study of street views showing the main divisions of the façade; street profiles with special attention to details which gave form to the street space (such as cornices and socles); research on communal facilities defined by the plan, construction and choice of materials; and a study on the interplay between the monument and the urban texture, as in the mapping of Kadhemiyah (Fig. 12).⁵⁶

The consequences of this research—which can be linked to Mańkowski's contacts with the Venice School of Architecture from the late 1960s

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Figure 11. Grid Model Designs, in 'Report no. 3. Model Design' (November, 1978), 'General Housing Programme for Iraq'. (Miastoprojekt Archive, Kraków.)

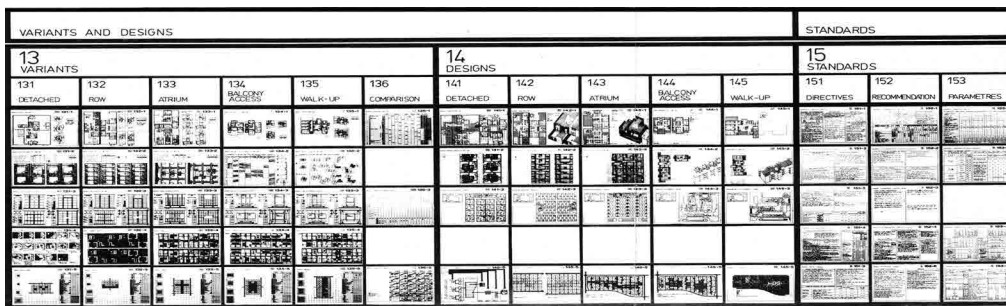
GRID MODEL DESIGNS
GENERAL HOUSING PROGRAMME FOR IRAQ

| | | RANGE OF DETERMINANTS | | | | | | | | | | | | CONSTRUCTION OF MODEL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---------------------------|------------|-----------|--------|--------------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------|--------|-----------|----------------|------------|-----------|--------|--------|---------------|------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------|-------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------|--------|-----------|
| | | 10 PERMANENT DETERMINANTS | | | | 11 VARIABLE DETERMINANTS | | | | 12 MODEL | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | 101 | 102 | 103 | 104 | 111 | 112 | 113 | 121 | 122 | 123 | 124 | 125 | 126 | 127 | 128 | 129 | 101 | 102 | 103 | 104 | 111 | 112 | 113 | 121 | 122 | 123 | 124 | 125 | 126 | 127 | 128 | 129 |
| | | UMBRINOLOGICAL | FUNKTIONAL | TECHNICAL | FORMAL | SOCIAL | TECHNOLOGICAL | OBJECTIVES | PROGRAMME | INTERRELATIONS | PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS | FLEXIBILITY | PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION | SPATIAL ORGANIZATION | PARAMETRES | MODELS | SELECTION | UMBRINOLOGICAL | FUNKTIONAL | TECHNICAL | FORMAL | SOCIAL | TECHNOLOGICAL | OBJECTIVES | PROGRAMME | INTERRELATIONS | PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS | FLEXIBILITY | PHASES OF CONSTRUCTION | SPATIAL ORGANIZATION | PARAMETRES | MODELS | SELECTION |
| THE FIRST STRATUM DWELLING | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| THE SECOND STRATUM GROUP OF DWELLINGS | 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| THE THIRD STRATUM RESIDENTIAL PRECINCT | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| THE THIRD STRATUM COMMUNITY FACILITIES | 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| COMMUNITY | 5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

onwards—can be found in the designs of housing projects included in the study, in particular in the shape of volumes and the choice of materials differentiated according to regions, as well as the light prefabricated details which, at the same time, have much in common with the then-contemporary work of Rifat Chadirji in Baghdad and in Mańkowski's own work in Kraków (cf. Figure 12).⁵⁷ However, these themes did not lead to any fundamental revision of the premises of Miastoprojekt's urban design, in spite of the declared reservations about CIAM doctrines.⁵⁸ What the study presents is a set of recommendations for planners, informative but conventional and, indeed, used by the authorities in their planning practice.⁵⁹ As demonstrated by the Al-Kadisiyah housing project, included in report no. 3, this methodology resulted in a diversity of housing typologies, from row and atrium houses to multifamily estates, as well as in some attempts at introducing dense sequences of squares and streets defined by building volumes and geometrically planned vegetation. Yet, the general layout of the segregated and hierarchised traffic is very close to the

work of Doxiadis, including the widely published master plan of sector no. 10 in West Baghdad almost twenty years earlier.⁶⁰

