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A HOUSE IN THE FRONTAGE. THE CONTINUITY AND TRANSITORINESS OF SILESIAN MARKET SQUARES' DEVELOPMENT

DOM W PIERZEI. TRWANIE I PRZEMIJANIE ZABUDOWY ŚLĄSKICH RYNKÓW

Abstract

Majority of Silesian towns are distinguished by their medieval Old Towns with centrally located market squares. The frontage development of the market squares historically combines housing and service functions. Over the centuries, the form and stylistics of this development were undergoing changes, creating the individual image of every Silesian market square. In the paper, the transformations of the market squares' frontage development are analysed, describing their tendencies and specificity.

Keywords: market square, frontage development, Silesia

Streszczenie

Większość miast Śląska wyróżniają średniowieczne układy staromiejskie z centralnie położonymi placami rynkowymi. Zabudowa pierzejowa rynków historycznie łączy funkcje mieszkaniowe i usługowe. Na przestrzeni wieków forma i stylistyka tej zabudowy ulegała przemianom, składając się na indywidualny wizerunek każdego z rynków. W artykule poddano analizie przekształcenia zabudowy pierzejowej rynków charakteryzując tendencje i specyfikę tych przemian.

Słowa kluczowe: rynek, zabudowa pierzejowa, Śląsk

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1. INTRODUCTION. HISTORICAL OUTLINE

Silesia is a historical region with a complex multicultural history. Its boundaries and nationality have changed many times over the centuries. In the Middle Ages, the region was divided into a number of independent duchies. It became an integral part of the Kingdom of Bohemia in the 15th century and was taken over by the Habsburg dynasty in the 16th century. The Silesian wars in the 18th century resulted in a major part of the Silesian area, including the County of Kłodzko, being incorporated into the Kingdom of Prussia. In 1945, Silesia was annexed into Poland and now lies within the borders of four provinces: Lower Silesia, Lubuskie, Opole and Silesia Province, with some small parts in the territory of Czech Republic and Germany. Apart from the administrative division, a historical and geographical division into Lower Silesia (a north-western part of the region) and Upper Silesia (a south-eastern part of the region) is used. The term Opole Silesia, which appeared in the interwar period, means the western part of Upper Silesia, which is of a different nature compared to its highly industrialised eastern part. Nowadays, the term is used interchangeably with Opole Province, but it includes a part of Lower Silesia, as well.

2. MARKET SQUARE CHARACTERISTICS

The medieval old town layouts emerged in Silesia as a result of urbanisation undertaken in the 13th and 14th centuries. Approx. 120 cities were founded at that time in Silesia as part of a planned process of urbanisation of the then under-capitalised and poorly populated area¹. Towns, founded mostly under German law, applied repeatable rules to establish the arrangement of streets intersecting at right angles with a central square. Urban centres were gradually surrounded by defensive walls, which usually gave them oval outline or less often – a shape of a circle or a square. The market square served as the administrative and commercial centre of the city, where most of the social life occurred, fairs were held and the wealthiest lived. Most of the market squares were shaped as a rectangle of various proportions: from a square-like shape to elongated rectangles. Some marketplaces are based on the shape of a quadrant (Głubczyce, Nysa) and several have a square shape (Lubań, Trzebnica). The average market square surface area is between 0.6 ha to 1.5 ha, with the largest market square in Wrocław being 3.5 ha. The market squares are usually located on flat terrain, but there are some situated on slopes, e.g. in Byczyna, Kłodzko and Otmuchów. An interesting issue, which is not analysed in this article, is the orientation of the market squares in relation to directions of the world².

The architectural expression of the market square as a closed space depends on the degree of fragmentation of its walls, the typology of the frontage housing, its height and proportions to the size of the square. The historic front-gabled development of the

¹ R. Eysymontt, *Kod genetyczny miasta*, Via Nova, Wrocław 2009, p. 17–18.

