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## MEMORY OF THE CITY – LAYERS OF THE CITY. SPANISH EXAMPLES

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### PAMIĘĆ MIASTA – WARSTWY MIASTA. PRZYKŁADY HISZPAŃSKIE

#### Abstract

Some cities have incessantly teemed with life for centuries, even for millennia. Currently, the oldest inhabited urban settlements are deemed to be those located in the *Old World*. Their contemporary layouts are very different to how they were originally, this is very often hidden in relics which attest to the older layers. Searching for such layers is a fascinating task. Sometimes, they can be found in the layout of public spaces, or in the architecture of historic buildings and complexes. Others remain deeply concealed underneath the surface of streets, squares, pavements, and parks. Most frequently, the exposure of larger parts of the remains of old architectural and urban structures is not easy due to the need to secure efficient functioning of the contemporary urban tissue. Architectural and archaeological reserves established especially in Europe, help to restore the lost memory of the city by exhibiting its historic layers.

*Keywords: city lifespan, urban tissue, archaeological and architectural reserve, excavations, museum*

#### Streszczenie

Niektóre miasta nieprzerwanie tętnią życiem od wieków, nawet od tysiącleci. Obecnie za najstarsze wciąż zamieszkiwane miasta uważa się te położone w *Starym Świecie*. Ich współczesna struktura przestrzenna daleko odbiega od pierwotnych układów. Bardzo często ukrywa w sobie relikty świadczące o dawniejszych nawarstwieniach. Poszukiwanie tych warstw jest zajęciem fascynującym. Niekiedy można je odnaleźć w układzie przestrzeni publicznych czy w architekturze zabytkowych budynków i zespołów. Inne pozostają głęboko ukryte pod powierzchnią ulic, placów, chodników i parków. Najczęściej ekspozycja większych fragmentów pozostałości dawnych struktur architektoniczno-urbanistycznych nie jest łatwa ze względu na prawidłowe funkcjonowanie współczesnej tkanki miejskiej. Tworzone, zwłaszcza w Europie, rezerваты architektoniczno-archeologiczne pomagają w przywróceniu utraconej pamięci miasta poprzez ekspozycję jego historycznych warstw.

*Słowa kluczowe: trwanie miasta, tkanka urbanistyczna, rezerwat archeologiczno-architektoniczny, wykopaliska, muzeum*

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## 1. Introduction

We do not know for certain when the oldest towns came into being. In many sources<sup>1</sup> the prevailing opinion is that urban settlements that have been inhabited for the longest period of time are located mostly in the Middle East and are connected by the Mediterranean basin, and can be linked with the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. This is supported by data contained in the holy books of the Torah, the Bible, and the Quran. A relatively large number of documents attesting to this have also been preserved, especially in the form of newer extracts and copies or accounts written down sometimes even after centuries. These were stored and disseminated in different forms over subsequent millennia in the circles of Judeo-Christian culture, as well as from Asian and North African sources. Numerous relics of architecture and urban planning dating back to past epochs are still discernible in the landscape of cities of this region. Others have been discovered and popularised over the last three centuries during military campaigns<sup>2</sup> and more and more professional large-scale archaeological studies conducted in this region of the world<sup>3</sup>. The history of Jericho, documented by such research, undoubtedly dates back to 7800 BC, and it is Jericho that is believed to be one of the cities which have been inhabited for the longest period of time<sup>4</sup>. Perhaps a bit younger is Aleppo, recently severely damaged, where the oldest ruins discovered so far date back 'only' to 3000 BC<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, many other cities, also located in, more remote regions of Europe than the Mediterranean<sup>6</sup>, can be proud of shorter, but also centuries-long development, which has had its effect on their present spatial structure. Roman or medieval urban layouts determined the subsequent development of numerous towns and cities on the continent, and they constitute the heart of urban structures of different sizes to this day.

Using the example of two cities whose lineage is definitely shorter than that of Jericho, although still quite impressive, Zaragoza and Barcelona, this paper shall illustrate the problem of recovering the *memory of the city* lost due to subsequent accumulations of the urban tissue. Currently, thanks to archaeological research, part of this memory is being discovered anew.

