

**studioMERZ**

# **container city**

Design concept for the city of Katowice in an era  
of permanent temporariness

# container city

## an introduction

The city constantly changes. It adapts to new times, to new wishes and new demands. Buildings are being abandoned, demolished, rebuilt, renovated or adapted.

In general, politicians, planners, developers and architects are mainly focused on the end result and seem less interested in the process of transformation.

Moreover, urban design / development is mainly presented in text and pictures that usually present a simplified view of reality:

- the actual and unwanted situation
- the plan with the desired situation
- the new situation.

Of course, in reality there is an extensive period of time between the present and the future situation. This is the period of transition, *the interim*.

The interim is the time during which land or buildings rest empty, awaiting a new designation. In most cases this temporary period between what was and what will be, is regarded as a loss: There is no revenue of the land or the building, offices stay empty and abandoned houses are boarded up and fenced in. Especially in times of economic setback, this occurs on many locations and can last many years.

studioMERZ works within the concept of *permanent temporariness*; in a world where developments are alternating increasingly faster, everything is always temporary.

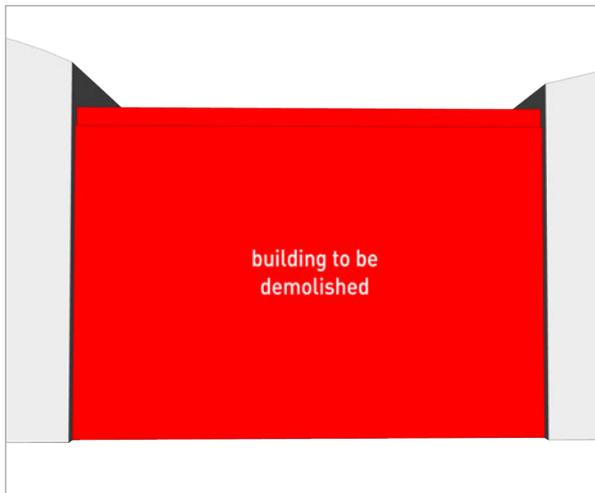
This calls for initiatives that exploit the full potential of it, economically as well as socially. The awareness of a permanent temporariness offers new possibilities and the creative use of the interim can enrich our cities. Design should be flexible to any new situation and, instead of hindering it, accommodate it.

In the inner city of Katowice, demolished buildings leave empty areas awaiting new development. These areas are often simply abandoned, fenced, or used for parking and are visually unattractive.

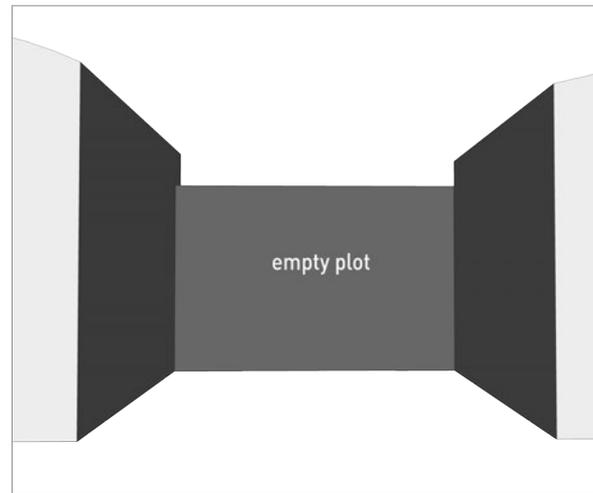
studioMERZ has developed a concept to use these empty areas during the interim, attracting people instead of keeping them out. *Container city* adds value to these areas and, instead of decay and stagnation, shows change and progress.

Rotterdam / Katowice, April 2013  
Edwin Dekker  
[www.studiomerz.nl](http://www.studiomerz.nl)

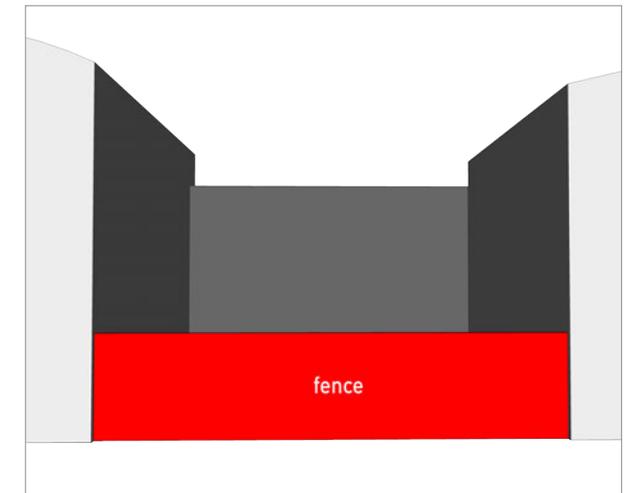
## typical process in 3 steps



1. When a building is economically end-of-life, in a poor condition, or when a developer wants to realize a new building for another reason, the old building is demolished.



