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City life

The windows of our editorial office gaze out over downtown Warsaw – Poland's largest city. One can see the intermingling of old and new buildings, watch the hustle and bustle of people and cars, and keep track of the fascinating pace of new investments. This inspired us to devote the latest issue of ACADEMIA to taking a closer look at various aspects of city life. Since there can be no city without city residents, we have turned much of our attention to people, beginning with the members of medieval society (*Civilized Slavs* p. 16). But analyzing modern city-slickers also proves exceptionally interesting. It turns out that they clearly differ from the residents of the countryside – in terms of not just culture and lifestyle, but also biological parameters (p. 12). Our trip through city societies will also take us to the “tragic city” of the Jewish ghetto set up in occupied Warsaw during WWII (*Guide to a Lost City* p. 36).

Of course, a city's character is not just determined by its residents, but also to a great extent by its architecture. Can an architect's gender be sensed in the urban fabric? Is there such a thing as male or female architecture? As it turns out, there is, although female urban planners have not by any means had an easy time realizing their visions (*The Woman in the City Space* p. 30). It is exceptionally interesting to take a look at the roles played by various investors in shaping modern metropolises (*Metropolis Warsaw* p. 40). Attentive city observers know that this is not just limited to the layout of streets and buildings or to the traffic of pedestrians and vehicles. Urban areas constitute a unique, characteristic ecosystem, in which many types of plants and animals manage to thrive – such as moths, which we investigate on p. 8. However, the organisms that do adapt to urban conditions have to cope with a range of unfavorable factors, such as lead contamination (p. 21).

Nevertheless, some people quite simply can't stand cities, perhaps due to the fumes and noise. We encourage them to take a look at the achievements of Polish scientists who are translating mathematical formulas into the language of the blind (p. 34) or simulating biological systems that generate alphabetic shapes (p. 28). Another surefire way to take a refreshing break from the tumult of the city will be to visit the Botanical Gardens of the Polish Academy of Sciences (p. 24), whose staff are involved in the battle to preserve dying plant species.

ACADEMIA staff

Igor Mone/Agencja Gazeta



The City – a fascinating mixture of life,
culture and technology