

MACIEJ GOZDECKI<sup>1</sup>

# REVITALISED POST-INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE AS MANIFESTATION OF CONNECTING TRADITIONAL FORM AND MODERN FUNCTION

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## ZREWITALIZOWANE DZIEDZICTWO POPZEMYSŁOWE JAKO PRZEJAW ŁĄCZENIA TRADYCJI FORMY Z NOWOCZESNĄ FUNKCJĄ

### Abstract

Currently, among many processes that take place in urban spaces, one of the most important is revitalization of post-industrial objects and areas around them aiming at giving them new, modern functions. This matter involves multiple planes that are correlated and interact resulting in more or less satisfactory effect. Apart from elements of cultural context, heritage protection and place identity or maintenance of local traditions in architecture, we are facing more general aspects: sociological, environmental, economic and urban, often defining the approach to given solution. Still, despite the fact that revitalization is a resultant of these multiple, different factors, thanks to successful implementations it proves that traditional form is a carrier of an immense potential for modernity. The following work presents the observed phenomenon, whose objective is to investigate whether the adapted post-industrial heritage offers any advantages to the society around it by protecting the tradition and value of the site through providing it with a modern function.

*Keywords: post-industrial architecture, revitalisation, adaptation, traditional form in architecture*

### Streszczenie

Obecnie, wśród wielu procesów jakie zachodzą w przestrzeniach miejskich, jednym z ważniejszych jest rewitalizacja obiektów poprzemysłowych oraz terenów wokół nich, w celu nadania im nowych, nowoczesnych funkcji. Na problematykę tą nakłada się kilka płaszczyzn, które oddziałując między sobą, dają bardziej lub mniej satysfakcjonujący wynik. Oprócz elementów należących do kontekstu kulturowego, ochrony dziedzictwa i tożsamości miejsca, czy zachowania lokalnych tradycji w architekturze, mamy do czynienia z aspektami bardziej ogólnymi: socjologicznymi, środowiskowymi, ekonomicznymi i urbanistycznymi – determinującymi niejednokrotnie podejście do rozwiązania. I pomimo tego, że rewitalizacja jest wypadkową tych wielu czynników, to dzięki udanym realizacjom udowadnia, iż tradycyjna forma jest nośnikiem ogromnego potencjału dla nowoczesności. W poniższej pracy, przeprowadzono obserwacje zjawiska, którego celem jest zbadanie, czy adaptowane dziedzictwo postindustrialne przynosi korzyści społeczności żyjącej wokół niego, chroniąc tradycję oraz wartość miejsca, poprzez nadanie im nowoczesnej funkcji.

*Słowa kluczowe: architektura poprzemysłowa, rewitalizacja, adaptacja, tradycyjna forma w architekturze*

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<sup>1</sup> M.Sc. Arch. Maciej Gozdecki, Ph.D. Studies, Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology, mgarch@o2.pl; ORCID 0000-0001-6360-0669