2. This leaves an empty area in the neighborhood. There is a period of time between the present situation (empty area) and the moment the build will start: the interim.



3. The interim is considered a loss with no revenue on the land or rent from a building. But for several reasons (like an economical / financial crisis) this period can last for many years.

Often the area is fenced or used to park cars.

## design concept #1 /1

The building on this location near the station (ulica Dworcowa) was demolished some years ago. To this date, the developer has not started the construction.



The proposed concept uses the available plot to change the area into a temporary bar / restaurant with a kiosk and a shop. The plinth is restored and complemented with a shopping-function.



design concept #1 /2



## design concept #2

Using ones imagination, the number of function of the containers is nearly limitless. In this setup a square is created, and on top of the bar and restaurant green is added to the street-scape.

A closed down, fenced plot is transformed into a visually attractive area with a commercial function. It adds value to this part of the street and attracts people instead of keeping them out.



## design concept #3



In this concept the containers are used for promotional activities. Consequently designed, together with the new logo they are part of the corporate identity of Katowice.

Here placed near Spodek, they are a recognizable information office. For visitors, but also (maybe even mostly) for the inhabitants of the city.

Manned or unmanned, opened (exhibition space) or closed (information box), with pictures, text, audio-video or interactive, the containers represent the communication between the city and the people who live there.



# containers

The advantage of containers is that they are cheap, durable, strong and easy to transport. This makes them an excellent building material for temporary constructions.

The containers are painted in the colors of the Katowice logo, the color representing its subject: sport, infrastructure, culture, ...



for a change



Katowice, like many post industrial cities, has a relatively negative image. Following the political and economical changes after 1989, Katowice is slowly developing from an industrial city to a modern service-oriented city. But this takes time.

Compared to the other big city in the area, Krakow, Katowice is poorer, faces a higher unemployment and there is more overdue maintenance.

To change the negative image, it has developed a new logo: "Katowice, dla odmiany" (for a change). But this is not only a logo or a phrase; it is a promise:

**Katowice changes and takes the future in its own hands**

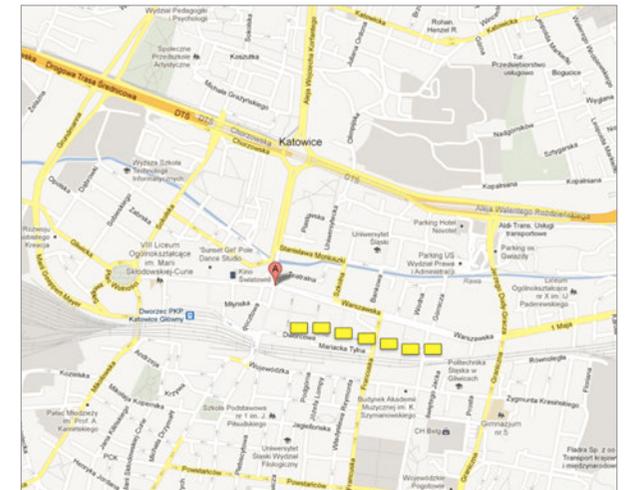
*Container city* supports this promise and fills the gap between the present situation and the future.

Like Katowice, *Container city* is creative. It uses the interim to actively show that the situation is changing for the better in the city.

The notion of progress is very important for people. Decline and stagnation feed the negative image, change and progress pave the way for a positive future.

Of course there are practical difficulties to overcome: unclear or scattered (land-) ownership, unwilling owners and developers, legal and social issues, financial restrictions. However, these difficulties hinder any new development; they are the exact reason for the present empty areas in the city.

Investigating promising areas where *Container city* can be executed, and overcoming these difficulties is the starting point for the development of Katowice. With *Container city* as the visual promise that Katowice is changing the future and that there is progress.



## partners

### Katowice

The key player in the project. Most specialists that are needed in this project work for the city.

- geographers, urbanists & architects
- other urban specialists
- legal specialists
- city promotion specialists

### Developers / land- & building owners

They have a commercial and a social concern. Participating in the project can also be part of the marketing strategy.

### NGO's

Organizations of social importance. They can use the containers for promotional activities or as a temporary work- or exposition space.

