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THE RATIONALIST AND INTUITIVE TENDENCY
IN SHAPING THE BUILDINGS
OF HISTORICAL DISTRICTS
(SOME EXAMPLES:
ELBLĄG, GŁOGÓW, KOŁOBRZEG, SZCZECIN)

RACJONALISTYCZNE I INTUICYJNE
TENDENCJE W KSZTAŁTOWANIU ZABUDOWY
DZIELNIC HISTORYCZNYCH
(WYBRANE PRZYKŁADY:
ELBLĄG, GŁOGÓW, KOŁOBRZEG, SZCZECIN)

Abstract

The rational and intuitive trends in projects of reconstructing historical development were extracted in Poland during the period of the transformation in 1989 and during German reunification in 1990. These projects were subordinated to the adopted rules of restoration programs to restore the damaged space systems and to reconstruct of the most valuable development. A reconstruction of shattered historical cities forms a contrast with the modernist concepts of shaping an urban space.

A redefining of the radical trends of the avant-garde movement of the modern style were discussed after a few decades and resulted in a trend of returning to traditional aspects of the beauty in all the form as well as returning to the classic rules of composing the façade and the urban complex development. During extensive reconstruction programs the return trends tend to reach the “sources” – a reconstruction of forms of classical architectural styles (of demolished objects that constitute national cultural monuments) and the integration of historic development with the new buildings, composed according to the old solutions by so called “borrowing” (including the imitation of the appearance of the historic building).

Keywords: restoration and reconstruction of old towns, architecture in the cultural context, environmental architecture, sustainable architecture

Streszczenie

Racjonalne i intuicyjne tendencje w projektach odbudowy zespołów staromiejskich wyodrębniono w przedstawionych realizacjach w Polsce z okresu transformacji ustrojowej 1989 r. oraz po zjednoczeniu Niemiec w 1990 r. Podporządkowane były przyjętym zasadom programów konserwatorskich przywrócenia zniszczonych układów przestrzennych oraz rekonstrukcji

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najcenniejszej zabudowy. Odtworzenie wyglądu zrujnowanych miast historycznych stanowi kontrast z modernistycznymi koncepcjami nowoczesnego kształtowania przestrzeni zurbanizowanej. Przeźniowanie radykalnych tendencji stylowych z okresu awangardy Ruchu Nowoczesnego zostało po kilku dekadach poddane dyskusji, spowodowało nasilenie tendencji tradycjonalistycznych – powrotu do aspektów piękna form zabudowy, klasycznych zasad komponowania elewacji i kształtowania urbanistycznego. W okresie podejmowanych ponownie rozległych programach rekonstrukcyjnych wykorzystane zostały tendencje powrotu do „źródeł” – odtwarzania form klasycznych stylów architektonicznych (wyburzonych obiektów o charakterze pomników kultury narodowej) oraz zestawiania w obrębie zespołów staromiejskich nowych domów, komponowanych przy „zapożyczeniu” dawnych rozwiązań (łącznie z imitacją wyglądu historycznej zabudowy).

Słowa kluczowe: odbudowa i rekonstrukcja starych miast, architektura w kontekście kulturowym, architektura środowiskowa

In reconstruction not only urban rations prevailed, but mainly and primarily the emotional factors of the human population – society as a whole – which requested the restoration of the oldest witnesses of the centuries-old tradition. In retrospect, after twenty-five years, when they have become an integral part of the great urban ensembles, it can be said that the achieved effect surpassed the wildest expectations. It has managed not only to constitute valuable evidence of material culture in a historical context, but it also has enabled the rebuilt historic districts to the new mainstream of life¹.

