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DOROTA GAWRYLUK*

# PLAYING AT BARRACKS OR PLAYING WITH BARRACKS?

# ZABAWA W KOSZARY, CZY ZABAWA KOSZARAMI?

A b s t r a c t

This article attempts to organize the activities that have been carried out in the recent decades in relation to historic barracks located in Poland, in comparison to the analogous processes taking place abroad. It presents examples of old post-military complexes whose function has recently been changed. There are two approaches to the adaptation of these buildings: enclosing in the historic context ("playing at barracks") and contrasting with the historic background ("playing with barracks").

*Keywords: historic barracks, modernization*

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W artykule podjęto próbę uporządkowania działań prowadzonych w ostatnich dekadach w stosunku do zabytkowych koszar znajdujących się w Polsce w odniesieniu do analogicznych procesów toczących się za granicą. Zaprezentowano przykłady dawnych zespołów powojskowych, których funkcja została współcześnie zmieniona. Wśród adaptacji obiektów można wyróżnić dwa podejścia: wpisanie w historyczny kontekst („zabawa w koszary") i skontrastowanie z zabytkowym tłem („zabawa koszarami").

*Słowa kluczowe: zabytkowe koszary, modernizacja*

* Ph.D. Arch. Dorota Gawryluk, Landscape Architecture Teaching Team, Faculty of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Bialystok University of Technology.

Parts of the legacy of the Partitions period in the territory of Poland are numerous preserved barracks complexes. Usually erected on the outskirts of cities in the nineteenth century, over the years they have been absorbed by these cities and today they are often in their inner districts. Post-military complexes are compact urban complexes, so they are legible in the spatial structure of the cities.

The contemporary fates of these historic barracks are very different, and range from intentional destruction (barracks buildings at the Royal Baths Park in Warsaw, 2011) to their revitalization aimed at transforming the barracks into a new symbol of the city (Poznań, Gdańsk Wrzeszcz, Ełk). "Playing" with barracks covers the whole spectrum of activities from destruction to creation of a new quality space honouring the history of the place.

Polish realizations of recent decades have fallen within the scope of activities carried out in relation to historic barracks in Europe and around the world.

## 1. Modern foreign realizations

Contemporary modernization activities on historic barracks complexes are based on the need for functional changes, and thus result in formal changes. They concern either the whole complexes or single buildings. Post-barrack complexes, extensive spatially and organized in their structure, are adapted to different functions that correspond with their rich program to the scale of post-military complexes.

### 1.1. "Playing" with function

Noteworthy is the realization at the post-barracks grounds in Tübingen (Germany). In the 1990s, after the French army units stationed there moved out of the historic Prussian barracks (dating from the late nineteenth century), the complex underwent modernization and transformation into housing developments. French Housing (Französisches Viertel) developed on the site of the Hindenburg barracks (Hindenburg – Kaserne) was awarded the German Urban Prize for 2001. The density and extension of barrack buildings was increased with new buildings (both residential and of service function i.e. offices, doctor's surgeries, restaurants, shops, kindergartens, multi-storey garages, etc). Also modernized was a second barracks complex Loretto, where a new Loretto estate was built (Loretto-Areal) [6]. The new facilities were entered in an orderly urban context.

In Erlangen (Germany) Prussian barracks complexes dating from the second half of the 19th century were occupied after World War II by American forces, who left them in 1994. Ferris Barracs. The area of barracks, now called Rothelheimpark, was subjected to modernization. The grounds of the former barracks were made denser by including modern buildings. The functional program of the new district of houses, Siemens Medical Department, Erlangen University (Medical Department and Natural Sciences) and includes related functions, i.e. offices, apartment blocks, a school, kindergarten, sports facilities, etc. [17].

Universities are an interesting group of examples of barracks complexes being adapted to the needs of a university. In Barcelona, in the Pompeu Fabra University, a library wing was built inside a post-barrack building. The Technical University in Cartagena got a wing in one

of the buildings which enclosed the courtyard (Antigones Barracks) and in the second – a sail like roofing of the courtyard. In Bayonne in France the university functioning in the former barracks has been extended with a new library building.

Another group of objects located in barracks are museums. In this case the historic buildings are both museum buildings and exhibits. Military exhibitions are presented in Dublin (Military History Museum, Collins Barracks), in Dresden (Militaerhistorisches-museum), and in Sydney (Sydney Hyde Park Barracks). Exhibitions of contemporary art are presented in a new building erected on the site of the former barracks in Rome's Flaminio (National Museum of the 21st Century in Rome, MAXXI).

### 1.2. "Playing" with form

Examples of modernized barracks buildings can be divided into two main groups with respect to the approach to the historic tissue of the complexes. The first includes buildings distinguished from the historical context, in some cases predestined to be called works of art – icons of modern architecture. The second group of buildings undergoing modernization is that in which new elements are part of the historical background, not competing with it.