The impact of field research becomes more visible in several architectural proposals in the framework of the GHPI. For example, the design of the *sug* by Danuta Mieszkowska and her team—first intended for a specific site in Baghdad, then developed into a typical design and applied in the neighbourhoods in Amara, Irbil, Samawa, Mosul and Baghdad—reveals a particular attention to traditional everyday practices of its users, and consists of a main arcade, an area for small services (clockmakers, potters, tailors), shops, tea-houses (a meeting place for men), and a shaded courtyard with a well (a meeting place for women) surrounded by grocery shops, a butcher's shop and a bakery (Fig. 13).⁶¹ Like all architectural projects within the GHPI, this design accommodated a request for light prefabrication rather than the large-scale one that had been rejected by the Ministry of Housing in Baghdad after what it considered to be failed attempts at an adaptation of the French CAMUS system to Iraqi conditions.⁶²



Another example is the project of multifamily houses built in a neighbourhood of 2,278 inhabitants in Mahmadiyah by Tadeusz Myszkowski. In an attempt to mediate between the general preference of the Iraqi population for the individual house and the requirements of intensified housing, Myszkowski designed a three-storey house with one flat on each floor, to be experienced as a detached house. The staircase leading to the flats is separated from the house and, in order to allow sleeping outdoors in the summer, the bedroom zone of each flat is furnished with a private terrace located on a higher floor and linked by a private staircase, giving each occupant the feeling of having their own roof (Fig. 14).⁶³

Political economy and architectural research

When interviewed now, the architects and planners of Miastoprojekt's Iraq team argue that what distinguished their work from earlier designs, in particular that of Doxiadis, was the accommodation of local specificities facilitated by their research-oriented approach.⁶⁴ While the extent of

background research effectively carried out by Doxiadis is open to debate,⁶⁵ there is no doubt about the growing role of research in Miastoprojekt's work in Iraq: from the preparatory work for the 1963 master plan, through a separate section within the commission of the 1973 master plan; the General Housing Programme and the Housing Standards as independent commissions; to consulting services and research-oriented teaching curricula introduced by Polish architects at Baghdad University from the 1960s to the 1980s.⁶⁶ These activities and the expansion of the teams working in Baghdad (from 36 working on the master plans for Baghdad to 112 working on the GHPI)⁶⁷ suggest that Miastoprojekt's commissions were part of a larger process of architects and planners engaging in knowledge production. It paralleled some of the developments in France and Italy from the mid-1960s onwards,⁶⁸ but stemmed not from theoretically driven debates on the 'crisis of architecture' but rather from a competitive international market for urban research and consulting.

Miastoprojekt goes abroad: the transfer of architectural labour from socialist Poland to Iraq (1958–1989)
 Łukasz Stanek

Figure 12. Model designs: Atrium dwellings; and permanent determinants (formal): groups of dwellings: in 'Report no. 3.', plates 104–2 and 143–1A.

