

**Polish Pavilion
at the Biennale
Architettura 2021**

Trouble in Paradise

PROLOG +1



La Biennale di Venezia

**17. Mostra
Internazionale
di Architettura**

Partecipazioni Nazionali

The *Trouble in Paradise* exhibition in the Polish Pavilion treats the countryside as an independent area of research and seeks within it answers to the main theme of this year's Biennale Architettura 2021 in Venice: *How will we live together?* Exhibition curators, PROLOG +1 collective, in collaboration with an international group of architects and artists, will show that in times of growing local and global crises, rural areas are an important element of building sustainable human environments.

On May 22nd, the opening day of the exhibition, a digital version of the project will launch online at labiennale.art.pl. The exhibition in the Polish Pavilion is organised by Zachęta — National Gallery of Art in Warsaw.

Trouble in Paradise is a multi-faceted story about the future of communal life in the countryside. That is where the authors of the exhibition see the potential for discussion on what is common — going beyond the division into the public and the private. Reflections on the marginalised issue of large rural areas and the progressive migration from cities to these areas became an impulse for the creation of speculative visions by the architectural teams from Europe invited to the project. They are accompanied by an in-depth analysis of forms of working and living in the countryside, which resulted in the *Panorama of the Polish Countryside*, created in collaboration with Polish artists. The case study of Poland — a country in which 93 per cent of the area is rural — allows us to understand the specificity of post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe and to identify problems and proposals for solving them on a global scale.

The research method adopted by the PROLOG +1 collective aims to create new tools for describing the countryside. The three periods of historical development of rural areas — early capitalist, socialist and late capitalist — are analysed from the point of view of three spatialities: territory, settlement and dwelling, with particular emphasis on colonisation projects carried out by the Polish state over the last century. This made it possible to build a narrative of the exhibition based on two complementary parts: analytical and projective.

The space of the Polish Pavilion is filled with a photorealistic panorama of the countryside, printed on fabric and placed on the line of the viewer's actual horizon. This is the analytical part of the exhibition — it presents characteristic elements of the rural landscape resulting from the processes taking place there over the course of a hundred years. The panorama created by photographers Michał Sierakowski and Paweł Starzec, as well as artist Jan Domicz in collaboration with the PROLOG +1 collective allows for the image to be viewed in two modes: looking at it from a distance gives the impression of being in the landscape, from close up — it allows the viewer to recognise the forms that make it up. 'Each of the elements visible in the panorama carries information. The objects hold a record of the history of ways of living and working in the countryside, as well as the processes which over the years have preserved the fragmentary nature of the rural landscape', say members of PROLOG +1.

PROLOG +1 invited six architectural teams from Europe to the project part of the exhibition: Atelier Fanelisa (DE), GUBAHÁMORI + Filip + László Demeter (HU), KOSMOS Architects (RU, CH, AT), Rural Office for Architecture (GB), RZUT (PL) and Traumnovelle (BE). Their members are closely involved with research work in the field of architectural theory and related sciences, as well as with the creation of visions based on the practices of commoning, increasingly accentuated in the architectural discourse. Each team took as its starting point the analysis of one of the three areas (territory, settlement, dwelling) and then extrapolated the solutions to the others, creating an overall picture of the countryside. The result of their work are architectural models, collages and drawings presented in the pavilion against the background of the panorama. The diversity of points of view and the juxtaposition of different perspectives are linked by a reflection on the effects of rural exploitation, climate disasters or global crises — including those whose impact on the fate of the planet and rural areas is yet to be known.

Trouble in Paradise is a kind of review of ideas about communal life in the countryside, the evaluation of which PROLOG +1 leaves the audience of the Polish Pavilion. 'The countryside, until now considered a periphery, will cease to be one when we stop considering the city as the centre. The countryside is not a hierarchical, but a horizontal entity, which we will understand by looking at its landscape. We will then notice the shapes on the horizon and ask ourselves if they are a threat to paradise', the authors conclude.

The exhibition is accompanied by the book *Trouble in Paradise*, which includes essays by Platon Issaias & Hamed Khosravi, Pier Vittorio Aureli, Andrea Alberto Dutto, Katarzyna Kajdanek, Łukasz Moll, a photo essay by Jacenty Dędek, as well as texts by the PROLOG +1 team, a photographic *Panorama of the Polish Countryside* and visualisations of the projects. The book will be available for sale at the Zachęta art bookstore and in La Biennale's bookstores starting 22 May, as well as for download in digital form at labiennale.art.pl.