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<sup>1</sup> Such as numerous encyclopaedias, as well as history books or books devoted to the history of architecture and urban planning popular in the countries of western civilisation (some of which are included in the references and further footnotes), which also constitute the foundation for the education of architects and town planners. The views presented in these, although supported by centuries-long literary, empirical or eventually archaeological studies may, or may not, be fully accurate, and in the world facing the reality of globalisation, they may be regarded as too Europocentric.

<sup>2</sup> Starting from the expedition of Napoleon Bonaparte to Egypt in 1798, symbolic in this respect (e.g. [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com) – access: 8.09.2016).

<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, many towns and cities in India and the Far East can most probably boast a similarly long history. The destructions caused by conquistadors in pre-Columbian cities forfeited the opportunity to get to know the earliest history of this part of the globe, perhaps forever. In spite of this, we can still find traces of ancient civilisations on the American continent, as well. Perhaps some of these are still hidden underneath the streets of the contemporary metropolises of this region.

<sup>4</sup> Jericho is also mentioned in the Bible as a city besieged by Israelites in 1250 BC – cf. [www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl](http://www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl) – access: 01.03.2016; Whereas according to [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com) (access: 05.03.2016) – the city could have been founded as early as ca 9000 BC

<sup>5</sup> [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com) – access: 25.06.2016.

<sup>6</sup> On which the Author wishes to focus in this paper.

Most often, the exposition of larger parts of the remains of former architectural and urban structures is not easy due to the need to secure the efficient functioning of contemporary urban fabric. Over recent decades, several European cities have organised exhibitions of the kind of *architectural and archaeological reserves*<sup>7</sup>. Thanks to these, the preserved relics of the old urban tissue help us to understand the *sense of the city* which may have been lost or misunderstood for centuries, and the logic of the urban form with which the contemporary users and explorers of towns contact on a daily basis.

## 2. *Caesaraugusta* vs. contemporary Zaragoza

Contemporary Zaragoza<sup>8</sup> is situated in a green valley of the middle course of the Ebro river, surrounded by desert mountains. Today, it is the capital of the autonomous province of Aragon – once a kingdom, which due to a King’s marriage was incorporated into the Kingdom of Castile and León in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, giving rise to modern-day Spain. In the spatial structure and the architecture of the city, one may discover traces of the rich and turbulent history of the Iberian Peninsula. Around 25 BC, the Iberian settlement of Salduba, which was located on the banks of Ebro river, was conquered by the armies of Caesar Augustus. The camp established on its ruins, whose importance as a crucial town in this part of the Empire grew very soon, was one of a few that were named after the conqueror – *Caesaraugusta*<sup>9</sup>, which in its modified form, has survived to this day. After the fall of the Roman Empire, the town frequently changed rulers to finally become the capital of the local Muslim state in 1039<sup>10</sup>, conquered by Alfonso I the Battler as soon as in 1118, when it became the capital of the Catholic Aragon<sup>11</sup>.

The urban layout of the centre of Zaragoza is obviously very different to its Roman prototype. Nevertheless the historic part of the city that constitutes the heart of the metropolis is situated on the southern bank of the river, fortified by Romans, and then by Moors and Catholic kings. Its shape was determined long ago by the fortification lines<sup>12</sup>, which

<sup>7</sup> A term popularised in Polish scientific literature devoted to architecture and urban planning, especially by Professors: Andrzej Kadłuczka and Klaudia Stala – Cf. References.

<sup>8</sup> Zaragoza is Spain’s sixth largest urban agglomeration; the population of the city along with the adjacent areas amounts to ca 730,000 inhabitants (2011). It is also an important centre of industry, business, university education and culture; it administers a complex traffic hub of international importance. Thanks to the world exhibition held in Zaragoza in 2008 (ExpoAqua Zaragoza) many large-scale revitalisation projects were implemented in the city, Cf. [10, 29], [www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl](http://www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl); [www.zaragoza.es](http://www.zaragoza.es) – access: 10.09.2016.

<sup>9</sup> The founding of the city and the privilege of granting it with a complete name of the Emperor dates back to 23.12.14 BC [www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com); [www.zaragoza.es](http://www.zaragoza.es) – access: on 24.04.2016.