The MAXXI Museum, the work of Zaha Hadid and her team, was opened in 2010 after ten years of construction. The object, with its dynamic form, was created in the context of nineteenth-century buildings and the complex of the former Montello barracks. A modern, light grey, concrete-and-glass form stands out from the neighbourhood buildings covered with plaster in the ochre tint characteristic of Rome. The museum building clearly contrasts with the surroundings. "Set in a new style, which Hadid and her colleague Patrik Schumacher called the trend of parametricism in architecture" [11, p. 222]. MAXXI is considered to be the best, so far, of Zaha Hadid's realizations, which is reflected in the prestigious awards granted to the author [11, p. 222; 5].

The Museum of Military History (Militaerhistorisches-museum) in Dresden was built in 2008–2011, and designed by Daniel Libeskind. The building is located in the nineteenth-century Wilhelminian barracks built in the Neoclassical style. Thanks to its location in the arsenal building it is particularly exposed in the context of the historic complex. Libeskind crosses the bulk of the historic building with the dynamic form of a "gigantic arrow". The contemporary intervention in the historical building has its symbolic justification. "According to the architect it will show the openness and transparency of new detail in opposition to the absence of transparency and solidity of the existing historical shape" [11, p. 80]. Libeskind's deconstructive work is the value entered by contrast into the historic environment.

Another concept by Libeskind related to the location of an object in the area of the former barracks was the project for the new Leuphana University AudioMAX auditorium centre in Lüneburg (Germany). The designer's intention was that the deconstructed military form changed the nature of the space created by the brick buildings of the barracks [16]. The futuristic shape of the building is designed to symbolically indicate the future as a direction for the university's development. The building was to be completed in 2014, but its construction is still ongoing.

The university library in Bayonne (France) by architect Jean de Giacinto, realized in the first decade of the twenty-first century, is another example of an object modern in form and




Ill. 1. Hotel “Loft 1898” in Suwałki (photo Andrzej Stetkiewicz, 2015)

contrasting with the context of a complex of former barracks [1]. The modern building is included in the orthogonal plan of the historic complex. The modern body is covered with an openwork structure screening a slanted wall enclosing the courtyard. The texture of the library facade stands out of the historical context.

The second group of historic barracks complex modernizations includes those in which the supreme value is the historical context. The new objects are a part of the background, they do not compete with the historical value of the buildings. In the Museum of Military History (Military History Museum) located in Collins Barracks (from the beginning of the eighteenth century) in Dublin (Ireland) the interior was expanded to the needs of exposure [14]. A new wing and connectors between the blocks of the barracks are in the form of minimalist, neutral inclusions into the historic complex. A similar concept characterizes the modernization of the nineteenth-century Barracks Museum in Hyde Park (Hyde Park Barracks Museum) in Sydney (Australia) [10]. An interesting contemporary detail in its neighbourhood is the Irish Famine Orphan Memorial integrated into the fence of the museum, dedicated to the orphans and lonely Irish immigrants who lived in the barracks when they were a poorhouse. The main Library of the Technical University of Carthage (Spain) was placed in a new western wing attached (2000–2006) to the eighteenth-century barracks of Antigone. The idea of the architects Martin Lejarragi and Fulncio Aviles was to restore the historic barracks complex by introducing new forms of scale and proportion harmonized with the monument [15]. The minimalizotic form of the library makes a neutral complement to the historic courtyard.

## 2. Modern Polish realizations

Realizations of recent decades related to modernizing historic barrack complexes in Poland can also be divided into two groups due to the changes in function and due to the changes in the form of buildings. The history of the three Partitions is readable in various architectural forms of historical complexes and does not predestine a new special function of any kind. It should be emphasized that although the objects are associated with a difficult period in the history of Poland (a symbolic manifesto of the invaders' power), nowadays in most cases they are not regarded negatively. They are etched into the landscape of Polish identity of individual regions, and are a heritage accepted by society.

### 2.1. "Playing" with function

The scale of the former barracks complexes predisposes them to be restored into facilities with rich functional programs.

In 2007 the adaptation and reconstruction of the old barracks of the 15th Cavalry Regiment in Poznań was completed. Arch. Slawomir Rosolski used the concept of inverse issues in the process of designing this complex in order to incorporate new functions into the existing historical form [7, p. 19–30]. The City Park of his authorship is an urban planning scheme (apartments, offices, hotel, shopping mall, commercial premises). This realization was awarded the Jan Battista Quadro prize (2009). In 2009 the CDF Architects office created a project for the Modena Park in Poznań covering the revitalization of the former Modena factory area, located in another barracks complex in Poznań. The new premises include buildings with living, commercial, service and office functions. *"A merger of historical buildings, old trees and modern architecture into a coherent complex will create a unique part of the city"* [2].

