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HISTORICAL BUILDINGS OF THE POZNAN AGGLOMERATION AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

HISTORYCZNA ZABUDOWA AGLOMERACJI POZNAŃSKIEJ I JEJ RELACJE Z ARCHITEKTURĄ WSPÓŁCZESNĄ

Abstract

The Poznan agglomeration is currently a place of rapid expansion of residential buildings. Apart from spatial, social, economic and ecological problems, this process results in the disappearance of historical buildings and traditional urban structures. The lack of design patterns, especially those based on traditional architecture can be observed.

This paper describes complex relations between old and new buildings in the Poznan agglomeration. It presents unfavourable examples of contemporary houses constructed in historical locations but also shows a positive trends in designing new buildings, whose architecture refers to old forms and construction techniques.

An important aim of this work is to define the traditional and contemporary architecture of Greater Poland.

Keywords: contemporary architecture, traditional architecture, Poznan agglomeration

Streszczenie

Obecnie aglomeracja poznańska jest miejscem gwałtownego rozwoju zabudowy mieszkalnej. Oprócz problemów przestrzennych, społecznych, ekonomicznych i ekologicznych proces ten powoduje zanikanie historycznej zabudowy i tradycyjnych struktur urbanistycznych. Brakuje wzorców architektonicznych, szczególnie opartych na tradycyjnej zabudowie.

W niniejszym artykule zaprezentowane zostaną skomplikowane relacje między starą i nową zabudową aglomeracji poznańskiej. Przedstawione zostaną niekorzystne przykłady współczesnych budynków powstających na miejscu historycznych. W opozycji do nich ukazane zostaną nowe realizacje, których architektura nawiązuje do historycznych form architektonicznych i dawnych umiejętności budowlanych.

Ważnym elementem pracy będzie odpowiedź na pytanie, czym jest tradycyjna i współczesna architektura Wielkopolski.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura współczesna, architektura tradycyjna, aglomeracja poznańska

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1. INTRODUCTION

Spatial disarray is a phenomenon which has been affecting most of the territory of Poland for many years. Intensification of this unfavourable process was a consequence of economic and social changes initiated in the last decade of the 20th century. Spatial chaos and its consequences have been the subject of scientific research for years. Among the most frequent reasons for its occurrence are demographic processes and erroneous planning conditions, as well as a low level of aesthetic awareness and reluctance of the Polish society and, consequently, a departure from the strict aesthetic and design rules characteristic of the construction industry from the times of the Polish People's Republic.

Currently, suburban areas are particularly vulnerable to spatial problems due to rapid suburbanisation processes. For example, between 2010–2013, the average increase in the housing stock in municipalities of the Poznań County amounted to 2–3% per annum. *The biggest quantitative changes [...] were reported in the following municipalities: Dopiewo, Kleszczewo, Komorniki and Kórnik. In these municipalities, the change reached on average about 5% year³. Unfavourable spatial processes also result from designation of an excessive number of areas for development, especially housing, by local governments. Research confirms that demographic absorption of such areas indicated in planning documents of a large part of local government units exceeds even ten times the number of residents of the municipality, causing spatial chaos and waste of space and capital⁴. Irresponsible spatial management results in deconcentration of settlements and dispersion of buildings, and as a result it causes and intensifies social, economic and environmental problems.*

In addition to the abovementioned consequences of spatial disorder, there is another unfavourable phenomenon, which is sporadically the subject of scientific research. Rapid development of new residential buildings, particularly in suburban areas, whose forms are often the result of periodical trends and very rarely make a reference to the surroundings or local building traditions, leading to the disappearance of historical buildings in those areas. High costs of maintenance or modernization of old buildings, which usually exceed the resources required to build new facilities, mean that traditional buildings often deteriorate or are simply replaced with cheaper designs adapted to modern technical and functional requirements. Sometimes historical buildings are visually lost under the burden of a large number of modern buildings. Sometimes the oldest structures lose their spatial potential in this way, and sometimes they even no longer fit or even interfere with neighbouring new buildings. The lack of formal connections between historical and contemporary construction creates *an unpleasant effect of style disintegration or even cultural schizophrenia*, and yet the *landscape of each region constitutes a unique spatial arrangement of natural and cultural elements, which accumulate over subsequent historical epochs⁵*. Ignorance of his-

³ Matusiak M., Palicki S., Strączkowski Ł., *Stan i kierunki rozwoju mieszkalnictwa w Metropolii Poznań*, Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Poznań 2017, p. 30.