<sup>10</sup> The most splendid relic of that period is Palacio de Aljaferia, soaring over the western part of the historic centre, surrounded by gardens, reduced to minimum after implementation of the contemporary traffic system – e.g. [www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl](http://www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl); [www.zaragoza.es](http://www.zaragoza.es) – access: 10.09.2016.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Initially Roman (currently preserved only in small fragments) but also medieval, and this line was not crossed by the urban city until the beginnings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – <http://planosympasdearagon.blogspot.com> – access: 7.09.2016.

were absorbed by later development and repeated in the road system. Some monuments of antiquity are still visible today, both inside edifices reconstructed many times over the ages, and outside, in public space, embedded in the walls of numerous buildings, or left as ruins.



Ill. 1, 2. Contemporary exposition of the remains of Roman defense system, Saragossa  
(photo by M. Gyurkovich)

After the demolition of the fortifications in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city was developing predominantly towards the south-west, and also<sup>13</sup> on the northern bank of the Ebro, based on subsequent extension plans<sup>14</sup>, of which the plan from 1934 should be recognised as the most important. Although its implementation was interrupted by the Spanish civil war, the later plans introduced in the late 1930s and the early 1940s reflected partly the provisions of the abovementioned plan from 1934. The most painful change in the urban layout of the historic city centre, full of narrow winding backstreets and small piazzas which were a record of the memory of the city's history, was brought about by the planning of the first years of the fascist dictatorship. The large numbers of bombastic monumental public facilities and spaces that



Ill. 3. Theatre Museum, Saragossa (photo by A. Matusik)

was desired by the authorities for ideological reasons entailed providing cars and public transport with access to the historic city centre<sup>15</sup>.

The element of the plan from 1942 that was the most visible in the dense historic tissue was the monumental square, Plaza del Pilar, in the foreground of Europe's oldest shrine to Our Lady, Basilica Santa Maria del Pilar<sup>16</sup>. Actually, it is an extension of a piazza bearing the

<sup>13</sup> Apart from a rather small stronghold of the city existing in the vicinity of the oldest bridge on the Ebro (today it is Puente de Piedra from the 15<sup>th</sup> century) since the Middle Ages – this area was urbanised predominantly in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and in modern times.

<sup>14</sup> Such plans, following the example of Barcelona and Madrid, have been developed since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and one of the first crucial stimuli to the change of the existing state was the organisation of the French-Spanish exhibition in Zaragoza in 1908. Due to this event, many new buildings were erected and many green areas were organised – [www.zaragoza.es](http://www.zaragoza.es); [www.perso.wanadoo.es/zaragozaantigua/sigloxx.html](http://www.perso.wanadoo.es/zaragozaantigua/sigloxx.html) – access 8.09.2016; [25].

<sup>15</sup> Plan de Reforma Interior from 1942 – *ibid*.

<sup>16</sup> The basilica is located on the bank of the Ebro in a place where, according to legend, Our Lady appeared to St. James the Apostle on 12.10.0040 – the current form of the temple with dimensions of 130 m × 67 m crowned with 4 towers and 11 domes, was erected in the period 1681–1754, in the place of former churches erected around a small shrine with a statue of Our Lady on a jasper column – <http://www.basilicadelpilar.es>, also – [www.zaragoza.es](http://www.zaragoza.es) – access: 10.02.2016.



III. 4. Plaza del Pilar, Saragossa, view towards Plaza de la Seo (photo by M. Gyurkovich)

same name, situated there since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, orientated parallel to the longer, southern side of the basilica. By the demolition of the city quarters this space was linked to Plaza de Cezar Augustó from the west near the church of San Juan de los Panetes, and from the east with Plaza de la Seo, closed with a beautiful cathedral<sup>17</sup>. The sequence of urban interiors open to each other spanning nearly 0.5 km from the side of the river is encased predominantly by monumental historic structures, including churches, the city hall, and the archbishop's palace and the southern frontage is composed mostly of buildings from the 1940s, emphasised with a pompous geometric colonnade. Today, it is the largest hardened representational public square of Zaragoza, rich in statues and fountains<sup>18</sup>, hiding relics of the previous epochs underneath its surface.

Paradoxically, the demolitions carried out in the 20<sup>th</sup> century created new opportunities for the modern exhibition of the oldest Roman relics of Caesaraugusta. In the 1990s, the local municipal authorities decided to restore parts of the still accessible remains of the Roman city and organise a tourist route dubbed *Ruta de Caesaraugusta*. This was to enable

<sup>17</sup> La Catedral San Salvador o *la Seo* – erected and extended since the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a largely Gothic temple, with a tall belfry from the west, very richly furnished, which at the same time is a necropolis of the rulers of Aragon – [www.zaragoza.es](http://www.zaragoza.es) – access: 10.02.2016.

