

Major pulsar events in Cracow

Aldo Vargas, Poland

Cracow, one of the most important cities in Poland, possesses a specific character due to its historical and cultural heritage as well as its economical and educational basis.

It is possible to define two kind of phenomenon that can be viewed as source of a pulsar effect on the city structure and functioning. The first of them is huge building development, the second cultural or religious events of major importance.

As far as infrastructure and building development are concerned there is one major situation that can be considered. It is the building of the Sendzimir steel plant, one of the largest in Europe. Its creation by itself has provoked a sort of pulsar effect considering the fact that it was related to a massive building effort, its exploitation has provoked major pollution threats to the city and the region and its actual economical decrease is followed by a socially threatening process of job loss.

The creation of the Sendzimir Steel Plant (formerly under the name of Lenin) has been planned and realised beginning from 1949. Its creation resulted not only from economic or industrial needs but also from political reasons, as an attempt to change the traditionally cultural and intellectual centre of Poland into an industrial one. The growth of the industrial plant was spectacular. In principle the steel plant was planned to produce 1.5 tons of steel per year. From 1959 to 1969 the production increased to 5.5 tons per year due to the development of several new blast furnaces.

About the same time were builded the aluminium plant of Skawina and the heat and power plant of Łódź. All of those developments converted Cracow into a major industrial centre and its population raised from 220000 inhabitants in 1939 to 760000 in 1990 and its surface passed from 80 km² to 370km². A whole new city was built to satisfy the increasing need for new houses: the city of Nowa Huta.

Later on, due to the pollution caused in the area by the Steel plant, a protected area of

3000 hectares was created, inside of which no development was allowed. The board of the steel plant was obliged to buy all the surrounding private parcels to create a green belt around the steel plant. Unfortunately this process has not been finished and a lot of buildings has been built up illegally.

With the political change of 1989, begun the struggle for the future of the steel plant. The most important tasks appeared to be:

- pollution reduction and the definition of clear political and economical activities assuring possible ways of development of the steel plant.
- The creation of new working places for the 8000 workers who have lost their jobs at the beginning of 2000 and for all those that can loose it in the future.
- Restructuring and renewal of the degraded industrial lands, modernization of the infrastructure and regeneration of the polluted natural and built environment.

The city of Nowa Huta itself has suffered from its quick development. A new population, mostly rural, came from all over Poland, deprived from its traditional physical and spiritual surrounding. Few cultural facilities and churches, for a population traditionally catholic, has resulted in a high rate of delinquency and criminality, and severe social troubles with the communist government.

Since the building of Nowa Huta, no other development has been planned at this scale or with a similar potential of influence on the city structure. However a similar situation, although minor in scale, will occur with the biggest city development in the coming years, namely the **Tishman – Speyer Properties'** New City development planned close to the city centre. Although the following years will show how the different departments and services of the city will assume the new increased demands, this development should not occur to be a major threat to the city structure and functioning since its planning takes into account future needs and resolve one of the major problems of the city communication plan: the closing of the second ring road.

Although Cracow has never been the host of major international events such as Olympic Games or International Expo's, during the past several years it has been the scene of a few pulse events. The major problem in quantifying the effects of most of them is that no specific records or reports have been made after them. The existing documents relate either to the plans of the events or are contracts signed between all the organizers and responsible. For instance, in the documents of several city services, no major difference exist between the events that actually took place and those that, for different reasons, did not. On the level of environmental care, most of the events have no specific requirements. The organizers are supposed to clean the place after the event. No major problem has been noticed so far.

The following events are the most important ones in Cracow in matter of their influence to the functioning of the city structure:

1. Cultural events

One of the major events that strongly influence the city structure is the "Wianki" (Garland) event. It takes place around the 22 of June on the riverside of the Vistula river, at the feet of the Wawel Castle, as a remain of a pre – Christian fertility holiday. At the beginning it was not a big event, rather a local tradition perpetuated for centuries. With the political change in the '90 it has grown to be one of the most important ones in the cultural calendar of the city and so has the number of participants. The problematic side of it appeared at the communication level, since the beginning of the '90 was a time of very important growth of private car communication. This phenomenon of course had its influence on every aspect of the city life, provoking traffic jams at peak communication hours, but became a serious problem during such specific situations as the "Wianki" event creating important post – peak traumas of different kind. The City Communication Company (MPK) had to react to both of those phenomenon that overlapped on each other. Although short in duration it causes every year severe communication

problems due to its localisation between two of the six bridges connecting both sides of the city, which are in the same time important crossroads, in an area with relatively few parking sites.

The final evening of the "Wianki" event gathers up to 100 000 people. For that time all communication is suspended on at least one of the two bridges (at the last occasion, due to the requirements of the script of the event, both bridges had to be closed), forcing all communication means to change their route.

The accumulated experience of all those events since the mid '90 has lead to an in-depth knowledge of all the characteristics and consequences of it.