⁴ Kowalewski A., Mordasewicz J., Osiatyński J., Regulski J., Stępień J., Śleszyński P., *Raport o ekonomicznych stratach i społecznych kosztach niekontrolowanej urbanizacji w Polsce*, Fundacja Rozwoju Demokracji Lokalnej, Instytut Geografii i Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania im. S. Leszczyckiego PAN, Warszawa 2013, p. 3.

⁵ Chmielewski T. J., Śleszyński P., Chmielewski S., Kułak A., *Estetyczne koszty chaosu przestrzennego* [in:] Kowalewski A., Markowski T., Śleszyński P. (eds.), *Koszty chaosu przestrzennego*, Polska Akademia Nauk Komitet Przestrzennego Zagospodarowania Kraju, Warszawa 2018, p. 386.

torical design patterns is characteristic of all participants in the construction process, from investors to those for whom spatial order should be a priority, i.e. architects, planners, state and local government officials. As a result, incorrect planning documents are created that do not utilise the potential of local building traditions. This indifference also causes the emergence of neutral architecture, i.e. buildings that do not refer to the existing spatial context, neither formally nor in terms of urban planning. However, the biggest problem seems to be the lack of awareness of the existence of patterns and experiences related to traditional buildings in particular regions of Poland, which is probably due to a small number of studies describing such the buildings, as well as their poor accessibility for the public and a general lack of interest in the subject.

The aim of this paper is to attempt to answer the question of how traditional and contemporary architecture can be defined and characterized, especially in the area of the Poznań agglomeration. An important element of the article is to show the relationship between historical and contemporary buildings in the area. Unfavourable relations between modern and historical buildings are presented, but particular emphasis is placed on presenting examples of correct and desirable relations.

The observations and conclusions included in this study are the result of many years of research conducted by the authors on the development of suburban areas, and the information contained herein was obtained on the basis of research conducted on source literature, planning documents and the authors' own search for buildings, both historical and contemporary, with special cultural and landscape characteristics.

2. TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE

Characterizing traditional architecture in the Poznań agglomeration is not an easy task, because for centuries it has been a place of clashing and mixing of different cultures. Especially German settlers, but also Jewish, Czech, Italian and even Bulgarian and Greek settlers have left their mark on this area. Over the years, these people have transformed and usually enriched the local culture. In this respect, the newcomers who settled in the 16th and 17th century on the basis of the laws of the Olęder settlements were particularly noteworthy – through deforestation, introduction of new agricultural systems and by using their construction skills, they left a special mark on the landscape of Wielkopolska. It was shaped both by the years of peace and by the wars, partitions and occupations that affected this area over the centuries. The centuries-old multiculturalism of the region and its turbulent fate mean that today it is difficult to clearly distinguish traditional Polish or even Wielkopolska-style buildings in this area, especially taking into account rural residential buildings. In the Poznań agglomeration and Wielkopolskie Voivodeship, there are over 1,200 castles, palaces and manors, part of which was designed in the so-called national style, there are also over 200 traditional sacred buildings, however, due to their unique role in the traditional rural landscape and their high representativeness, these buildings may not constitute a proper reference for the modern residential architecture of suburban areas, which is the dominant style in buildings currently being erected in the Poznań agglomeration. Unfortunately, the number of historical houses and rural homesteads in the area is much lower. There are only 78 of such buildings in the

register of monuments of Wielkopolskie Voivodeship, 38 of which are located in a single village called Gołęczewo and which are typically Prussian buildings⁶. The remaining ones date back mainly to the 19th century, i.e. to the times of the partitions, when the Polish state did not exist. The oldest examples of Wielkopolska-style residential buildings can now be seen in open-air architectural museums, e.g. in the Wielkopolska Ethnographic Park in Dziekanowice, where one can find mainly homesteads and cottages from the nineteenth and twentieth century, but the oldest building was erected at the beginning of the 17th century. However, also in that case references to tradition are incomplete, as these buildings were removed from their original surroundings and are now part of an artificial landscape only inspired by history.

Perhaps it can be considered that an example of traditional architecture are also buildings built after World War II, as, after all, over 70 years have now passed since its end. Encyclopedia PWN defines tradition as: *cultural content passed down from one generation to another (customs, views, beliefs, ways of thinking and behaving, norms of conduct, etc.) recognized by a given community (nation, people) as socially important for its present and future*⁷. If, therefore, we assume that one generation lasts about 27 years (according to research, at that age Polish women give birth to their first child)⁸, then the third generation since the end of the war is now alive. From this point of view, post-war buildings can be a cultural element passed down from generation to generation, although even in that context there are doubts as to which of them are socially significant for the national or regional community. Certainly, post-war historical buildings could be considered such buildings, but the register of monuments for municipalities of the Poznań agglomeration does not include any houses or homesteads from that period.