<sup>18</sup> With the fountain designed by arch. Ricardo Ursón Garcia within the scheme of the revitalisation of this space in the period 1989–1992 [9], called *la Fuente de la Hispanidad (The Source of Spanishness)* – a monumental composition of stone and water, depicting a geometric outline of Latin America – Our Lady of the Pillar from the local cathedral is regarded as the patron saint of not only Spain, but also the entire Spanish speaking world – <http://www.basilicadelpilar.es> – access: 12.06.2016.

visitors to get familiar with the functioning of the Roman city that had been located at the site of Zaragoza in a possibly legible way through the interesting exhibition of the ruins dispersed around the historic city centre, constituting the remains of the fortification system, trade and public facility buildings, as well as buildings connected with the transportation system – this includes relics of the river port which was extremely important for the development of the city at that time<sup>19</sup>. The route encompasses two rather small preserved fragments of Roman walls, located on opposite sides of the city centre, more or less at the height of Plaza del Pilar, and four museums, or rather *architectural and archaeological reserves* with parts of the ruins carefully displayed. The first facility to open was the Forum Museum (*Museo del Foro*) (1995), the next were the Museum of Public Baths (1999), the River Port Museum (2000), and the Theatre Museum (2003), which is mostly an enormous roof over the partly preserved ruins of a Roman theatre. This exhibition formula enjoys great interest on the part of visitors, thanks to which, *Ruta de Caesaraugusta* is visited by ca 2 million people per year<sup>20</sup>.

The Forum Museum combines properties of a contemporary top quality architectural creation along with preservation and *in situ* exposition of relics of the urban layout from the times of the greatest splendour of *Caesaraugusta*, during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. Thus, it is extremely interesting from the point of view of the considerations of this paper. Under the surface of Plaza de la Seo, the museum exhibits relics of the Roman forum – the heart of the then city – discovered during excavations carried out in 1988–1991. As the results of the archaeological research were not known in advance, the design of the exhibition and its architectural frame<sup>21</sup> constantly evolved. Finally, two underground halls were built, where, in comparison to the initial project, small parts of the preserved structures of the forum planned at the time of Augustus and completed during the reign of Tiberius were exhibited. The remaining part, which is presented on a model displayed in one of the exhibition halls and in the plans displayed in the museum, is either located underneath the later, still standing, structures, or was destroyed during their erection. A small part of the forum<sup>22</sup>, along with the waterfront of the Roman port, was also displayed in a similar way in the small River Port Museum on the Ebro. It demonstrates the special location of the forum in *Caesaraugusta* – it was not situated at the crossing point of *Cardo* and *Decumanus*, as was the case in other Roman cities, but it was closer to the river due to the enormous significance of the port for the city. Perhaps this sort of location was also dictated by other reasons which are thus far unknown.

The structure of the new architectural setting of the museum differs significantly in terms of material from the preserved and exhibited relics. The dominating materials still remain crude, reinforced concrete<sup>23</sup>, steel and glass. The exhibition halls, although designed tastefully

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.zaragoza.es/ciudad/museos/ruta-caesaraugusta.html> – access: 12.06.2016.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> *Developed in the local design studio, the owner and main designer of which is arch. José Manuel Pérez Latorre. The website of this studio still displays photographs from the construction works on the structure which was then dubbed Museo de la Historia de la Ciudad – Foro Romano Hall.* <http://www.jmplatorre.es> (access: April – September 2016).

<sup>22</sup> The corner of the rectangular structure opposite the one displayed in the Forum Museum.

<sup>23</sup> Due to the proper protection of the excavations and the nearby monuments, the cathedral and the palace of archbishops, and also owing to the pressure and penetration of water from the nearby river, very large cross-sections of reinforced concrete structural elements were used, which is visible inside the museum and is somewhat overwhelming for the exhibition.