² Such an analysis was conducted for selected small Polish cities by H. Adamczewska-Wejchert and K. Wejchert. It suggests that approx. 35% of the analysed market squares are situated in the north-south direction, while others are characterised by 10 o'clock (41%) and 11 o'clock orientations. H. Adamczewska-Wejchert, K. Wejchert, *Małe miasta*, Arkady, Warsaw 1986, p. 24–26.

market square's frontages create a dynamic rhythm encompassed in a harmonious whole, without depriving the buildings of their original features. The side-gabled development creates a complex that is more monotonous and loses individual building features to a certain extent.³

The analysis of town plans by J. Pudelko⁴ makes it possible to identify the original types of market squares' transportation system, especially the number of street inlets and their configurations. A characteristic arrangement often encountered in Silesia is the convergence of eight streets in the market square, two in each corner. Such a layout can be seen in the Opole market square. A more complex variation of such a system is one with additional two streets separating the housing blocks on the elongated sides of the market square – with a total of ten streets coming into the market – present in e.g. Brzeg, Grodków, Jawor, Namysłów, Paczków and Ząbkowice Śląskie. Further expansion of the Silesian market square's street layout includes streets separating housing quarters along the short sides of the market square, as well. Simpler systems are represented by market squares in Bolesławiec and Jelenia Góra, which have six inlets: four streets coming out of the corners of the market square and the remaining two streets separating the buildings on the longer market square's sides.

The original character of each market square created by frontage development is enriched by the town halls and middle square housing blocks that often accompany them. Silesian town halls, located mostly in the middle square and repeatedly rebuilt and renovated, represent a variety of styles ranging from Gothic, to the Renaissance and Classicism, to Baroque and 19th-century eclecticism and historicism. Their towers with original forms create spatial dominants and constitutive elements of the old town layouts.

3. ISSUES AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The historic medieval marketplaces in Silesian towns are squares surrounded by quarters of condensed frontage development. Over the centuries, the form and style of tenement buildings located on market squares changed and built original and diverse image of these important urban squares. It was evidence of the dynamics of the town's development and its economic potential or – on the contrary – stagnation and economic collapse. The process of transformation was interrupted by World War II and the resultant significant destruction of historical market squares' housing in many cities. The post-war reconstruction was carried out based on several trends and market squares' frontages are complemented even nowadays.

This article, which is a continuation of the author's previous research, attempts to determine the directions of the transformations in the frontages of selected Silesian market squares from historic times to modern times and characterise the specificity of these changes. Moreover, the article outlines the mutual relations between the historical and modern buildings and identifies problem areas and negative phenomena that have a negative impact on the image of the market square frontages.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 27–30.

⁴ J. Pudelko, *Zagadnienia wielkości powierzchni średniowiecznych miast Śląska*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław 1967.



Ill. 1. Strzelin. View plan of the town by F. B. Werner from the second half of the 18th century. Source: Wrocław University Library Ill. 2. Paczków. View plan of the town by F. B. Werner from the second half of the 18th century. Source: Wrocław University Library Ill. 3. Jelenia Góra. Aerial photograph from 1929. Source: Herder Institute in Marburg. Image Archive: Hansa-Luftbild, no 58801 Ill. 4. Wołów. Aerial photograph from 1930. Source: Herder Institute in Marburg. Image Archive: Hansa-Luftbild, no 59769 Ill. 5. Opole. Baroque character of the market square – the result of the post-war rebuilding. Source: photo by M. Adamska (2013) Ill. 6. Byczyna. Contemporary and historic development of the market square. Source: photo by M. Adamska (2015)

4. TRANSFORMATIONS FROM LOCATION TO 1945

The metrological method of studying Silesian towns developed after World War II assumed the modularity of the measurement system and adopted the plot as the smallest unit, with the housing block and the square as multiples thereof. According to J. Pudelko, in the first stage of the foundation of cities in Silesia, until 1238, a module equal to a multiplicity of 60 feet (one foot was 31.30 cm then) was used and plots with the dimensions of 60 x 120 feet or 60 x 210 feet were created. In the second stage of the development (after 1241), narrower plots with the width of 50 feet (1 foot was 28.80 cm) were used. A 50-foot module was used to create plans for e.g. Jawor, Kluczbork, Jelenia Góra and Strzelin, and 60-foot module was used for e.g. Brzeg, Grodków, Legnica and Opole. A characteristic feature of Silesian market squares is also the presence of wider plots, the so-called stall-keeper's plots, in the market square corners. However, these wider plots – which were a result of the 13th-century location – underwent further divisions as early as in the 14th century. As a consequence, the cities (and market squares too) were filled with narrower buildings of greater depth and compactness located on smaller plots – the buildings were connected by their longitudinal walls⁵. In this period, the average plot in a Silesian town was 7–10 metres wide and usually housed a tri-axial tenement. This width was reused in many urban centres, regardless of their size⁶. The plots in the blocks adjacent to market squares were set out in layouts that were perpendicular to the market frontages and were usually filled with single-front houses.