*Any interference implies destruction.  
Destroy sensibly.*

Luigi Snozzi

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In almost two last decades revitalization of industrial and post-industrial architecture in Central Europe and Poland has been gaining unprecedented momentum of change. This is mainly due to the overturn of political and economic systems, which took place beforehand at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in this part of the continent. Becoming gradually of mass nature, these undertakings have won social acceptance, often constituting an interesting alternative to greenfield type investments. Adaptation process of objects to function other than the originally intended has been known since time immemorial, however, it concerned mainly residential and public buildings. It did not include industrial buildings for an ordinary reason – the deficit thereof (the industrial revolution speeded up only in the mid-nineteenth century building its own structures) and the lack of social acceptance for such intents. Not matching the canon of the then aesthetics, industrial objects well falling into ruin and destruction, becoming a symbol of disinterest in their traditional form. The breakthrough in the art of construction, and thus in construction systems made industrial architecture evolve towards independence, becoming a separate field. This has led to the emergence of autonomous architectural forms, resulting from the desire to optimize costs and reduce the time of their erection. The order of shaping industrial objects adopted at that time has largely been used until now. Contemporary adaptations focus not only on saving historic industrial structures which, predominantly, used to gain just negative perception while today earn more and more interest of an average viewer, but also to ensure the maximum use of areas in overcrowded and built-up city centres. Transformation in awareness of perception and the passage of time have also led to extended protection of such places and structures in the conservation aspect, contributing to the interest in this form of investment. Generally, this direction is consistent with the contemporary concept of sustainable development, emphasizing the factor of human in protected nature, with which he remains in harmony, which he respects, and constitutes its conscious part. “Nature only sides with truth” – Adolf Loos used to say and, undoubtedly, respect for own heritage and tradition falls within this approach, because man – part of the nature and the environment created by himself – preserves it and its traditional shape, while protecting the nature in which he can interfere less. This implies the question of material, space and resources saving in general. Economic management thereof is, apart from care for the modern human future, a kind of “spiritusmovens” of eco-development. Moreover, a man living in a space created by himself according to his own beliefs and views, having a shaped map of existing environment from the past and the tradition he has created himself, feels safe despite the changes he slowly introduces himself. The adapted space becomes a bridge between the former and the new, the old, not modern – and contemporary, modern. It allows the continuity of the material heritage cultural tradition with which the recipient is connected and which anthropologically becomes sort of intangible heritage. The tradition of architecture is an intergenerational code, which they use to communicate over the ages, a language, which allows to preserve the DNA of any culture in the course of its existence. Oftentimes, it is modernity, which undertakes interpretive dialogue with tradition and trans-

fers meanings in the shift of generations. Such approach is not a new thing also in broadly understood contemporary art with good creative effects, as D. Łaryionow writes about the meaning of Tadeusz Kantor's artistic work: "Kantor, ... used tradition (differently understood) to build the identity of his art ..., the goal was to build a new, modern, or perhaps postmodern, interpretative structure"<sup>2</sup>. Such a creative viewpoint on architecture is exemplified by the following adaptation projects of post-industrial objects.

## 2. HISTORY OF INDUSTRIAL ARCHITECTURE

Industrial structures are an indelible mark of human activity, thus, a substantial element of heritage, which is productive and technical progress of humanity. They constitute an undeniable material testimony of his civilization development and building tradition. The centuries-old history of industry makes its types diversity, techniques, and aesthetic forms used over time and place evident to us. Industrial architecture existing since its dawn experienced its mass splendour at the time of the eighteenth-century revolution. Along with the industrial mass-course, it has become a realm independent and separate from general construction, however, drawing from it aesthetic standards, usually in a minimized scope. It was a result of a broadly understood economic calculation, which in history had had the greatest impact and decided for the longest time on the choice of an architectural concept. Technique and production technology determined the economics of solutions for halls and other buildings<sup>3</sup>. Over nearly two hundred years of history the concepts of architecture development and shaping evolved following the fluctuation of long, 50 to 60-year economic cycles, adjusting to the then technological, organizational and financial requirements, introducing new ideas and solutions that were moving freely around the European continent constituting benchmarks<sup>4</sup>. In the initial period of the industrial revolution the main precursor was the English industry, which brought construction typical for that period and whose development characteristics were determined by economic side of enterprises due minor importance of technical issue at the time. Such status quo lasted for two centuries, setting trends in industrial construction, and thus in its architecture. The domination of the function over aesthetics was a crowning achievement of the phenomenon. Typical for this period was prevalence of several-storey buildings over single-storey ones. Buildings erected using a commonly applied material were enriched with repeatable, structural elements of cast iron, obtaining sort of prefabrication effect. It can, therefore, be deemed as some origination of small-scale standardization in construction industry. Around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, due to settling and intensification of capitalism in Western Europe, massive, unparalleled plants appeared along with industrial complexes, whose units and production facilities reached massing unprecedented before. This period lasted until the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the next cycle, instituting extensive social and environmental changes. It shaped the today known types of industrial buildings, including the single-level hall, even though of still traditional eclectic aesthetics

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<sup>2</sup> D. Łaryionow, *Trzy Balladyny, czyli Tadeusza Kantora gry z tradycją* [in:] E. Nowina-Sroczyńska (ed.), *Nowe czytanie tradycji*, Instytut Etnologii i Antropologii Kulturowej UŁ, Łódź 2016, p. 300.