In the light of the above considerations, a question arises whether multiculturalism and centuries of partitions validate the use of a notion of traditional Polish architecture or construction. It seems more appropriate to use the term “historical buildings” and this term will also be used in this article, although further considerations will show that drawing a distinction between historical and contemporary buildings is not an easy task either.

Słownik 100 tysięcy potrzebnych słów edited by J. Bralczyk defines contemporariness as *present times*, as well as the *occurrence of some facts and events at the same time*⁹. The above definition can be interpreted in two ways in relation to contemporary buildings. It can refer to buildings which were constructed in the times of currently living people, which in many cases would mean during the Second World War and after it. This approach is still very popular and used in many architectural research projects. However, we should ask ourselves whether, according to the second interpretation, post-war years can still be considered as present times. Doubts in this case concern not only buildings completed just after World War II,

⁶ *Rejestr zabytków nieruchomości województwa wielkopolskiego*, http://www.nid.pl/pl/Informacje_ogolne/Zabytki_w_Polsce/rejestr-zabytkow/zestawienia-zabytkow-nieruchomych/WLK-rej.pdf (access: 22.05.2019).

⁷ Kofman J., Petrozolin-Skowrońska B. (ed.), *Encyklopedia Popularna PWN*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, 1994 p. 537.

⁸ Stańczak J., Stelmach K., Urbanowicz M., *Małżeństwa oraz dzietność w Polsce*, <https://stat.gov.pl/obszary-tematyczne/ludnosc/ludnosc/malzenstwa-i-dzietnosc-w-polsce,23,1.html> (access: 02.06.2019).

⁹ Bralczyk J. (ed.), *Słownik 100 tysięcy potrzebnych słów*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2008, p. 929.

but even so-called cube houses – single-family residential dwellings commonly found in the landscapes of Polish cities and villages in the 1960's and 1970's. From this perspective, buildings constructed after the political changes in 1989 would be closer to the definition of contemporary architecture. Apart from taking different structural forms, different materials, usually of a better quality, were used to build them. They also featured functional systems more suited to the requirements of the present day.

In accordance with the above interpretation, the present work assumes that contemporary buildings are structures created in the 1990's and in the 21st century, while any earlier structures are considered historical buildings.

3. RELATIONS BETWEEN CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORICAL ARCHITECTURE

As mentioned in the introduction to this paper, the Poznań agglomeration is a place where, due to the very rapid development of residential construction, a lack of traditional buildings becomes particularly noticeable – and consequently a lack of design patterns which could and should serve as a point of reference for contemporary architecture. Erroneous or insufficient planning records and documents concerning newly-designed architectural forms, low level of public awareness of aesthetic requirements and the practice of erecting buildings in areas not connected with the historical layer of the urban environment add to the list of problems. They result in a large number of modern buildings which do not make a reference to their surroundings, creating complexes of a similar scale but inconsistent and inharmonious in terms of architecture and urban planning. And although in the Poznań agglomeration there are still examples of historical residential and farm buildings, they are often replaced by modern buildings with random architectural forms and random positioning on the plot, with much densely situated developments, featuring materials and colours selected more on the basis of global trends than references to the historical architecture of the region. As a result, the oldest buildings are often surrounded or even “encircled” by modern structures, and their historical impact in the landscape is degraded and ultimately loses its earlier significance.

Another reason for the disappearance of historical buildings, which also contributes to the intensification of the aforementioned problems, is the high cost of their maintenance and modernisation. As a result, many old residential buildings in the area of the Poznań agglomeration are in a bad technical condition, and even fall into ruins.