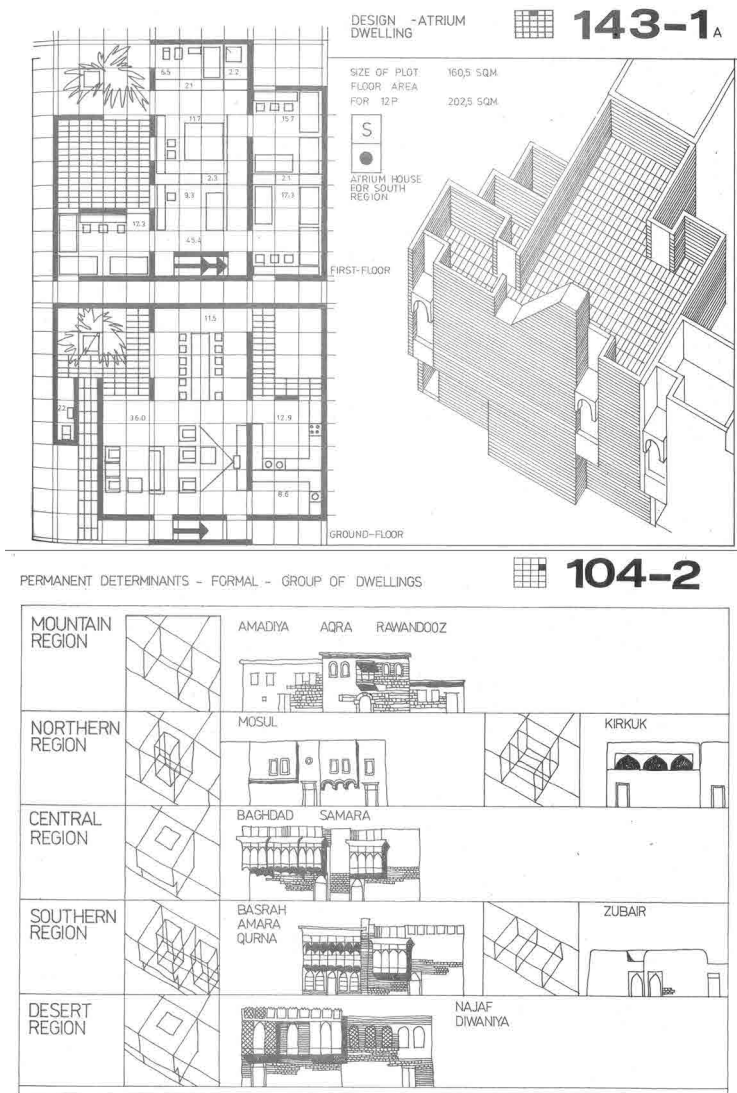




Figure 13. Miastoprojekt-Kraków, *suq* for Baghdad (model). Programme: Danuta Mieszkowska and Zdzisław Gołąb; conceptual project: Danuta Mieszkowska. Developed in the framework of the General Housing Programme for Iraq, 1976–80. (Courtesy of Danuta Mieszkowska.)

Some of this competence can be linked to the empirical traditions in Polish urbanism of the II Republic as well as to the planning of Warsaw after the Second World War, which involved interdisciplinary research and was based on the mapping of the ruined city in order to account for the available resources to be incorporated into the designs.⁶⁹ At the same time, in order to understand the conditions allowing for *Miastoprojekt*'s research in Iraq—including the size of the teams and the quality of their work—it is necessary to address the microeconomics of contracts offered to these specialists, and the accompanying procedures of motivation and selection.

Polservice offered two types of contracts: collective contracts, in which Polish experts kept their

affiliation with a Polish institution; and individual contracts, in which experts were employed directly by foreign institutions. (Poland was the first country in the Eastern Bloc to introduce individual expert contracts in 1965, followed later by Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria.)⁷⁰ Architects and engineers worked on both types of contracts, generally preferring individual ones, which meant a higher salary but also a greater degree of responsibility. Polish architects were employed on individual contracts by noted Iraqi firms, among them, Mohamed Makiya and Qahtan Awni, for whom Aleksander Markiewicz and Jerzy Staniszkis designed the 1960 office building in Jumhuriya Street (Fig. 15), while Lech Robaczyński was responsible for several

Fig. 14. Miastoprojekt—Kraków, housing typology for Mahmudiyah, designer: Tadeusz Myszkowski. Developed in the framework of the General Housing Programme for Iraq, 1976–80. (Courtesy of Tadeusz Myszkowski.)



buildings of Baghdad's Mustansiriyah University.⁷¹ Polservice's collective contracts also implied a requirement for personal responsibility, entrepreneurship, and flexibility: recurrent themes in the accounts, both professional and personal, of architects and planners who had worked in Iraq.⁷² These were important criteria for the selection of candidates, who were never in short supply, motivated by financial rewards (up to ten times higher than their Polish salaries), professional ambition, the opportunity to travel abroad and, not rarely, dissatisfaction with everyday life under socialism. In other words, Polservice's contracts can be seen as vehicles for introducing mechanisms of individual responsibility, quality control and financial

incentives, which, while rare in a socialist economy, became indispensable when competing in a global market.