<sup>3</sup> N. Juzwa, *Tradycja współczesnej architektury przemysłowej*, Zeszyty Naukowe. Architektura, 1997, no. 36, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> N. Juzwa, *Kształtowanie przestrzenne przemysłu na obszarach intensywnie zurbanizowanych*, Zeszyty Naukowe. Architektura, 1988, no. 8, pp. 7–8.

and frame iron structure, which a bit later became reinforced concrete<sup>5</sup>. In the next period, the lead of industrial development is taken over by electricity and engineering industry, which impact the erection method of production structures. There comes into being a one-storey, large-area hall – the synonym of a modern factory facility – as a response to changes in work organization and ergonomic research. Back then, under the influence of the achievements of technology and cultural changes, new aesthetics of industrial architecture emerges as reference to the achievements of the era and embodying its reflection. The succeeding scientific and technological progress, as well as the emergence of computers and, consequently, changes in the architectural workshop conditions, contributed to the unification and standardization of solutions, resulting at the same time in excessive uniformity and distortion of the industrial objects scale<sup>6</sup>. And, although the previously quoted renowned Italian architect Luigi Snozzi, also legitimately says: “Diversity is the prelude to monotony; if you want to avoid it, repeat [your] element”<sup>7</sup> – which undoubtedly has a deep, creative meaning regarding universal architecture – this rule in industrial architecture of the 1970s was overused, producing just for those times an ultra-modern monotony.

### 3. TRADITION IN ADAPTATION OF INDUSTRIAL ARCHITECTURE

In the adaptation process of post-industrial objects each of the creators attempts to combine a lot of traditional elements, often constituting formal cohesion and unity, with modernity. A man needs historical continuity, enjoys spanning traces of his history and tradition and admiring monuments, yet at the same time he strives to modernize the function and form for adaptation purposes as extensively as possible. Obviously, this raises the question of acceptable scope of interference into the existing tissue, as the case of industrial facilities elicits temptation for far more extensive modernization. It seems indispensable to recall at this point the definitions of revitalization of such objects proposed by J. Tajchman: “Revitalization of historic post-industrial buildings consists in best owing upon them a new function and incorporating them into the cycle of contemporary culture with utmost respect for composition and architectural form and structure”<sup>8</sup>. A particularly important problem in modernization is the fact of the object transformation, its multifarious impact on the surroundings both in the urban and aesthetic sense. Large dimensions, vastness of the area occupied by the complex, often a central location in the city area, and location in culturally and environmentally significant place bring about a huge impact on the immediate surroundings. They often shape the urban panorama making a paramount landscape-creating factor shaping space and the identity of the place. Skilful and respectful approach to the problem of revitalization by its creator is immensely important considering the aspect of what is valuable in post-industrial structures, what should be strictly protected, what we can lose irretrievably in such process, and what we gain and where the limit of conservation consensus lies. Part of adaptation of monuments to modern functions are always extensive renovation and construction works, retrofitting due to technical reasons, and often extensions and reconstructions according to the accepted scope of

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<sup>5</sup> N. Juzwa, *Tradycja...*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> [https://pl.wikiquote.org/wiki/Luigi\\_Snozzi](https://pl.wikiquote.org/wiki/Luigi_Snozzi) (access: 21.06.2019).