A characteristic element of the Silesian cities in the Middle Ages were arcades. According to J. Pudelko, they were present in at least 50 cities⁷. The solution came to Silesia via the Czech Republic and the Italian models. Arcades made it possible to conduct trade regardless of weather conditions. In the 14th century, though, decisions were made in many cities to remove arcades, e.g. due to fire concerns, which caused the historical building line to move back in some cases. Arcades survived longer in the hilly area in the southern part of Silesia⁸. Brick houses with arcades in Gryfów Śląski erected in the 16th century had three bays: a wide hallway in the first one, a staircase with a passageway in the second one and a dwelling room deeper in the house. This solution was used until the 18th century⁹. Currently, arcades can be seen in on the market squares in Jawor and Jelenia Góra, partly as historic buildings and partly as post-war restoration and reconstruction.

The original wooden buildings on Silesian market squares underwent a gradual transformation into brick buildings with masonry basement structures. In Wrocław, great fires accelerated the development of masonry construction in the 14th century and the houses destroyed in the fires had to be rebuilt in masonry construction. In Opole, the first masonry tenement houses at the market square were erected in the 15th century thanks to the Foundation of Prince Jan Kropidło¹⁰. In smaller centres, including Krosno Odrzańskie and Strzelin, deci-

⁵ R. Eysymontt, *Kod...op.cit.*, p. 56.-60.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

⁷ J. Pudelko, *Rynki w planach miast Śląska*, Kwartalnik Architektury i Urbanistyki, issue 3–4, 1959, p. 259.

⁸ R. Eysymontt, *Kod...op.cit.*, p. 109–115.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 319.

¹⁰ R. Emmerling, U. Zajączkowska, *Opole. Stolica województwa opolskiego*, Śląskie Wydawnictwo ADAN, Opole 2003, p. 22.

sions to rebuild the city in a permanent structure were made only in the 16th century after another fire.

The Renaissance had a significant impact on the transformation of market square housing in many Silesian towns, e.g.: Brzeg, Kłodzko, Świdnica and Wrocław. Not many Renaissance tenement buildings have been preserved – among others some in Oława (Rynek 24 with triangular volute gable), Opole (Rynek 1 with a cylindrical corner bay window), Paczków (Rynek 35 with a passageway and pilastered gable in a decorative form) and Świdnica (Rynek 26 with a decorative portal).

Information on Silesian towns in the 18th century is provided by numerous drafted measurement plans performed by Austrian and Prussian engineers. After the incorporation of Silesia and the Kłodzko County into the administrative structures of Prussia, King Frederick II commissioned the development of new cartographic materials for the conquered province. *Atlas Silesiae* by Prussian engineer Christian Friedrich Wrede includes plans of 67 Silesian towns at 1:14000 scale elaborated between 1747 and 1753¹¹. The scale and precision of the Wrede plans make it possible to analyse housing block layouts and street layouts' patterns in the mapped cities, including their market squares. Extremely valuable, although not preceded by measurements, are the simplified plans and bird's eye views of Silesian towns made by Friedrich Bernard Werner, an illustrator and author of a 5-volume work, *Topografia Silesiae*, which was an effect of his trips to Silesia from 1740 to 1758. The Werner's views document the appearance of the cities and its facilities prior to multiple transformations occurring in the 19th and 20th centuries and served as a valuable source material during the post-war reconstruction.