### Firms

Established firms as well as startups can benefit from the lower than average rent to try out new concepts and / or new locations.

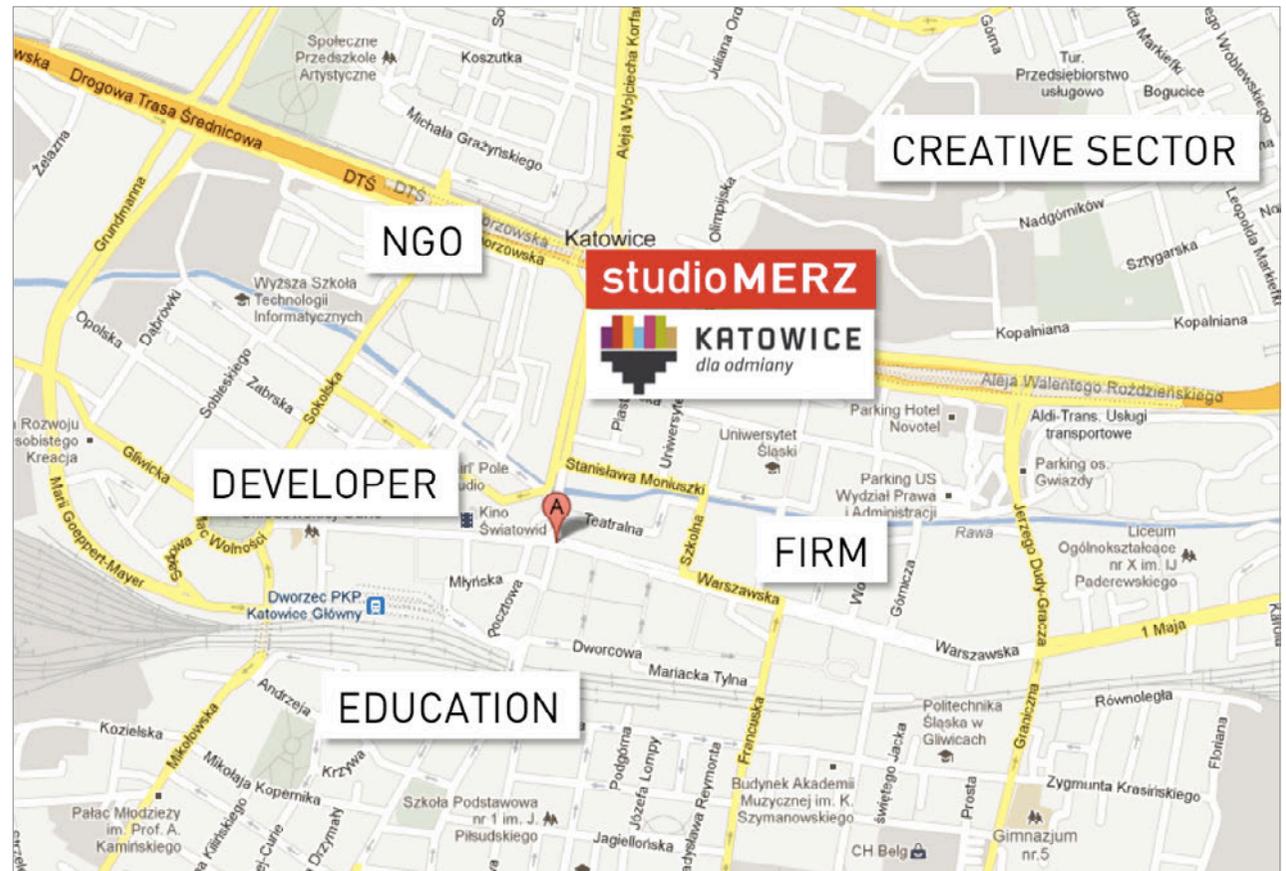
### Education and the creative sector

*Container city* offers a possibility to bring science, knowledge and art to the streets. To bring theory into practice and give exposure to special projects.

- popup stores, kiosks and restaurants
- project spaces
- studio's and workplaces
- exposition spaces for art and music

### studioMERZ

Project advisor, concept developer, designer of the containers and execution advisor. "Project evangelist" and sparring partner for everybody involved in the project.



## conclusion

*Container city* is a flexible solution to improve the quality of the urban environment and (commercially) use empty areas in an age of permanent temporariness.

The containers represent movement, change. They are the promise of the city to its inhabitants: "We're working on it".

All partners of the project work together to create a new future for Katowice:

## Dla odmiany

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