1. The demolition of a historical development

The modern Vitruvian science is not accepted in the full range of the old media, resulting from presenting the experience of the author in the part of the Treatise², reflecting the expanded level of the art of construction and advanced engineering era of ancient Rome. Regardless of the “natural” cycle changes in the history of urban planning and architecture, transformations and modernization of old buildings, the adaptation of the depreciated objects facing the change in commercial technological and aesthetic circumstances, in the 20th century and at the beginning of our century, demolition of buildings considered valuable in terms of functional and compositional form took place on a significant scale. The demolition projects were not always justified by the needs of modernization or a desire to achieve

¹ P. Biegański, *Przedmowa do wydania pierwszego*, [in:] *Stare Miasto w Poznaniu. Zniszczenia – Odbudowa – Konserwacja 1945–2016*, H. Kondziela (część I), zespół: I. Błaszczuk, A. Dolczewska, J. Domek–Nogalska, J. Figuła–Czech, J. Gołych–Pawłowska, A. Jakubowska (część II), Wydawnictwo Miejskie Poznań, Poznań 2017, p. 11.

² Witruwiusz, *O architekturze ksiąg dziesięć*, tłumaczenie K. Kumaniecki, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1956, *passim*.

modern standards; in many cases the decisions were taken ad hoc according to investment plans and perspectives of the particular needs of small groups of traders and users, which – to the detriment of the structural homogeneity of neighbourhoods – was the need to maintain the historical spatial compositions and landscapes in the cities; as well as the requirements of attention to the cultural aspects of old art, the care of the intangible values of the sites for the local community. The **durability of architecture** – perceived as a universal value – in the sense of a small, but influential group of entrepreneurs, civil servants, the designers changed this meaning; the value of the total was subordinated to the material factors and economic benefits. After 1945 the demolition of historical buildings took place on the Western and Northern regions in Poland (known as former territories of Germany).

The demolition of the remaining substance was also known as plans of execution for the modernization of old neighborhoods regardless of the scale of war damage and the degree of preservation of valuable objects if they interfered with the overall vision of urban planners. The huge scale of the destruction was also due to negligence and improper care of hosts and post-war administration (for the most part that represents the power of the state). Modernist buildings changed the landscape context of many cities.

2. The beauty of modern architecture

A contemporary reference to the values of beauty in architecture has changed the context of the source, which in the past was represented by the rules of the present canon of the art as well as by the development of the values by the most eminent artists. To the end of the era of the *fin de siècle* the dominating element referenced the principles of composition and formal and plastic classic style which was modified by the process of radical change in urban planning and architecture starting at the beginning of the 20th century. The new modernist mainstream (the Mainstream Modern) – emerging from CIAM and the Bauhaus – has had a strong impact on a significant part of the construction in the West of Europe.

New concepts of spatial planning (preceded by the exploration of modernists in the first decades of the 20th century)³ were dominated by the architectural experiments of the avant-garde⁴ that created excellent structural concepts; contributing at the same time – by launching a multilateral process of radical changes – to the unification of the urbanized landscape, the effects of which are clearly perceived after several decades of significant transformations of the urban centers and the peripheries. The restrictions in the creation of individual forms, mobile systems and the organization of work were the consequence of the ideological reevaluations, based on the assumptions of “post-cubist” urban planning and architecture⁵, and the rationalization of the technology of narrow scale references to aspects of the humanities, including the modularity of structural elements that resulted from simplified schematic functional solutions and unification, leading to repeatability in the building of segments.

³ Incl. O. Wagner, A. Loos, [in:] J-L. Cohen, *The Future of Architecture. Since 1889*, Wydawnictwo Phaidon, New York 2012, p. 92–97, 143–146.

⁴ Prevailing influence by Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, [in:] Ch. Norbert-Schultz, *Znaczenie w architekturze Zachodu*, Wydawnictwo Murator, Warszawa 1999, p. 186–188.

⁵ J. Wujek, *Mity i utopie architektury XX wieku*, Wydawnictwo Arkady, Warszawa 1986, p. 62.



III.1. Elbląg, Głogów, Kołobrzeg, Szczecin. (Photographies of author)

3. Rationalism and intuition in the architecture of historic urban ensemble

After 1945 in distant regions of the continent there were different rules of conduct for the restoration of the former position of the shattered urban centres; regardless of opposing political systems there were different concepts of architectural and urban strategies for the reconstruction of urban structures that interacted with each other or were the subject of a transfer of proven solutions. The unique conditions for post-war investment occurred in areas of the old districts. After 1945, there was an (exceptional) need to restore damaged spatial systems in the historic districts and reconstruct the appearance of the most valuable historical and artistic architecture, which are the distinctive elements of the landscape and cultural distinctiveness of urban centres.