At this point, one may ask whether – in the light of the above observations – the relations between contemporary and historical buildings in suburban areas are unambiguously unfavourable and whether there are any prospects for their improvement. These dependencies were investigated by the author of this paper in the area of Golęczewo located at a distance of about 10 km from the northern borders of Poznań. As mentioned earlier, there are as many as 38 historic houses and homesteads there, so half of all such buildings located in the Poznań agglomeration. The results of a detailed analysis of the architectural forms showed that although almost the same number of contemporary buildings make strong and weak references to the architecture of historic buildings, the unfavourable trends are gradually being reversed. This means that modern buildings more and more often refer in their

forms to historical buildings, although this is a slow process¹⁰. The analysis carried out in Gołęczewo, whose aim was also to refine the research method, concerned, however, a specific locality. On the one hand, almost 12% of the buildings in the village are monuments, on the other hand, they are typically Prussian buildings, built – like the entire model village called Golenhofen until 1945 – in order for the Germans to colonize the areas inhabited by the Polish population. The results of the analysis cannot be considered representative for the other areas of the Poznań agglomeration, especially that the history of this place may increase the reluctance for contemporary buildings to make references to the architectural forms of historical buildings and to still relatively coherent developments in the town. For this reason, the author also plans to continue research in other areas of the Poznań County. The results of the analysis show, however, that more than a hundred years from their erection the Prussian buildings do not arouse the same emotions as before, which is probably due to the low level of historical awareness in the society. It seems, however, that the main reason for this state of affairs are the satisfactory relations between Poland and Germany, which have lasted for many years. The Gołęczewo example, however, confirms the complicated history of Wielkopolska and its aforementioned cultural diversity.

The post-war period, and especially the 1960's and 1970s', was characterized by emergence of buildings that not only did not make references to historical forms, but even consciously ignored them. As a consequence, at that time the landscape of many villages throughout Poland deteriorated and currently we see there dual architectural forms, where houses with steep roofs are situated opposite two-storey "cubes" with flat roofs or multi-family residential buildings based on "large panel" technology, built for employees of the State Farms.

However, in those times, buildings were also erected which made references to the historical architectural forms of rural areas and old construction skills that were already disappearing. The most famous buildings from that period in Wielkopolska were the so-called inn houses designed in the 1970's by architects Jan Kopydłowski and Jerzy Buszkiewicz. Located on the so-called Piast Route, the buildings referred to the architecture of historical inns and guesthouses, especially because of their tall, steep roofs, sometimes thatched roofs, as well as traditional finishing materials such as fieldstone and wood. Although these buildings have already aged in terms of technology and some of them are no longer in use today, they still represent an unsurpassed design benchmark for modern hotel, catering and travel agencies. Unfortunately, despite the special potential and location, which should encourage architects to make references to regional architecture, the designers of these buildings often prefer to refer to foreign architectural styles. It is worth mentioning that the abovementioned inns were complemented by a whole system of spatial information, which consisted of wooden signposts and sculptures set up in 1978 along the "Piast Route" inspired by historical figures and ancient beliefs. In 1966 the market square in Kostrzyn was also decorated with a column made of sandstone, representing Świątowitz – a Slavic deity with four faces, which is also a signpost to Ostrów Lednicki – one of the most probable venues of the Baptism of Poland.

¹⁰ Zierke P., *Rola tradycyjnej architektury w kształtowaniu form współczesnej zabudowy terenów podmiejskich na przykładzie Gołęczewa* [in:] Gasidło K., Twardoch A. (eds.), *Region - miasto - wieś. Na wsi, czyli gdzie? Architektura, środowisko, społeczeństwo, ekonomia współczesnej wsi*, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej, Gliwice 2017, p. 129.

Although modern times are characterised by a lack of spatial order, current construction projects also include valuable buildings that refer to regional building traditions and historical architectural forms. One of the most interesting structures of this type in the Poznań agglomeration is the so-called Dziewicza Baza (Dziewicza Base) built in 2013 at the foot of Dziewicza Góra in Czerwonak. The facility designed by M. Sokolnicki, R. Berek, J. Kielak and A. Rosochowicz fits in very well with the natural surroundings thanks to the use of a structural form combining traditional solutions (including wooden structure and shingled roofs) and modern technologies (including photovoltaic panels). The functional potential of the complex, which consists of, among others, training rooms, workshops, catering service, a bonfire shelter for about 100 people, a playground, a sensory path and a wicker labyrinth, helps the facility integrate the local community, also attracting guests from other areas of the Poznań agglomeration.

Another structure which makes references to the historical forms of Wielkopolska construction style, especially manor house architecture, is the village hall in Rakownia, which was opened in 2011. The building, designed by architects Filip and Jacek Buszkiewicz, stands out from other typical buildings in the town thanks to its refined details and simple form finished with clinker bricks and red tiles, with very modern interiors. The centre is a place which integrates the local community and a venue for meetings, balls and conferences.

