

The presented project aims to present and thoroughly analyze the processes that shaped the space of medieval Cracow from the 13th to the beginning of the 16th century. During this period, the city underwent profound changes, which turned the early medieval settlement into a vast metropolis composed of three self-governing cities with regular spatial layouts and a network of suburbs, containing many residences, sacred buildings of two religions, and various public facilities. The formation of this complex organism, "the greatest city of all Poland", as the caption on the famous panorama from the beginning of the 17th century says, was the result of several economic, social, and artistic processes. These include, apart from the economic and demographic development stimulated by the rulers' actions, also urban regulations, including, above all, the foundation of three communal cities making the Cracow agglomeration, including Cracow itself (1257), as well as Kazimierz (1335) and Florencja (also known as Kleparz, before 1358). The issue of urban planning in Cracow's cities has been studied many times, but it seems that some issues still require clarification - e.g. the original plan of Cracow reveals certain biblical inspirations, the analysis of which allows to shed new light on the way of thinking about the city and its space in the 13th century. So far, no appropriate attention was also paid to the creation of vistas and visual openings and the location of dominants in city planning at that time; However, the belief that attaching great importance to the aesthetics of the city is only a modern phenomenon seems to be wrong. Such means include exposing church towers or facades in street vistas (e.g. the tower of St. Mary's Church and the transept of the Franciscan church), or a wide opening towards a group of municipal buildings in the so-called "funnel" of Grodzka Street.

Shaping urban space with architecture, however, is a much broader problem. Cities were rich in public buildings, such as town halls, commercial buildings (the Cloth Hall, stalls, scales), fortifications, and objects related to state power; their distribution, forms, and decoration were one of the most important ways of expressing content related to the identity and self-awareness of the city as a community. Hence the similarity of many objects, which has been noticed for a long time, but is difficult to explain - e.g. the great 14th-century basilical churches, buildings with limestone facades decorated with blind traceries (St. Catherine's Church, the Danish Tower of the Wawel Castle or the town hall tower), rooms with asymmetric ribbed vaults (so-called Hetman's House and House under the Lizard) or spires with wreaths of turrets - seem to be both artistic and social phenomena, constituting an expression of prestige and a reflection of the complicated interplay of interests of various institutions and groups. This type of research can be conducted not only on real architecture but also on that which remains in the sphere of imagination - buildings appearing, for example, on the seals of local government institutions are an important source of learning about the ways of perceiving works of architecture and the symbolism assigned to them.

The city formed in this way, especially in the representative spaces of main squares, streets, and gate areas, was also a setting for dynamic events - religious processions and performances, pilgrimages, triumphal entries of rulers, and finally their funerals. Sources informing about the course of this type of events are scarce, but sufficient to reconstruct the course of some of them. This category also includes places intended as a setting for acts of justice - pillories, and gallows. Long-term construction or frequent reconstruction of churches or public buildings can also be treated as a dynamic social process; this process, on the one hand, allows for tracking changes in fashions and investors' views, and on the other hand, it could itself trigger certain reactions from viewers - e.g., the perpetually unfinished churches of mendicant orders could encourage people to make donations.

The dissertation conceived in this way will be a picture of the shaping of a medieval city, unique in Polish literature, taking into account urban planning, architecture, and social life. It will show medieval Cracow as a dynamic organism, the shape of which was the result of both large, conscious foundation programs, as well as conflicts and intertwining interests of various groups of its inhabitants.