The reconstruction of the former landscape was implemented on the basis of conservation programs, prepared by shared teams representing different fields of science and administration; the leading role belonged to the urban planners and architects, archaeologists, art historians and restorers.

The post-war destruction brought by state authorities, the administration of the cities, and entrepreneurs was to begin a new organization of economic and social life of cities, coping with problems – of excavating bombed-out neighborhoods, of reconstructing the economic potential, as well as preparation of the environment for economic development. The organization of city space requires the development of rational methods of planning reconstruction and upgrades the restoration policy of the historical cities used in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century.

City centres that survived the hostilities were also influenced by this ideology (increased in the most important historical centres that were destroyed); architectural and urban projects were used as part of the shaping of national identity and cultural shaping of society by the postwar authorities⁶. In the organization of life in the urban centres after 1945, a separate issue was the modernization of old urban structures (improved communication, the organization of open spaces with greenery) and “humanitarian” reconstruction of depreciated construction substances– expected due to the excessive density inside the building blocks of the old town. At the time inhabited by the less affluent social layer (outbuildings within inner-city quarters), in which additional offices with a low standard were to be found, due to the demographic conditions and employment of unskilled workers as well as provisional factors in a period of dynamic development of the industrial centres in the 19th and 20th century)⁷.

Traditionally a **rational** principle of the continuation was applied in reference to the canons of classic architectural styles represented in the projects that were prepared for the reconstruction of historical districts, in particular the need for references to *the art of shaping space*⁸; without

⁶ Similar issue known after the First World War, [in:] M. Górzyński, I. Barańska, *Wprowadzenie*, [in:] *Odbudowy i modernizacje miast historycznych w pierwszej połowie dwudziestego wieku w Europie. Naród – Polityka – Społeczeństwo*, red. I. Barańska, M. Górzyński, Kaliskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk, Kalisz 2016, p. 25.

⁷ *Geschichte der Rekonstruktion – Konstruktion der Geschichte*, red. W. Nerdinger, M. Eisen, H. Strobl, München, Prestel Verlag, 2010, pass; P. Jokilehto, *A history of architectural conservation*, Amsterdam, Wydawnictwo Elsevier, 2004, p. 223–244, 256–283–287.

⁸ P. Biegański, *Architektura. Sztuka kształtowania przestrzeni*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, 1974.

leaving excessive an margin for presenting individual solutions. There prevailed expectations of customizing the appearance of new buildings to the existing architectural landscape of the historic district. Design dilemmas were major issues in the development of reconstruction projects in accordance with historical landscape. The freedom to shape the architectural composition was accepted in modernist urban planning systems projects and modern architectural forms; however, it was limited within the framework of the convention of the new mainstream. **Intuitive** solutions within the historical urban ensemble belonged to the narrowed group of projects, prepared for the unique position of the new objects, mostly of special and functional interest; the privilege of developing these new projects belonged only to the most distinguished creators at that time.

4. The reconstruction of historical cities in poland after 1945

The most important aspect for the history and culture of Polish cities directly after the end of World War II was the decision to undertake a **complete reconstruction** of the shattered urban layout and architectural monuments – differently from the viewpoint regarding reconstruction policy present in the countries of Western Europe.

After the end of the German occupation, during the first National Conference of Art Historians in Poland (29 August – 01 September 1945 in Kraków, Poland) Polish conservators, architects and art historians – in the face of the deliberate destruction of monuments of Polish architectural culture – approved the main thesis presented by the contemporary General Conservator Jan Zachwatowicz; *We regard as unacceptable the extortion of our cultural monuments, we will reconstruct them, we will rebuild them from scratch, to show future generations, if not authentic, then at least in the exact form these monuments, that live in our memory, also we rebuild them from available building materials*⁹.