POLISH PAVILION AT THE 17TH INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE EXHIBITION — LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

Venice, 22 May–21 November 2021

Trouble in Paradise

curators: PROLOG +1 (Mirabela Jurczenko, Bartosz Kowal, Wojciech Mazan, Bartłomiej Poteralski, Rafał Śliwa and Robert Witczak)

participants

architectural studios: Atelier Fanela, GUBAHÁMORI + Filip + László Demeter, KOSMOS Architects, Rural Office for Architecture, RZUT, Traumnovelle

authors of the *Panorama of the Polish Countryside*: Jan Domicz, Michał Sierakowski, Paweł Starzec, PROLOG +1

authors of the *Glossary* (online): Michał Sierakowski, Paweł Starzec, Wiktoria Wojciechowska, Patrycja Wojtas, PROLOG +1

exhibition visual identification, book design: zespół wespół

organiser: Zachęta — National Gallery of Art, Warsaw

Polish Pavilion Commissioner: Hanna Wróblewska, director of Zachęta — National Gallery of Art

Polish Pavilion Office: Ewa Mielczarek, Joanna Waško

labiennale.art.pl

Polish participation at the 17th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia was made possible through the financial support of the Ministry of Culture, National Heritage and Sport of the Republic of Poland.

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Excerpts from the book *Trouble in Paradise* accompanying the exhibition in the Polish Pavilion at the 17th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice:

The Polish countryside is a place where the problems, hopes and paradoxes of the socialist and capitalist periods become clear; the notions of tradition and progress are not easy to discern here, and radical reforms have met with both enthusiasm and resistance. Despite the scale of the phenomenon that is the Polish countryside, the issues related to it remain outside the mainstream of architectural discourse. The marginalisation of these areas intensified during the political, economic and social transformation of the 1990s and consolidated their perception through the prism of simplifications and stereotypes, or simply excluded them from the sphere of collective consciousness, transforming them into an invisible element of the landscape. This project presents a new perspective, redefines the understanding of what is rural, going beyond the narrow framework of a romantic or technological utopia, and reads the countryside as a space of struggle and resistance against the forces colonising it, and not as an innocent, idyllic landscape outside the city.

PROLOG +1, curators, excerpt from the introduction

The object of PROLOG +1's interest is the countryside seen from different perspectives: historical, geographical and sociological. The countryside as a contemporary myth, but also as a place of transformation and post-transformation changes. The countryside from the perspective of an architect, researcher and resident — a native or a fugitive from the city. The Polish countryside, but in a global perspective. A countryside that has remained on the side lines of the interest of architects or urban planners, but which in recent years has become that 'extraordinary other' we want to encounter in order to conquer, colonise or tame it. A countryside with all its history, problems that have not always been clearly perceived in the past and a huge potential that perhaps holds the answer to the slogan of the current edition of the Biennale — at a time when physical distance and distance are once again highly valued.

Hanna Wróblewska, Polish Pavilion Commissioner, excerpt from the introduction

According to UN statistics, since 2007, the number of inhabitants of urban areas surpassed the number of inhabitants of rural areas. Today, more than 4 billion people around the world live in urbanised areas, and this figure is expected to rise to 7 billion by 2050. Global migration trends reflect a pattern of predominantly rural-to-urban movements and a strong, positive relationship between societies' wealth and urbanisation level. Current data provided by Statistics Poland shows that 40% of the population lives in rural areas, while areas administratively classified as rural (i.e. without city rights) represent 93% of Poland's area (according to data from the 2010 Agricultural Census). Thus, urbanised areas, which are home to 60% of the population, cover only 7% of the country's territory.

Katarzyna Kajdanek, excerpt from the essay 'From the Milky Way's Point of View, We All Seem to Be from a Village (Loesje)'

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Curators

PROLOG was founded in 2017 by Mirabela Jurczenko, Bartosz Kowal, Wojciech Mazan, Bartłomiej Poteralski and Rafał Śliwa. It is scattered across Europe, with a base in Wrocław, Poland. PROLOG engages with architecture through design projects, research, writing, exhibitions and workshops. PROLOG aims to frame each design from a practical and theoretical perspective. PROLOG is thought as a formative period, therefore its focus lies in the exploration, speculations and experiments. PROLOG was shortlisted in the international competition for the Tautos Namai concert hall in Vilnius, Lithuania, received the second prize in the international competition for a concert hall in Żelazowa Wola, Poland; and the second prize for a master plan for the Interrodera district in Szczecin, Poland.