In Olsztyn in the years 2006–2014 a nineteenth-century post-military complex was revitalized into the Barracks Park, designed by architects from the Dżus GK Architects atelier. In the old artillery barracks flats were made and space for offices, retail, and services was added [13]. In Gdańsk Wrzeszcz an investment is being carried out by Hoss covering more than 20 ha of the former barracks of the Black Hussars. The project is the work of architects from the GI Hossa Design Studio managed by Marcin Woyciechowski [9]. The realization is proceeding in stages (the investor bought the area in 2005, the first buildings were completed in 2012). Historic buildings have been complemented with numerous new facilities. A rich functional program complements the residential development with offices, services, trade and cultural facilities.

Cracow University of Technology has been housed for decades in the former barracks of Archduke Rudolf located on Warszawska Street. Gradually the buildings have been modernized one by one [3, p. 1–2]. Noteworthy are the following buildings: the Boiler house, Detention Building and Artillery completed in 2014, where the old names were retained in order to emphasize the historic nature of the place. The Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Wroclaw (Koszarowa Street) also operates from a former barracks. The characteristic details at the entrances to the individual buildings bear witness to their contemporary modernization.

A valuable example of a post-barracks object adapted to be used for exhibitions is the Home Army Museum in Kraków, which has operated in its regenerated premises since 2011, realized according to the design of Air Jurkowscy Architects Studio.

"Brama Mazur" is a revitalized area of the nineteenth-century barracks located in the centre of Ełk. In 2011 the CDF architectural studio developed documentation for this location including a shopping centre, a cinema, and a restaurant connected by public squares [2]. The revitalized complex of buildings – now a symbol of the region – has been functioning since 2014.

In Ostróda, the "White Barracks" built in the years 1913–1927, were used after World War II until 2001 by the Polish army. After the renovation (2009–2013) they house the District Court and the Prosecutor's Office, the Starostwo Powiatowe (District Office) and the Centre for Public Service, where there is room for 50 non-governmental organizations [4].

## 2.2. "Playing" with form

Among the Polish examples of contemporary regenerated barracks, similarly to foreign realizations, we can distinguish two approaches due to the treatment of these premises of historical value. In the first group there are buildings in which the activities in the new buildings contrast with the historic background. The second group includes realizations where the historic value of the buildings is superior and new inclusions do not compete with the historic form of the structure.

"Playing" with the form and space of barracks is particularly clear in the new complexes dominated by residential use, realized in Gdańsk Wrzeszcz and Poznań (City Park, Modena Park). In the urban scale, selected new buildings make strong accents standing out of the former regular structure. In Ełk the scale of the historic buildings is continued in the complex of the "Brama Mazur" (Mazury Gate) with their height, the tectonics of facades, and the colour of the cuboidal forms making up the shopping centre.

In the scale of the objects, the contemporary inclusions are visible in the form of details contrasting with the historical background, for example overbuilt with oval, glassed overlap floor with a swimming pool in the body of the main building of the complex, or the glassed link building spanning the street at the City Park in Poznań. In Suwałki in the old tsarist barracks at Dwernickiego Street, one of the buildings was converted into a hotel "Loft 1898", designed by Atelier ZETTA from Bialystok. The object was opened in 2015. (Ill. 1). A contemporary wing was added to the front of the historic building and on the hotel corpus some details were realized that accent the main entrance and the selected corners. Despite these additions, the historical values of the premises are still clear.

In the complex of Barracks Park in Olsztyn the new features were added to the existing buildings in such a way that the legibility of the historic urban space and architectural form were preserved as much as possible. A similar approach characterizes the modernization of the White Barracks in Ostróda. The example of the Home Army Museum in Kraków shows that a successful revitalization of the historic building gives it a new life and at the same time "restores" the historical value of the degraded object. The museum is at the same an exhibit in its own right. A similar role is also played by the Boiler House, Detention Building and Artillery – regenerated buildings of the Cracow University of Technology, which in their preserved or reconstructed forms, along with the context of historic university buildings, evoke the history of the place – the former Archduke Rudolf barracks.

## 3. Conclusion

Playing at barracks or playing with barracks are terms readable mainly in the form of metamorphosis of historic buildings. Playing at barracks corresponds to an attitude that honours the superiority of historical value and results in subtle interventions harmonized with the context of the former building complexes. In playing with barracks the historic objects become converted. We often have to deal with a spectacular metamorphosis. A new building, element or detail contrasts with the historical background, stands out, and attracts attention. In most of the examples presented the readability of the historical value of the objects was preserved.

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