The reconstruction of historic urban complexes in Warsaw, Gdansk, Poznan, Wroclaw and other cities were exceptional in Europe after 1945, due to the scale of the ongoing restoration work to reproduce the appearance of the shattered cities¹⁰. The eloquent term “Polish historic preservation school”, popular in Europe, did not reflect the essence of the complex problem – the need to restore programmatically annihilated Polish national culture by the occupying forces in 1939–1945, which continued the *Kulturkampf* ideology in the area of the former Prussian partition.

In Poland after 1945, to the extraordinary scale of war damage there was a need for a complex range of extensive work that in the first stage concerned the restoration of the completely destroyed buildings, enabling their operation and development in subsequent decades. In the field of restoration programs undertaken in the destroyed historic cities, there were changes

⁹ J. Zachwatowicz, *Program i zasady konserwacji zabytków*, Biuletyn Historii Sztuki i Kultury, 1946, R. 1/2, p. 48–51.

¹⁰ *Zabytki urbanistyki i architektury w Polsce. Odbudowa i konserwacja*, t. 1. *Miasta historyczne*, ed. W. Zin, W. Kalinowski, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Arkady, 1986; E. Małachowicz, *Konserwacja i rewolucja architektury w środowisku kulturowym*, Wrocław, Oficyna Wydawnicza Politechniki Wrocławskiej, 2007, p. 327–349, 398–414; B. Rymaszewski, *Klucze ochrony zabytków w Polsce*, Ośrodek Dokumentacji Zabytków, Warszawa 1992; B. Rymaszewski, *O przetrwanie dawnych miast*, Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Arkady, 1984.

in the point of view of the representatives of historic preservation; the investment decisions were taken with regard to the complex problems of particular historic areas concerning the post-war reconstruction, since their different histories and lines of spatial development, their individual features of local architecture; and further in the mid-20th century the dissimilar scale of the destruction of the historic substance took place in different areas. Furthermore different conceptual design projects, concepts and trends in art (due to different views of the restorers, historians and art historians, architects – leaving aside the political context of the Communist Poland period) formulated compromise decisions; in particular: the reconstruction of non-existent objects (demolished decades before) in restoring spatial arrangement and the reconstruction of the space of the former centres in their artistic glory – while putting an emphasis on national culture and Polish heritage that was diminished in the 19th century by the partitioning powers; the authentic reconstruction of the shattered valuable monuments of architectural history; the restoration of the existing buildings of historical appearance (hidden by secondary and distorting reconstruction resulting in a compounding of different styles); providing historical quarters by removing objects that caused excessive concentration of urban design (primarily residential houses from the 19th century); the introduction of modern buildings (according to an appropriate standard and technological equipment); free-standing buildings in the direct surrounding area of the monuments.

The preservation issues were carried out to a large extent without any support of practical experience: to rescue the priceless monuments, in repairing damaged works of art, in the reconstruction of the historical centre along with the reconstruction of the most important monuments. The multilateral mission to rescue the devastated historical centres and the most valuable works of art led *society as a whole, in a natural way, to respond to the barbaric plans of the Nazi invaders, who not only had planned to destroy us as a nation, but also systematically cut off Polish culture and monuments of our past*¹¹. The attitude of Polish restorers was to develop viewpoints and positions to protect an architecture represented by the researchers in peacetime. In the face of different circumstances, after 1945, the scope of work was extended and activities that most widely *summarized the restoration issues*” which aimed at a noticeable participation of the past in contemporary life. *The restoration of historic urban centres, as this practice evidenced, was not only the result of close cooperation with preservation architects and urban planners, but also an expression of social demand. Thanks to the conditions created in the new Polish reality the monuments could be restored by means of assigning them a new content and an important social role*¹².