In the Poznań agglomeration there are also several historical buildings, which through the process of modernization and adaptation to new functions very successfully combine old and contemporary architectural forms. One of the most interesting buildings of this type is Hotelik Rozmaitości built in Pławno in the Zielonka Forest. In 2011, the building was rebuilt from an old stable and converted into a hotel and restaurant. Its most impressive part is a glass dining room added to the main structure, which, despite its modern style, goes very well with the historical basis.

An old building adapted for new functions is also a village hall in Borówiec in the municipality of Kórnik, which was originally an utility building. As part of the works carried out, the interiors were rebuilt, and building structural elements, roof coverings as well as window and door woodwork were replaced. As a result, the structure does not dominate the space, but fits very well into the rural landscape.

In Puszczykowo, in the vicinity of the Wielkopolska National Park, a complex of “Hotelarnia” buildings designed by Bartosz Konieczny was built in 2009, which houses a hotel, restaurant and wellness centre. Despite the very large dimensions, the main building of the complex fits very well into the spatial context thanks to a huge thatched roof in earthy colours, which refers to traditional construction patterns, and thanks to the use of refined architectural details.

Examples of successful projects in the Poznań agglomeration include not only large buildings which serve public functions, but also single-family dwellings, whose forms refer to building traditions, and also fit very well into the surrounding landscape. One of such buildings is a single-family house built in 2012 in Puszczykowo, in the vicinity of the Wielkopolska National Park, designed by Bartosz Konieczny and Tomasz Sołtysiak. The extended ground floor of the building is hidden inside a scarp and is hardly noticeable from the outside. Above, there is a small structure covered with a gable roof, which does not dominate the space in form or scale and has more in common with simple, typical rural developments than with extensive, styleless villas built in the neighbourhood.

In the same town, a simple single-family house was built in 2012, designed by the Archymetria studio. It is surrounded by historic buildings, has a very subdued colour palette



- III. 1. Dziewicza Baza in Czerwonaku, photo: P. Zierke
- III. 2. Fence House in Borówiec, photo: P. Zierke
- III. 3. House in Puszczykowo, photo: A. Bukowy – the FoA-PUT archive
- III. 4. House in Puszczykowo, photo: A. Bukowy – the FoA-PUT archive

and successfully combines traditional materials (including natural stone cladding, rarely used for finishing contemporary buildings) with modern materials. Due to its size, roof shape and relatively simple form, as well as the addition of a uniform fence, the building does not dominate the space, but complements it creatively, while remaining an example of elegant architecture.

Another interesting residential house is the so-called Fence House, built in 2016 in Borówiec according to the design of the Mode:lina studio. The main part of the building was supposed to be the architects' modern interpretation of traditional forms of rural houses. Despite the use of modern materials, contrasting colours, and thanks to a relatively small size, division of the structure into smaller blocks and a limited the colour palette, the building fits very well into the surrounding landscape, which consists of modern single-family houses and forests.

Nowadays, small architectural forms which refer to the traditional architecture of the region are also designed and constitute an interesting alternative to similar, often styleless or neutral projects. An example of this type of structure are wooden bus shelters built at the beginning of the 21st century in the Skoki municipality, which not only refer to the traditional wooden sacred buildings located on the so-called "Trail of wooden churches around

the Zielonka Forest”, but through the use of materials, colours and scale, fit very well in the natural surroundings.

4. SUMMARY

The Poznań agglomeration is currently struggling with many, especially unfavourable trends related to the phenomenon of suburbanisation. Many areas currently occupied by residential buildings are characterised by a lack of spatial order and incoherent buildings which do not usually make references to the historical surroundings and often seem to deliberately avoid such references. However, the examples of residential buildings presented in the work show that it is possible to successfully combine contemporary and historical architecture and make subtle references to the traditional forms of rural buildings. Currently designed architectural forms do not have to be typical, styleless, nor do they have to look up to temporary and foreign trends. Although it can be expressive, through a harmonious combination of different elements of the architectural form it cannot dominate in the space, but can complement it creatively. Architects who designed the buildings presented in this paper were able to use the advantages of the surroundings, such as large areas of greenery. Others proved that even in the vicinity of incoherent buildings it is possible to create exceptional buildings that have the potential to become a model for future developments in the neighbourhood. In this way, the abovementioned projects in a sense become “ambassadors” of spatial order and if new inhabitants of these areas can only see the hidden potential in them, they will cease to be solitary oases of successful architecture, but will become part of larger, formally coherent and harmonious projects.

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