An analysis of the bird's eye views of the Silesian cities by F.B. Werner, already made of brick to a great degree, shows the contrast between stately frontage development of the market squares and modest-looking buildings in other quarters. A distinctive feature of the buildings in the 18th century Silesian towns (including those adjacent to market squares) was the front-gabled development (ill.1). Werner, an insightful observer, captured the degree of decorativeness of the Baroque gables, which serves also as a source of information on the dynamics of development of the city and its economic situation. In most cities, the frontages on market squares were dominated by triaxial brick tenement buildings two or three storeys high, which confirms the use of 7-metre-wide plots resulting from the secondary divisions as part of the medieval parcelling. Four – or five-storey buildings can be found not only in the market square of Wrocław, the historic capital of Silesia, but also in the thriving cities of Brzeg and Głogów. The housing blocks adjacent to market squares often include single-front buildings with a considerable depth and the remainder of the plot intensively built-up by farm and residential buildings of smaller dimensions. Views of many cities still show wider buildings on plots located in the market square corner blocks, which resulted from the establishment of stall-keeper plots. The Werner views also included explanations of the functions and properties of the most important structures in the city. This way, information was provided about the families of Larisch and Gaschin, the owners of houses in the western side of the market square in Opole. Also, the description of the view of Paczków identifies the owners of four neighbouring tenement houses in the south-eastern frontage block (ill. 2).

¹¹ G. Bosy, *Atlas Krieges-Carte von Schlesien Christiana Friedricha von Wrede jako źródło do rekonstrukcji krajobrazu kulturowego Dolnego Śląska w poł. XVIII w.*, *Prace Komisji Krajobrazu Kulturowego*, 29/2015, p. 43–44.

In Namysłów, where the architectural expression of the market square shapes the rhythm of two – or three-storey front-gabled buildings with simplified forms of the gables, the western frontage is created by five wide-front houses, three of which are labelled as inns. One of them is a half-timbered building, an exception among the brick buildings located on the market square. A different image of the market square emerges from the view of Oleśnica, where the market square is dominated by two-storey side-gabled houses of pitched and higher multi-pitched roofs.

The market squares in Lewin Brzeski and Trzebnica looked more modest than market squares in other cities in the 18th century, pointing to a slow economic development of these centres or maybe even an economic stagnation. In Lewin Brzeski, the market square is surrounded by one-storey half-timbered buildings with arcades of a simple form and with no detail.

The second half of the 18th century saw the beginning of the process of converting the front-gabled development into side-gabled development, as a consequence of fire regulations introduced in Silesian cities. King Frederick II set himself a purpose of liquidation of wooden buildings in Silesian cities and a ban was introduced on the use of wood shingle roofs and half-timber construction¹².

An important role in the analyses of further transformations of Silesian towns and their market squares taking place in the 19th century, the early 20th century and the interwar period was played by the simplified cadastral plans drawn up mostly in 1865 for a number of Silesian towns, which are a part of the collections of the Herder Institute in Marburg. These plans indicated the original parcelling and numbering of the plots and noted the curvatures in the building lines. However, the most valuable iconographic source material, which allowed to analyse towns in a three-dimensional space – similarly to the Werner views – is the collection of aerial photographs from the interwar period, which is also a part of the Herder Institute collection. A comparison of these photographs with the 18th century bird's eye views of towns by Werner makes it possible to identify the methods in which frontage housing on Silesian market squares were transformed.

The interwar aerial photos show the intensity of the development within the quarters adjacent to the market square as well as the compactness of the market square frontages. The frontages on Silesian market squares were created in the interwar period by buildings of different forms: the oldest 18th century side-gabled buildings and 19th century buildings with flat roofs. The market square in Strzelin in the interwar period is the combination of these three solutions; next to narrow two – or three-axial gable-sided houses, there were wide-front side-gabled buildings and between them – 19th century buildings with flat roofs. A similar diversity characterised the row houses on the market square in Jawor. The consistent repeatable elements include the prevalence of triaxial buildings and arcades on the ground floor level (ill. 3). Market squares in Lewin Brzeski, Milicz and Wołów were surrounded by two-storey side-gabled houses (ill. 4). In Bolesławiec, in turn, there was a prevalence of front-gabled buildings and varying front width and number of storeys. In Dzierżoniów and Ząbkowice Śląskie, frontage development on the market square was significantly transformed in the 19th century, which resulted in a complex of buildings with flat roofs surrounding the market square. Trade

¹² R. Eysymontt, *Kod...op.cit.*, p. 31. In the 17th and 18th centuries, only two cities out of 130 were damaged by fires per year.

rapidly developed on the ground floor level of the market square frontages. The pictures showed large glazings of commercial premises, adverts on front façades and awnings.

5. POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION AND MODERN TIMES

As a result of World War II, mainly the year 1945, and the period after the end of hostilities, old town layouts and market squares – which served as their centres – were damaged to various degrees in Silesia. The group of the most affected old cities included e.g. Głogów, Strzelin and Wrocław in Lower Silesia and Głubczyce and Nysa in Opole Silesia. The post-war reconstruction was carried out based on three main directions. M. Przyłęcki identifies and defines them as: 1. reconstruction of the destroyed housing and restoration to the state before the destruction or of earlier structures with historical forms, 2. construction of new structures and complexes retaining some historical elements, e.g. the scale, the roof shape, the building line and programme-based exclusion of modern architectural forms (conditional restructuring), 3. construction of new structures and complexes without regard to historical conditions and shapes prior to 1945 (neointegration)¹³. In Lower Silesia, the following restorations were representative for the direction of reconstruction: the southern frontage on the market square in Wrocław and the frontage on the market square in Bolesławiec. Examples of activities based on the assumptions of the so-called conditional restructuring and programme compromise included residential and commercial buildings erected in the place of one of the destroyed housing blocks in the southern frontage of the market square in Oleśnica¹⁴. With its steep ceramic roof and parallel ridge line orientation, the new three-storey row houses are a reference to the 18th century stylistic traditions. They refer to the medieval parcelling with their simulated division into triaxial sections and emphasis on the broader corner divisions. Façades are decorated with simplified forms of historicising detail. Functional solutions took into account the traditional commercial use of the premises on the ground floor and the flat layout on the upper two floors. Compared to the pre-1945 state, the houses were characterised by smaller depth, which allowed to introduce new functions within the quarter. The frontage development in the market square in Bytom in Upper Silesia was completed in a similar style.

Noteworthy is the completed in 1955 reconstruction of market square buildings in Opole by architect M. Skalkowski, based on the decision to restore the Baroque nature of the market square¹⁵. The damaged fabric (usually 19th century tenement buildings) was replaced by residential and commercial buildings with functional solutions based on contemporary standards and façades with Baroque styling and divisions going back to the historical parcelling (ill. 5).

Another noteworthy post-war reconstruction is the project implemented in Jawor, a small town in Lower Silesia. The two housing quarters in the northern and eastern side of the market square, destroyed during the war, were reconstructed in the 1960 with clear references to the tradition and identity of the place. Architect S. Müller proposed to use three-storey

¹³ M. Przyłęcki M., *Trzy kierunki odbudowy miast Dolnego Śląska po 1945 roku*, [w:] *Odbudowa miast historycznych*, (red.) M. Lubocka-Hoffmann, Elbląg 1998, p. 70.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 73–44.

¹⁵ R. Emmerling, U. Zajązkowska, *Opole. Stolica województwa opolskiego*, Śląskie Wydawnictwo ADAN, Opole 2003, p. 22.

buildings that combined modern solutions for the section-divided elevation with high roofs in a side-gabled scheme and arcades on the ground floor, characteristic of the history of many towns in Lower Silesia¹⁶.

The third approach, which consisted in breaking away from historical forms and replacing the destroyed old town structures with contemporary buildings, plays a significant role in shaping the contemporary image of many Silesian market squares. Typical four – or five-storey residential blocks with flat roofs and the ground floors usually intended for services were constructed on market squares in many towns, especially the smaller ones: Lubin, Strzelin and Trzebnica (Lower Silesia), Brzeg, Byczyna, Głubczyce, Otmuchów (Opole Silesia) and Racibórz (Upper Silesia) (ill. 6). The row of new locations did not take into account the historical building lines and moved the block buildings deep into the old quarters, thus allocating the area for public greenery. In Lubin and Strzelin, decisions were made to fill in the housing quarters adjacent to the market square with multi-family buildings (tower blocks), which stands in contradiction with the traditionally tight nature of market square frontages. There are also a number of towns in Silesia where housing quarters adjacent to the market square were not rebuilt and often served as incidental green spaces, e.g. in Brzeg, Grodków, Lubin and Racibórz. In Głubczyce, the quarters that had formed a quadrant shape closing the market square on the south-eastern side – a distinguishing features of city charter based on Flemish law – remained undeveloped.¹⁷ The non-rebuilt housing blocks broke the historic closing of the market square, and the compactness of its development furthermore changed the proportions of the internal space of the market square and the fundamental elements of its spatial composition.