5. The restoration of Elbląg, Głogów, Kolobrzeg and Szczecin after 1989

In Poland another period of post-war reconstruction of historic towns with war damage has occurred together with the transformation in 1989 on the undeveloped areas of the ruined old neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, after 1945 no comprehensive work and no proper management started as a solid preparation of the reconstruction work. A period of economic

¹¹ H. Kondziela, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Stare Miasto w Poznaniu. Zniszczenia...* (op.cit.), p. 15.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 17.

and socio-political breakthrough enabled the construction of buildings by private investors. The economic situation and changes in ownership became the essential factors to restore elements of the historic structure. After the decades of centralized economy and state ownership in the Western and Northern historic parts of Poland there finally appeared the opportunity to purchase plots of land and the opportunity for individual owners to construct buildings (the principle of ownership and management was restored and reflected in the diversity of types and evolution of a stylish old architecture that aimed the patricians, merchants and entrepreneurs to distinguish them from the appearance of their residences). In Elbląg, Szczecin, and Kołobrzeg as well as in other Polish urban centres, during the changes in the state system, there were restoration programs set for the restoration of the historical spatial layouts of historic districts and the reconstruction of the appearance of the selected buildings. A leading reconstruction program was developed to rebuild the old city of Elbląg, that was further continued and developed (with adaptation to local circumstances) in Szczecin; this program was based on the experience of post-war decades of rebuilding the historic urban complexes, prepared on the basis of multilateral thorough research along with analysis by a panel of specialists. In Głogów and Kołobrzeg the rebuilding of objects in the oldest districts was carried out referring to the earliest street layouts, quarters and partial divisions shaping the development of the suggestive characteristics of the historical buildings; it was not according to an earlier set up program based on a choice to restore in detail the appearance of damaged facades. To ensure favourable housing conditions (access to sunlight), the urban plan anticipated the widening of old streets by changing the historical lines of the building frontage. The facades of the new building body suggested a section break according to historical ownership that did not reflect the original limits of ownership (known from preserved cadastral plans). The individualized projects of a new development arising within the limits of the old cities of Głogów and Kołobrzeg had no explicit references to archival iconographic and photographic transfers; the principle of restoring the old frames, height, roof shape, the top form of the demolished building was abandoned (given that this principle was meaningful for attempts to reproduce the original scale, the ambiance and the landscape of damaged historical urban complex).

In Elbląg and Szczecin¹³ the reconstruction of quarters and tenement buildings was carried out on the basis of maintenance guidelines giving the requirements based on an analysis of the data sources. The programs of preservation work were adjusted to local circumstances taking into account modern requirements and technological capabilities – that reflect the **reasonable** and multilateral research of a historical structure.

In Głogów and Kołobrzeg the appearance of designed modern buildings was associated with an **intuitive** composition, not determined by the requirements and restrictions that contain specific guidelines for preservation – as known as restoration of the historic layout reproducing the appearance of ancient architecture or direct referencing to its original and composite characteristics as well as formal and visual characteristics.

The examples of historical centres of old cities in Poland after 1989 – which have been widely accepted by residents and tourists – reflect applicable in the various regions of the country directions and investment programs tailored to local environment, history, culture,

¹³ M. Słomiński, *Szczecińskie Podzamcze. Staromiejska dzielnica nadodrzańska i jej odbudowa – kwartały XIV i XVII*, Wyd. Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa “Podzamcze”, Szczecin 1998.

economic potential and the expectations of society. This is a continuation of restoration programs carried out in Poland after 1945 as a reconstruction and “referring to historic grounds” the old development; at the same time both intuitive and rational directions of carried out investments in Elbląg¹⁴, Głogów, Kołobrzeg, Szczecin, indirectly develop the elements of the persisting doctrine of preservation of historical monuments. Those elements are the reference to the different (in comparison with the period directly after the end of World War II) conditions, existing at the turn of the 20th and 21st century¹⁵.

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¹⁵ P. Fiuk, *Architektura miasta odbudowanego. Wybrane przykłady: Elbląg, Głogów, Kołobrzeg, Szczecin na tle historycznym*, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Zachodniopomorskiego Uniwersytetu Technologicznego w Szczecinie, Szczecin 2017.

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