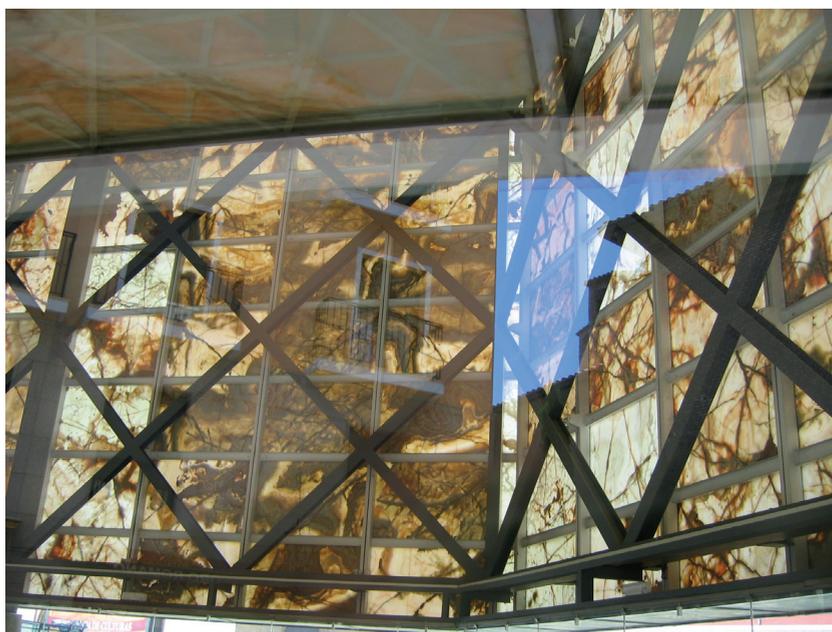
III. 5. Plaza de la Seo with Forum Museum as seen from Plaza del Pilar  
(photo by M. Gyurkovich)



III. 6. Forum Museum at Plaza de La Seo  
(photo by M. Gyurkovich)



III. 7–8. Stone wall of the museum frames the views towards the cathedral (7) and Basilica del Pilar (8)  
(photo by M. Gyurkovich)



III. 9. The detail of the steel structure supporting the alabaster wall of the Forum Museum in Saragossa  
(photo by M. Gyurkovich)

and with great respect for the heritage that is preserved in them, are actually nothing really special. What is unique, however, is the entrance pavilion to the underground museum premises, built at Plaza de la Seo, right in front of the elevation of the cathedral<sup>24</sup>. Maintained in the minimalist aesthetics cube shaped and rhomboidal in its projection, it reaches a little higher than the second floor of the nearby tenements. Due to such a considerable size, the structure seems to be an important volume in the space of the piazza in front of the cathedral<sup>25</sup>. Despite that, since Plaza de la Seo is merely an annex to the monumental Plaza del Pilar, the building is regarded just as a feature, and not a dominant, thanks to the larger perspective. The walls of the building at the ground floor level are glazed across their entire surface, displaying its interior. The taller portion, completely empty and opened towards the space of the ground floor is lined<sup>26</sup> with enormous slabs of alabaster, suspended on a steel structure supported by four monumental reinforced concrete posts. Orange and brown veins in the semi-transparent white alabaster correspond to the colours of the historic edifices that surround the facility. At the same time, alabaster as a material irresistibly evokes associations with the art and architecture of ancient Rome.

The memory and the sense of the city has been restored on multiple layers in the centre of Zaragoza. The modern shape of the entrance pavilion is their creative continuation, being a characteristic form which strongly stands out against the historic urban tissue. The alabaster cube builds interesting tension between what used to be, what is, and what perhaps will happen – at the same time, it addresses the most valuable monuments of Zaragoza located around it, and underneath it, with great respect.

### 3. Revitalisation of Mercat del Born in Barcelona

Barcelona<sup>27</sup>, most probably founded by the Phoenicians or the Carthaginians in a natural harbour, in a similar manner to Zaragoza, in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC found itself under Roman rule and called *Barcino*. The traces of this stage of the city's development can still be seen in its urban structure and the form of some public spaces in the oldest part of *Ciudad Vella*, as well as in parts of Roman walls and buildings embedded in the later architectural structures and complexes<sup>28</sup>. However, it is not the traces of the earliest urban history of the capital of Catalonia<sup>29</sup> that is the subject matter of the considerations contained in this paper.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. also Ph.D. dissertation on the history of arts by [21].

<sup>25</sup> Rather small Plaza de la Seo.