The critical moment comes at 11.30 PM after the official ending of the event, when everybody begin their way back home. At this time all buses and tramways finish their normal work and are supposed to go back to their depot. Taking into consideration the increased amount of people that spread out of the place in the course of a half of an hour, the MPK gather all the buses from the city centre that are on their way back to their depots, assuring additional transportation means in response to the suddenly increased needs. Nowadays this event is no longer considered to be problematic on any larger scale of time.

In the year 2000 took place **the Cracow 2000 - City of Culture festival**. The statistical data concerning this event indicates that it has had an important influence on the economical development of Cracow and the promotion of the city demonstrating its capability to host important cultural events. However, despite its four years duration and the important number of events within its frames and its increasing budget (1996 – 3033000 zlotys, 2000 – 21620094 zlotys), it has not been able to create a more important development, such as new cultural supply.

There are other recurrent big cultural events such as the '**Juvenalia**' students' week by mid May, or events organised by commercial companies (private radio stations), which procure occasionally

important pulsar effect on the city infrastructure, their significance is however lesser compared to the 'Wianki' event or for instance major religious events.

2. Religious events

The biggest in scale and in influence on the city functioning is the **All Saints** holiday at the beginning of October. During a period of two or three days it provokes, more than any other holiday, serious communication disturbances. This event also suffers from the increase of private communication. Till the beginning of the '90 the MPK used to work following the normal holiday timetable. With the growth of the car traffic it became almost impossible to circulate in the areas surrounding cemeteries, specially around the two major ones, Rakowicki and Grêba³ów. The MPK decided to co-operate with the police and to introduce several measures such as the temporary change of the route of private communication and mass transportation systems of large parts of the city, the closing of streets, etc. in order to ease cemeteries access.

There is a specific post event trauma that can be considered, which is related to the dates at which that holiday fall on. If the first day of November is a normal day of the week, communication troubles begin in the evening of the day before and are steel noticeable the day after. If it falls on Friday or a day of the weekend its influence is still noticeable till the nearest Monday. For the past several years no major problems have occurred. The section of streets that are closed are bigger every year as a result of the experience gathered by the police and the Communication Company. New temporary parking places are fixed with P+R service and information is spread in order to avoid traffic jams in sectors near the cemeteries.

The **visits of the Pope John Paul II to Cracow** are and have also been very specific events changing the habitual functioning patterns of the city. Those visits have gathered crowds of pilgrims willing to assist to this major religious event. The specificity of it is due to the fact that Poland is a very catholic country, the Pope has studied in Cracow and is also

closely related to recent history, being considered as one of the main actors responsible for Poland's political change. All the Pope's visits to Cracow (as well as to other cities in Poland) paralyse communication in the whole city. Streets and entire city sectors are closed, special communication lines and parking places are fixed. The next visit of the Pope to Cracow will take place on the second half of August and will be a very good occasion for analysing the process of temporary change and coming back to normality. No data are available before for security reasons.

3. Tourism and development

During the summer season Cracow is host of an increasing number of **tourists**. The city responds to it by a constantly growing number of hotels and other supplies, which however occur to be under-exploited in the post season period.

Although recurrent pulsar events are not foreign to Cracow, non-specific record of their influence on the city infrastructure has been done so forth. Some of those events still have a distorting influence on its functioning.

As it certainly is the case in other cities, there is always a certain time of recovering, which length depends on the scale of the event and of the way the situation is treated. This length has not been determined yet as a specific data in the planning process, showing that the time dimension is still a rather weak element of the planners' instrument. It seems however possible to facilitate future attendance of recurrent large scale events. Considering the post event weaknesses and needs under the perspective of its appeasing, it appears important to treat the post – event situation as a separate one and deal with it separately in the frame of a larger multi- aspect 'event / post – event' project. Elements forming part of such an approach are, among others: the calculation of the range of fluctuation between the "event " and "post event" stages and planning post-event adjustments according to that; the inclusion of the peak season temporary resources in the planned post – peak

project; the assurance of a “post event” life that would avoid the creation of “isles” of seasonal utility; the co-operation with local communities and organisations that deal with social development and environmental issues which, included in the post – event project, would be able to deal with the waste and outcomes: water, noise, pollution, waste, greenery, social and economical strength, spatial integrity and mixity, etc.

The Institute of Physical Planning and municipal Economy – Cracow Branch forms part of a consortium of contractor partners participating in a project led by the North Milan Development Agency. The overall object of it is, by the way of creating an innovative time oriented approach to urban regeneration, focusing on mobility, safety and improvement of the quality of urban life.

The direct objectives of the project are: to develop a new approach to Urban regeneration through a process of integration of spatial and time – related aspects, develop new forms of urban governance, disseminate best practices, favour citizen involvement, etc. Although this is not a direct objective of the project, the reconciliation of peak and post peak demands or the achievement of efficient and profitable year-round use of big and costly infrastructure does perfectly fit into the possible appliance of the outcomes of the project. This will be one of the focuses of the project.

The City Communication Company is also working on a system of numeric communication between all major city services to assure a constant and effective supervision of the whole city so as to avoid any inconvenient pulsar effect of natural or human origin and to co-ordinate directly major changes resulting from those situations.