PROLOG +1 is a team with the addition of Robert Witczak, working on the Trouble in Paradise project in the Polish Pavilion at Biennale Architettura 2021.

Mirabela Jurczenko graduated from the Faculty of Architecture of the Wrocław University of Technology and studied at the University of Minho in Guimarães, Portugal. She currently lives and works in Rotterdam. She has collaborated on research projects with the Technical University of Berlin and Technical University of Munich.

Bartosz Kowal holds an MSc Arch from the University of Liechtenstein. Previously, he studied at the Technical University of Munich, Yildiz Technical University in Istanbul and Wrocław University of Technology. Has worked as an architect in Germany, Poland and with Conradin Clavuot in Chur, Switzerland. Member of SIA (Swiss Society of Engineers and Architects).

Wojciech Mazan is an MPhil student of Projective Cities at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London. His dissertation focuses on the post-socialist countryside of Poland. He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture of the Wrocław University of Technology and studied at the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and Urban Design. He has worked as an assistant researcher at the Royal College of Arts in London and previously for architecture offices in competition teams in Madrid, Rotterdam, Mexico City, and Graz.

Bartłomiej Poteralski graduated at the Faculty of Architecture of the Wrocław University of Technology, acquired experience in architectural offices in Poland, Spain and Austria. As part of his work at the Atelier Thomas Pucher, he worked on designs of the Sinfonia Varsovia headquarters in Warsaw and the Universitätsbibliothek in Graz.

Rafał Śliwa studied architecture in Portugal, at the University of Minho in Guimarães, the University of Coimbra, and the University of Porto. He received his master's degree at the Wrocław University of Technology, with thesis investigating the relationship between the architecture of the city and education. He worked for offices in Poland and Portugal and is collaborating on competition concepts at the ANALOG office.

Robert Witczak studied at the Faculty of Architecture at the Wrocław University of Technology. He recently completed his master's degree from the Delft University of Technology. In his thesis he investigated spatial problems of suburbanisation in Poland. Winner of numerous architectural competitions. He has gained professional experience in competition concepts in architectural offices in Poland and abroad.

Architectural studios

Atelier Fanelisa is an international team of architects based in Berlin and Gerswalde (Brandenburg). The studio investigates contemporary forms of working, living and commoning in the countryside, the periphery, and the city. We realise private projects, public buildings, exhibitions, and workshops. Within these formats, we develop innovative and qualitative answers to questions regarding the conditions of today's society.

GUBAHÁMORI + Filip + László Demeter

GUBAHÁMORI is an architecture and urban design studio focusing on the correlation between the natural and the built environment. They are discovering architecture beyond ocularcentrism.

Filip is a collective of visual artists based at a ship repair yard on the island of Népsziget, which is a culturally uprising brownfield of Budapest. The eclectic milieu of the still functional industrial site inspires them to look at everyday situations as platforms of art.

László Demeter is a forest and ethnoecology scientific expert at the Centre for Ecological Research, Hungary. He specialises in using different knowledge systems (e.g. traditional knowledge and western science) for innovative conservation management.

KOSMOS Architects is an office collaborating virtually, bringing together partners based in Geneva, Moscow, Graz and New York. KOSMOS designs projects and environments of all types and scales: from a door handle to a city, from hardcore architecture to pop-up art installations. The office combines art and technology, global experience with respect to local context, academic research and practical architecture.

Rural Office for Architecture is based in a remote rural part of South Wales, UK. Established in 2008 by Niall Maxwell, the practice often works within rural settings, responding to its context and surroundings by reinterpreting the familiar architectural language of the past. They work across the UK on historic and new architectural projects and are currently developing a new dwelling in rural Japan, their first overseas commission.

RZUT (Katarzyna Billik, Matylda Gąsiorowska, Igor Łysiuk, Karolina Matysiak, Andrzej Olejniczak, Zofia Piotrowska, Przemysław Sobiecki, Łukasz Stępnik, Milena Trzcińska). 'We are a group of people who write, tell stories and offer critique. We summarise the stories we observe in a quarterly published since 2013. We are not a design studio, and our goal is not to build. Nevertheless, we feel like architects and use our experience to deepen our reflection on the subject of space. Text, drawing and building are for us equal elements of a world where there is no division between theory and practice'.