<sup>26</sup> On its the sides as well as on the top.

<sup>27</sup> Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, Spain's second largest city (the agglomeration is inhabited by ca 4.5 million – 4.8 million people, depending on the adopted delimitation). The currently operating administrative structure that administers the metropolitan area (or at least its central part, if metropolis is to be understood in a broader context) is the *Area Metropolitana de Barcelona*, established in 2011, which apart from Barcelona, includes 35 other smaller and larger towns. The continuity of urban and traffic structures is nearly totally uninterrupted over this entire area. [www.bcn.cat](http://www.bcn.cat); [www.enciclopedia.cat](http://www.enciclopedia.cat); [web.gencat.cat](http://web.gencat.cat) – access: 14.03.2016, as well as many titles quoted in the references.

<sup>28</sup> Very good sources of knowledge on the early history of Barcelona are numerous publications. From quoted in the references, e.g.: [1, 6] and most of all [26].

<sup>29</sup> The contemporary transformations of which the author has tackled in his research for years now and to which he has devoted many publications, [12, 13]; The Roman traces themselves are excellently

What is equally important for the preservation of the identity and continuity of the memory of the city are subsequent modern accumulations which then became obliterated by buildings and public spaces that came into being over the following epochs.

The bloody war of the Spanish Succession that was waged in the period 1701–1714, and in which many European states were also engaged<sup>30</sup>, was in fact a war of dominance not only on the Iberian Peninsula, but on the entire continent, and also worldwide via vast Spanish colonies. The destruction resulting from the war affected many cities, including Barcelona. The battle for the city ended after a thirteen-month siege. The Catalan defenders, favouring the Habsburgs, were defeated and the country found itself under the occupation of the army of the French Bourbons. So as to emphasise their power, the conquerors strengthened the existing fortifications and erected a monumental star-shaped citadel in the vicinity of the port, at the base of the Barceloneta peninsula. The troops settled there along with the garrison maintained in the former castle (also reconstructed) on the top of Montjuic were to control the strategically important port of Barcelona, as well as the revolting inhabitants of Barcelona confined within the city walls<sup>31</sup>. For the purposes of the construction of the new fortress, the occupants, who were now the new rulers of Spain by way of a royal decree of King Phillip V Bourbon<sup>32</sup> in 1714, razed to the ground a considerable part of the existing urban tissue. Over 1200 buildings were demolished, 40 streets in the district of La Ribera were liquidated<sup>33</sup>. The citadel was completed in 1727 and for a long time, it became a symbol of oppression and repressions. In the period 1854–1859 work connected with the extension plan commenced<sup>34</sup>. The plan assumed the demolition of defensive walls and increasing the area covered by the city ten times. The citadel, however, started to be demolished only ten years later, in 1869. Slowly, its site was taken over by new urban tissue, technical and traffic infrastructure (roads and a railway line), and a considerable part of the area was allocated to greenery, which became the scene for the World Exhibition in 1888<sup>35</sup>. To the west of the park complex<sup>36</sup>, several quarters of the district of La Ribera were revived, and among them, in 1876 a building of one of the great municipal market halls was erected, Mercat del Born.

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exposed in the city [16], also currently available in a digital form thanks to the project developed by CPSV UPC Barcelona-Tech – <http://www.upc.edu/cpsv> – access: 27.02.2015.

<sup>30</sup> England, France, Austria, Holland, Prussia, Spain, Bavaria, and even the Papal State and their allies, less important in the great European politics. It can be easily stated that as for those times, it was truly a world war – cf. [www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl](http://www.encyklopedia.pwn.pl) – access: 11.09.2016.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. [26].

<sup>32</sup> Who took over the throne in Madrid under the treaty in Utrecht in 1714.

<sup>33</sup> The port district of Barcelona, La Ribera, prospered most of all in the Middle Ages, before the period when Barcelona and the Mediterranean trade carried out in the ports of the city lost its significance. Later there were Cádiz and Seville, which has built their growth on the trade with Spanish colonies in the New World – Cf. e.g.: [24]; [1].

<sup>34</sup> The orthogonal plan of *Eixample* from 1859, the designer of which was Ildefonso Cerdà, was the prototype for similar solutions in other Spanish towns. Besides a bulky theoretical study of Cerdà himself, the plan has been the subject matter of numerous scientific studies and has been discussed in detail in many publications. References to it are made in many titles included in the list of references here, also by the author.