Working abroad might appear thus as a disciplining experience which transformed architects into entrepreneurial subjects and, as some of them recall, prepared them for practice after the end of the socialist regime.⁷³ However, this experience also points at an essential incommensurability between the socialist economy and the capitalist one: an inequality manifested in the gap between the fees of Western architects and of those from socialist countries. In other words: when Polservice's 1972 brochure argued that 'the work of Polish experts in the developing countries' needed to be



called 'aid' since 'their remuneration is not fully equivalent to the value of their work in these countries',⁷⁴ it is easy to ignore this statement as socialist propaganda. One could equally quickly brush aside the statements of these architects when they contrast, still today, their level of commitment to that of their Western colleagues. Yet, it might be more fruitful to acknowledge that, if the main objective of the export of architectural labour from the late-socialist countries was, indeed, econ-

omic, it was a hybrid economy, hovering between a commodity economy and an economy of the 'gift', with its rhythms, rituals and reciprocity: and its violence.⁷⁵ Of the latter, Polish architects, flying back to Warsaw, were always reminded by the silhouette of the Palace of Culture and Science: the high-rise structure built in the style of socialist realism (1955), considered by the Poles to be a symbol of Soviet dominance, and introduced by the regime as a 'gift of Stalin'.

From Poland to Iraq—and back

The high performance of Polish experts abroad resulted in the rise of demand for their labour, which contrasted with the receding export of technology from Poland.⁷⁶ By 1980 the author of *Rynki zagraniczne* was trying to look at the bright side and pointed out that the export of intellectual labour went 'with the low level of investment expenditure'.⁷⁷ That it was, however, a short-term strategy, became evident in the fact that from the late 1970s Polish architects and planners were not invited to the most prestigious competitions in Iraq initiated by Saddam Hussein, the Mayor of Baghdad, Samir Abdul Wahab Shaikhly and the Councillor of the Mayoralty of Baghdad, Rifat Chadirji. Competitions included, in particular, the development of the central areas on the eastern bank of Tigris: Khulafa Street, Bab Al-Sheikh, Haifa Street and the Abu Nuwas area; and the State Mosque Competition (1983).⁷⁸ Just as Polish firms exporting technology started to lose clients in the course of the 1970s because of a lack of innovation, so too Polish architecture and urban planning were increasingly failing to keep pace with current

Figure 15. Aleksander Markiewicz, Jerzy Staniszkis and Qahtan Awni Architects, office building, Jumhuriya Street, Baghdad, Iraq, 1960. (Photograph by Tadeusz Barucki, mid 1960s; courtesy of Tadeusz Barucki.)

professional discussions. In other words, if in the early 1980s Miastoprojekt's position in Iraq was undermined, it was not only because of Saddam's orientation towards monumental public projects rather than those related to the distribution of welfare, upon which Polish planners had developed their credentials, but also because of the fact that Miastoprojekt's conceptual framework and planning methodologies became more and more 'underinvested' and outdated.

This coincided with growing criticism of the 1973 master plan that was increasingly unsuitable for Saddam's reconstruction of Baghdad as the centre of the Arab world and as a showcase of postmodernism.⁷⁹ While some of this criticism stemmed from developments in Baghdad which had violated the master plan rather than following it, as in Kadhemiyah,⁸⁰ the success of such offices as The Architects Collaborative (TAC), Venturi, Rauch and Scott-Brown, Bofill or Erickson was based on a different way of conceptualising the city. For example, Erickson's report on the Abu Nuwas Conservation and Development Project criticised the 1973 master plan, at that time under revision by Japan City Planning, and raised such concerns as the inclusion of mixed-use multi-function development, with private investors contributing to the realisation of the plan, and the zoning codes in terms of experiential scales.⁸¹ Similarly, TAC's mapping of the Ahmadiya Area stressed the 'hybridity' of the houses and argued for the preservation of their heterogeneous uses and typologies.⁸²

These concerns were accommodated only to a very limited extent in Polish architecture before 1989. A most curious twist in the story told by this

paper, perhaps, is the fact that many of these themes were brought back to Poland after the end of socialism by the large numbers of Polish architects and planners who had worked in the Middle East and Africa in the course of the 1970s and 1980s, including the Miastoprojekt team, privatised in 1991. Several of these architects became very successful in the 1990s and contributed significantly to the changing faces of Polish cities. Knowledge of new construction technologies, ties to international developer and construction firms and experience of working in free market conditions became major assets after 1989, as was the confrontation with postmodernism as a new mainstream in architectural practice and discourse. Postmodern understanding of 'context' and 'local identity' and rejection of modernist 'universalism' and its 'social utopias' played as well with the regimes in Iraq, Syria, Libya, Algeria, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates of the 1970s and 1980s as with investors and large parts of the public in Poland after socialism.⁸³