Traumnovelle is a militant faction founded by three Belgian architects: Léone Drapeaud, Manuel León Fanjul and Johnny Leya. Traumnovelle uses architecture and fiction as analytical, critical and subversive tools to emphasise contemporary issues and dissect their resolutions. Their work champions a multi-disciplinary approach with architecture at the crossroads and has been published internationally. Traumnovelle curated the Belgian Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2018.

Authors of the *Panorama of the Polish Countryside*

Jan Domicz is a visual artist and creator of videos, objects and installations. He graduated from the Städelschule in Frankfurt and the University of the Arts in Poznań. He lives and works in Warsaw, collaborating with the Wschód gallery. Since 2017, he has run the semi-curatorial project *Office for Narrated Spaces*. His works have been presented in exhibitions at the Museum für Moderne Kunst in

Frankfurt, SALTS in Basel, the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Arts in Warsaw, Significant Other in Vienna and Karlin Studios in Prague. He uses the narrative potential of space in his works.

Michał Sierakowski is a documentary photographer and filmmaker. He graduated in photography from the University of Arts in Poznań. He was a holder of the scholarship of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage. His works have been shown in Warsaw, Kiev, London and St Petersburg, among others. In his work, he focuses on the relationship between humans and their environment, as well as how communities reinterpret and reconstruct landscape, whether natural or in the form of urban planning and architecture.

Paweł Starzec is a photographer, sociologist and documentary filmmaker. He is a lecturer and academic teacher, creator of workshop programs, co-creator of the Azimuth Press collective of artists and publishing house. He is a doctoral student at the Institute of Applied Social Sciences of the University of Warsaw and a graduate student at the Institute of Creative Photography of the University of Silesia in Opava. A musician and sound artist, he currently performs with the Mazut project as well as solo. In his work, he focuses on the links between space, history and their social contexts.

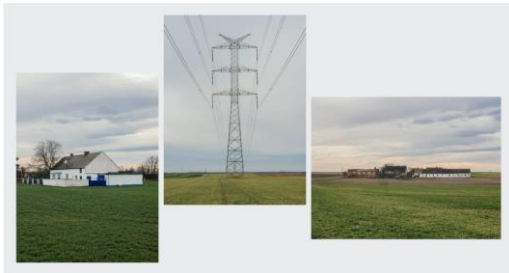
Organiser

Zachęta — National Gallery of Art in Warsaw, is the organizer of the exhibitions in the Polish Pavilion both for Art and Architecture Biennale, as well as the custodian of the building. The gallery's director acts as the pavilion commissioner. Poland has its own exhibition pavilion, which is located in Giardini — one of the two main exhibition venues of La Biennale.

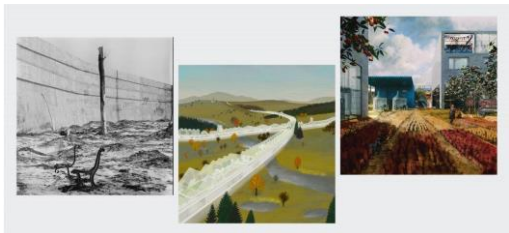
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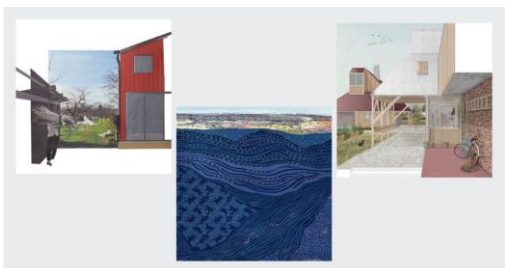
Trouble in Paradise, Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. Photo: Michał Sierakowski, graphic design: zespół współ.



Analytical part of *Trouble in Paradise* exhibition, Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. *Dwelling, Territory, Settlement*, photos: Michał Sierakowski.



Projective part of *Trouble in Paradise* exhibition. Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. From left: *EURECA* by Traumnovelle, *Countryspine* by KOSMOS Architects, *Social Infrastructure* by RZUT.



Projective part of *Trouble in Paradise* exhibition, Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. From left: *Village Commons* by Atelier Fanelisa, *The Sacred Species* by GUBAHÁMORI + Filip + László Demeter, *Spółem* by Rural Office for Architecture.



PROLOG +1, authors of the *Trouble in Paradise* exhibition in the Polish Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2021. From left: Rafał Śliwa, Robert Witczak, Bartosz Kowal, Wojciech Mazan, Mirabela Jurczenko, Bartłomiej Poteralski. Photo: Paweł Starzec.

All images courtesy Zachęta — National Gallery of Art, Warsaw.