<sup>35</sup> Today it is Parc de La Ciutadella.

<sup>36</sup> Designed by Josep Fontserè Mestres and Josep M<sup>o</sup> Cornet y Mas in the years 1873–1888 – [24]; also [www.caceresarquitectes.com](http://www.caceresarquitectes.com) – access: 22.07.2016.



Ill. 10. Barcelona, Passeig del Born – view towards Santa Maria del Mar cathedral  
(photo by M. Gyurkovich)



Ill. 11. Barcelona, Mercat del Born converted into the Cultural Centre as seen  
from the Passeig del Born (photo by M. Gyurkovich)

The market was played a role of compositional enclosure and the culmination of the promenade running from the church of Santa Maria del Mar<sup>37</sup> – Passeig del Born<sup>38</sup>. This monumental edifice made of cast iron and glass<sup>39</sup>, similar to many other buildings of the type that came into being in metropolises at the time, was one of the first such structures in Spain. It probably remains the largest facility of the type erected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Barcelona which has been preserved to the present day. The market hall fulfilled its commercial functions until 1971 when it was planned that it should be closed and demolished. Eventually, due to large number of social protests, it was decided to reconstruct it as a library.

The preparatory and designing works took many years – this was caused by the socio-political situation and economic conditions on one hand, and the progressing archaeological research on the other. The competition organised in 1998 was won by a team of Catalan architects: Rafael de Cáceres Zurita and Enric Sória Badia. The original version of the design, developed by the end of 2002, planned the adaptation of the market hall to premises of the national library<sup>40</sup> with spacious storage rooms, large reading rooms and common spaces, as well as private multifunctional rooms, together with the administration and technical premises necessary for the operation of such an institution. The first version of the design assumed the erection of a structure, independent from the existing hall, which would house this fairly complex functional programme, part of which was to be placed on underground floors.

During the construction works in 2002, extremely valuable foundations of the medieval development of La Ribera were discovered underneath a cast iron structure of the market hall. For reasons relating to their preservation, the initial concept had to be abandoned and an appropriate method of exhibiting this important archaeological discovery had to be developed. Due to these circumstances, the design of the functional project of the library had to be limited accordingly. Therefore, the architects from *Cáceres Arquitectes* prepared another design – a study of the compatibility of the functions of a regional library with the preserved parts of archaeological excavations, displaying the layout of the urban tissue from before 1714. It turned out that the preserved structure of the ground floors of the former city blocks<sup>41</sup> illustrated the evolution of the Barcelona medieval city much better than the still standing tissue of other districts, developed over the centuries<sup>42</sup>, contaminated with later layers. Thus, it turned out to be a true revelation in the scale of the entire city. Therefore the study of compatibility proposed independent entrances to the zone of exhibition of the excavations and to the zone of the library. It became necessary to find a new location for the storage rooms of books and documents, which initially had been planned to be predominantly located on the underground floor and the ground floor. The functions of the library were

<sup>37</sup> Gothic church, erected upon the initiative of King Jaume II in the period 1324–1379 as a cathedral – a symbol of the maritime and trade power of Catalonia – *ibid*.

<sup>38</sup> Quite a wide square, today with lines of trees in the middle, formerly a place of medieval equestrian tournaments.

<sup>39</sup> The author of the design was also Josep Fontserè Mestres – *ibid*.

<sup>40</sup> Of the total floor area of 18532 m<sup>2</sup>, the investor was the Catalan Ministry of Education [www.caceresarquitectes.com](http://www.caceresarquitectes.com) – access: 22.07.2016.

<sup>41</sup> In 1714, the city inhabitants had to deconstruct their houses themselves and carry the material to the construction site of the Citadel, so as to leave the area empty, what then remained were the underground levels and the low portions of walls of the ground floors – [24, 26].

<sup>42</sup> Districts within the perimeter of the old city walls – Ciutat Vella, from before the reform of *Eixample*.



Ill. 12. Plan of the destroyed part of La Ribera district on the background of old Barcelona (left). The position of Mercat del Born shows how little of the former urban tissue is presented in the exhibition (right) (photo by M. Gyurkovich)

designed to be across several floors – platforms suspended on a structure which did not interfere with the newly discovered ruins and the delicate cast iron structure of the hall of Mercat del Born. Nevertheless, eventually this version, very costly and controversial<sup>43</sup>, did not become realised.