Notes and references

1. 'Czy będziemy budować "pod klucz"?', *Rynki Zagraniczne*, 52, 3 (1986), p. 13.
2. The preliminary research for this paper was presented at the exhibition *PRL™ Export Architecture and Urbanism from Socialist Poland* (Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw, 2010); see also: Ł. Stanek, 'PRL™ Export Architecture and Urbanism from Socialist Poland', *Piktogram. Talking Pictures Magazine*, 15 (2011), pp. 1–54. I would like to thank the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, Warsaw, the Department of Architecture, ETH, Zurich and the Canadian Center for Architecture, Montréal, for supporting this research, as well as Mathieu Bouchard, Piotr Bujas,

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5. For a bibliography, see my Introduction to this Issue.
6. For a recent bibliography, see P. Azara, ed., *City of Mirages. Baghdad, from Wright to Venturi* (Barcelona, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 2008).
7. Ł. Stanek, "PRL™", *op. cit.*
8. Cf. B. Mrozek, 'Polska a "Trzeci świat"', *Kontynenty*, 7 (1965), pp. 1–3.
9. See: *Rynki zagraniczne*, 57 (1962), p. 4; 86-7 (1969), p. 11; 105 (1975); 119 (1978) and *Fundamenty*, 50 (1962), p. 2; 12 (1970), p. 16; 3 (1971); 38 (1971), p. 2; 34 (1972), p. 2.
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11. H. Boruciński, 'Sztuka sprzedawania fabryk', *Rynki zagraniczne*, 85 (1980). See also *Rynki zagraniczne*, 156 (1970), p. 1; 30 (1977), p. 6; 9 (1978); 35 (1978); 45 (1978); 24 (1979).
12. *Rynki zagraniczne*, 85 (1980); 93 (1980); 103 (1981), p. 1.
13. *Ibid.*; see also *Rocznik statystyczny budownictwa* from the 1960s to the 1980s.
14. 'Konferencja w PIHZ', *Rynki zagraniczne*, 52-3 (1986), p. 11.
15. 'Bagdad i codzienność', *Rynki zagraniczne*, 56 (1974), p. 8.
16. J. Al-Ahmar, 'Adaptacja polskiej metody rewaloryzacyjnej zabytków do warunków islamskich miast arabskich' (PhD thesis, Warsaw University of Technology, 1991), pp. 5–6.
17. Cf. 'Przestrzenie kolonialne', themed issue of *Autoportet*, 29, 4 (Kraków, 2009).
18. See H. Bahooora, 'Modernism Before Modernity: Literature and Urban Form in Iraq, 1950–1963' (PhD thesis, New York University, 2010).
19. A. Ciborowski, *Town Planning in Poland, 1945–55* (Warsaw, Polonia, 1956), p. 39.
20. *Fundamenty*, 51-52 (1968), p. 21; see also dossier no. 295, SARP Archive, Warsaw.
21. See Polska Kronika Filmowa 4B, 1963.
22. *Rynki zagraniczne*, 57, 4 (1962); *Fundamenty*, 50, 2 (1962).
23. Letter of reference, Ministry of Municipalities (Baghdad), date illegible (Jerzy Baumiller Archive). See also dossiers nos. 226, 268, 357, 373, 556, 562, 584, 668, 700, 815, 971 and 1146 (SARP Archive, Warsaw).
24. K. Bajera, 'Szkic historyczny eksportu w BPBO "Miastoprojekt Kraków" 1955–1984' (Kraków, 1990; typescript, Kazimierz Bajera Archive, Kraków).
25. Interview with Kazimierz Bajera, Kraków, June, 2010.
26. This project was preceded by Miastoprojekt's export of technical documentation on industrial plants to the People's Republic of China (1955): K. Bajera, 'Szkic historyczny', *op. cit.*
27. 'Sprawozdanie z przygotowań do umowy na opracowanie planu ogólnego Bagdadu oraz rozmów organizacyjnych z Polservice i Grupą Warszawską (3.3.1964–29.10.1965)' (Kazimierz Bajera Archive). See also dossiers nos. 24, 229, 234, 442 and 1266 (SARP Archive, Warsaw).
28. 'Master-Plan of Baghdad', 1967 and 'Comprehensive Development Plan for Baghdad', 1973 (Miastoprojekt Archive); cf. H. Nooraddin, 'Globalization and the Search for Modern Local Architecture: Learning from