In the 1980s, a new concept was formulated for the restoration of the damaged old town layouts, the so-called retroversion. The term means a set of activities undertaken on damaged old town areas that respect historical conditions, but do not reproduce old buildings. According to the principles of retroversion, new development based on the old plan should be a modern interpretation of the historic tenement housing. A significant aspect of retroversion is the precise recreation of the scale and proportions of the elements of urban design and proper definition of the style of the new buildings¹⁸. The method of retroversion was used in the reconstruction of old town layouts of Elbląg and Kołobrzeg and Głogów in Silesia.

The most recent activities in the space of market squares and old town layouts include the project in Polkowice in Lower Silesia. In the 1990s, a decision was made there to dismantle the post-war residential blocks and some parts of the 19th century development adjacent to the market square and introduce two-storey side-gabled buildings and simplified detail referring to the housing from the turn of the 18th and 19th century and the period of the Prussian building regulation¹⁹.

¹⁶ K. Petrus, *Rekonstrukcja i adaptacja zniszczonych wojną budowli mieszczańskich po 1945 roku*, Czasopismo Techniczne, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Krakowskiej, 2009, issue 3-A, p. 151.

¹⁷ M. Adamska, *Średniowieczne układy urbanistyczne miast Śląska Opolskiego. Stan zachowania i rewitalizacja*, Przegląd Budowlany, 3/2013, p. 15–29.

¹⁸ M. Lubocka-Hoffmann, *Retrowersja Starego Miasta w Elblągu*, [w:] *Odbudowa miast historycznych*, (edit.) M. Lubocka-Hoffmann, Elbląg 1998, p. 148–160.

¹⁹ R. Eysymontt, *Rewaloryzacja miast na Dolnym Śląsku po 1990 roku. Analiza wybranych przykładów*, Ochrona Zabytków, 2004, issue 1/2, p. 7.

6. SUMMARY

The first significant stage of transformations in the frontage development on the market squares of Silesian towns involved the process of conversion from wooden to masonry buildings, which started as early as in the 14th century in the case of Wrocław and lasted until the 17th and 18th centuries in the case of smaller towns of the region. The bird's eye views of Silesian cities made by F.B. Werner indicate the prevalence of front-gabled buildings in the space of the 18th century market squares, which was characterised by a dynamic rhythm. A triaxial house, 7 metres wide and two or three-storey high, with sloping roof, three bays and often arcades on the ground floor, is an example of the typical building dimensions on Silesian market squares.

The front-gabled development, characteristic of the region in the second half of the 18th century, was converted into side-gabled development as part of the implementation of the Prussian building regulations. In the 19th century, along with a period of intensive development of some cities, the buildings with flat roofs appeared in frontages on market squares, often higher than their neighbouring older buildings. The aerial photos from the interwar period reinforced the image of the frontages on Silesian market squares with their compact nature, in many cases as a set of solutions that represented various styles and formed the identity of the place and its authenticity.

As a result of the post-war reconstruction, the functional architecture in the form of typical residential blocks, monotonous and devoid of individual features, was introduced into the structure of many historical market squares in Silesian towns. A number of such Silesian market squares maintained its identity thanks to some balance with the preserved historical buildings. The market squares in Głubczyce, Lubin or Strzelin lost their uniqueness and history. The discussion on dealing with destroyed old town structures is still ongoing and relevant. One can hope that new trends will emerge, together with reconstruction methods aimed at restoration of *genius loci* of the degraded frontage development of Silesian market squares.

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