After subsequent concerns over the next few years, the building was finally taken over by the city<sup>44</sup> and the third stage of the design of the rehabilitation of Mercat del Born commenced. The concept based on the adaptation of the building for the needs of a library was abandoned as it was considered to be both excessively complicated in the current situation, and too expensive. In the final version<sup>45</sup>, a hybrid cultural centre was organised in the old market hall, in which the unique architectural setting was given priority over the complicated functional programme. On one hand, the setting is provided by a glazed cast iron hall, which is a true masterpiece of its epoch, and on the other, the carefully preserved and excellently displayed ruins of the old Barcelona. Nearly the entire ground floor along the main axis of the hall has been completely released from any functions and devoted to the exhibition of the architectural

<sup>43</sup> As far as the clarity of the exhibition of archaeological relics and the nineteenth-century hall is concerned.

<sup>44</sup> Instead of the provincial authorities, the municipality became the investor in this project.

<sup>45</sup> Developed in the years 2006–2012 by a designing team managed by the authors of the previous concepts, within the scheme of the same design studio. The progress of the works and the constant changes of the concept resulting from the discoveries made on an ongoing basis and decisions taken on the spot are described in detail on the website of the office – [www.caceresarquitectes.com](http://www.caceresarquitectes.com) – access: 22.07.2016.



Ill. 13–16. Archeological site within the Mercat del Born as the prolongation of the public space of the city of Barcelona (photo by M. Gyurkovich)

and archaeological relics. Multifunctional halls and a coffee shop with a reading room, as well as administration facilities, are housed in glass boxes in four corners of the market hall. This corresponds to the spatial structure of the initial market hall. The total integration of the internal covered space accessible to the public with the public spaces of the city corresponds to the latest tendencies in this respect<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>46</sup> Discussed in numerous publications, also by the author: [12]; *The Born Cultural Centre is a civic space and a covered plaza that connects the La Ribera district and Ciutatella Park, through a continuous passage from Passeig del Born and the Plaça Comerç until it opens to Passeig Picasso* – [www.mercatdelborn.org/el-born-cultural-center](http://www.mercatdelborn.org/el-born-cultural-center) – access: 1.08.2016.



Ill. 17. El Born Cultural Center seen from the site of Parc de La Ciutadella (photo by M. Gyurkovich)

This structure received an award of the city of Barcelona for the year 2013; it also housed historic celebrations commemorating the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the defeat from the year 1714. Over thirty years of work on the revitalisation of the edifice of the nineteenth-century market hall Mercat del Born, were combined with large-scale archaeological and architectural studies; all the design-related decisions were largely dictated by these studies. At the end of the day, the building, put into use in 2014, serves as a reminder of the traumatic history of the city, and at the same time, it introduces new life to the historic architectural structure, which was abandoned for decades and is of unique historic value.

#### 4. Summary

The examples presented in this paper are an illustration of a broader tendency which can be observed in numerous European cities over previous decades<sup>47</sup>. They demonstrate the evolution of the approach to the problem of exhibiting architectural relics and preserving ruins in a relatively efficient manner. Aforetime, next to open air exhibitions, parts of the excavations could be covered with roofing<sup>48</sup> or surrounded by new museum buildings. Today, visitors have access to preserved fragments of the old urban tissue more and more often – these fragments had been long hidden underneath the surface of streets and squares, as well as under existing buildings. Archaeological excavations can reveal the previously unknown history of cities (and not necessarily the earliest periods, as the example of Barcelona shows); therefore, they are indispensable for getting to know the evolution of urban structures [27].

<sup>47</sup> To the author of this paper, the example that is most dear is of course that of the *Market Square Underground Museum in Cracow* (designed by A. Kadłuczka with his team), extensively discussed in the source literature, e.g.: [11, 12, 18].

<sup>48</sup> This principle is also adopted in the Theatre Museum within *Ruta de Caesar Augusta* referred to above.

Exhibitions with the characteristics of *architectural and archaeological reserves* help us to understand the logic of the current urban form and its identity; to discover and disseminate the lost memory of the city. It happens with no detriment to the functioning of the city, moreover, it is extremely beneficial for the city.

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