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 30. See: 'The Master Plan of Baghdad', *Monthly Bulletin*, 9 (Doxiadis Associates, January, 1960); P. Pyla, 'Back to the Future: Doxiadis's Plans for Baghdad', *Journal of Planning History*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (February, 2008), pp. 3–19; and P. Azara, *City of Mirages*, *op. cit.* Not all Western planners left Iraq after 1958; Doxiadis worked on the master plan for Kirkuk, 1972 and the British planner Richard Llewellyn-Davies, in co-operation with Iraq Consult, delivered the master plan for Basrah, 1972: see N. I. Abu-Dayyeh, 'Persisting vision: plans for a modern Arab capital, Amman, 1955–2002', *Planning Perspectives*, 19:1 (2004), p. 82.
 31. F. Said, 'Uprzemysłowienie budownictwa jednorodzinnego w Bagdadzie na tle rozwoju miasta' (PhD thesis, Kraków University of Technology, 1982), pp. 35–37.
 32. A. Jędraszko, 'Problemy urbanistyczne Bagdadu', *Miasto*, 2 (1962), p. 11.
 33. Wireless interview with Kazimierz Bajer, March 29th, 1967 (typescript, Kazimierz Bajer Archive).
 34. *Fundamenty*, 51-52 (1968), p. 21; 2 (1968), p. 13.
 35. 'Master-Plan of Baghdad', *op. cit.*, plates.
 36. 'Comprehensive Development Plan', *op. cit.*
 37. 'Report on the Master Plan of Baghdad', undated (Miastoprojekt Archive).
 38. 'U.N. experts discuss master plan of Baghdad', *Baghdad News* (30.04.1967).
 39. 'Comprehensive Development Plan', *op. cit.*; H. Nooraddin, 'Globalization', *op. cit.*
 40. *Echo Krakowa* (15.10.1965); *Kultura i życie* (26.03.1967); *Dziennik Polski* (10-11.12.1967).
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 46. 'Comprehensive Development Plan', *op. cit.*, plate 'Historical heritage'. Cf. A. Basista, 'Kadhemiya—zespół tradycyjnej zabudowy w Bagdadzie', *Kwartalnik architektury i urbanistyki*, vol. XXI, no. 3 (1976), pp. 217–237 and A. Basista, 'Plany przekształcenia Kadhemiya, zabytkowej dzielnicy Bagdadu', *Kwartalnik architektury i urbanistyki*, vol. XXI, no. 4 (1976), pp. 337–358.
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 50. 'General Housing Programme for Iraq', 1976–80, 21 vols (Miastoprojekt Archive). See also K. Bajer, 'Szkic historyczny', *op. cit.*; Miastoprojekt-Kraków, 'Ludność i sytuacja mieszkaniowa w miastach Republiki Irackiej w świetle badań ankietowych', undated; Z. Pucek, K. Sowa, 'Social development', undated (Kazimierz Bajer Archive). See also dossiers nos 55, 124, 168, 305, 375, 498, 634, 636, 637, 638, 689, 955, 1023, 1091 (SARP Archive, Warsaw).

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56. 'Report no. 3', *op. cit.*
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59. A. Al-Haidary, 'Perspektiven des Wohnungsbaus im Irak', *Architektur der DDR*, 3 (1983), pp. 172–176; A. Al-Haidary, 'Entwicklungstendenzen', *op. cit.*
60. 'Report no. 3', *op. cit.*: cf. C. A. Doxiadis, *Architecture in Transition* (London, Hutchinson, 1963), p. 109; C. A. Doxiadis, 'Dynapolis. The City of the Future. Lecture at the Oslo Arkitektforening, Oslo, March 3, 1960' (Athens, 1960; CCA collection), p. 57.
61. Dossier no. 375 (SARP Archive, Warsaw).
62. Interview with Jan Bulsza, *op. cit.* On the adaptation of the CAMUS system in Iraq (CAMUS-SETAP), see F. Said, 'Uprzemysłowienie', *op. cit.*, pp. 100–1 and plates 90–3 and Z. Nowakowska, 'Metoda określania standardu mieszkaniowego na przykładzie Iraku' (Kraków, Politechnika Krakowska, 1986), p. 159. For attempts at adapting Polish prefabricated systems to Iraqi conditions, see M. Abdulla Moustafa, 'Perspektywy rozwoju architektury uprzemysłowionej w Iraku na podstawie doświadczeń polskich' (PhD thesis, Warsaw University of Technology, 1975).
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