<sup>8</sup> J. Tajchman, *Metoda konserwacji i restauracji dziedzictwa architektonicznego w zakresie zabytkowych budowli*, typescript, Toruń 2009, Poland, p. 67.

the functional program. This means significant changes in the substance and form of the object in an uncompromising attempt to upgrade them. Thus, the importance, value and credibility of a monument as a historical witness of development, a work of art, culture and tradition, and as a carrier of meanings from the past, often dilute. Vanishes its authenticity – a quality most valued in contemporary protection of heritage and tradition. Regardless of the change in the initial function, the future destiny of the object, the historical origin of its architecture, solutions concerning construction and material, the primary goal is to achieve an inherent synergy of opposites, a uniform composition between the historical value and contemporary complement. Given permanent evolution of needs, the historical substance is nowadays often combined with modern cubature in search of successful formal relationships. Implemented adaptations often cause transformations of functional systems and interior divisions due to their minor historical merit. Less frequently however minimalist interference is limited just to employment of some modern detail and implementation of necessary technical upgrade, simultaneously respecting the existing. Worse solutions include extension of the object in the historical spirit of the place, which deform traditions and attires it in a pseudo-modern character in the form of “resurrection after death”. Thus, contemporary transformations of post-industrial objects take on various adaptive solutions causing their aesthetic devastation or a new, “better life” increasing the value to an unprecedented level, which in recipients awakens justified aesthetic sublime feelings and satisfaction from being around. So, a number of questions arise: can post-industrial architecture, immersed in tradition, become a synonym of modernity, resulting in a lasting, positive impression of the recipient-user viewing it? Does revitalization of such objects allow for maintaining balance between the past, present and future? What in the end does modernity mean in historical buildings, such as post-factory buildings, which are reactivated to modern functional needs? Does not the primacy of one over the other in the final assumption reduce the importance of them both? Can the continuation of tradition be synonymous with modernity, or maybe modernity is the material of new tradition? Should revitalization process always mean victory of harmony of both in opposition to contrast? These questions have to be constantly answered by each creative restorer and adaptation specialist of such objects.

#### **4. BRIEF ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF SELECTED EXAMPLES OF INDUSTRIAL OBJECTS ADAPTATION TO MODERN FUNCTIONS IN POLAND – CASE STUDY**

##### **Old Brewery in Poznań**

(Authors of revitalisation: Studio ADS Sp. z o.o., Piotr Barełkowski and Przemysław Borkowicz)

The revitalisation of the complex of the Old Brewery buildings located in the very centre of Poznań at the intersection of Półwiejska and Krakowska streets, began in 1998, and was divided into three stages – construction of the “Atrium” (commissioning in 2003), construction of the “Courtyard of Art” (opened half a year later), and the “Passage” shopping centre (completed in 2007). The scope of the development also included the Dąbrowski Park surrounding the object from the north. Revitalization of the Hugger’s Old Brewery became a project that impacted the surroundings considerably. The adjacent Półwiejska street, once insignificant, today is a highly popular promenade, with concentration of commercial and service premises.

es. Areas located in the vicinity of the Old Brewery have gained high investment potential. As Jerzy S. Majewski writes: “The Old Brewery, unlike the majority of shopping centres in Poland, has been well-inscribed into the city tissue. And this does not apply only to the location. The object is not another isolated box with shops, as is the case of the huge Galeria



Ill. 1. (source: Ł. Cynalewski)



Ill. 2. (source: codziennypoznan.pl)

Mokotów and Arkadia in Warsaw. It makes part of the inner-city tissue – connects both to the Dąbrowski Park and Półwiejska Street, turned into a busy promenade. It does not kill this street but enlivens it and turns into the main commercial chain of the city”<sup>9</sup>. Both the adapted object and its extended section fit well with the surroundings and complete them constituting a worthy alternative to the Old Town Square in Poznań. Adaptation of buildings and applied architectural and material solutions contributed to correct connection of the object with the existing tissue and landscape of the surrounding quarters. The above-mentioned Półwiejska street is the axis connecting the Business and Art Centre of St. Brewery with the Poznań Old Market. As a result of the described adaptation activities, the object has become an important centre-forming element of the city gathering cultural, commercial and gastronomic functions, and administrative and educational facilities. There is no doubt that the revitalization of the Old Brewery in Poznań, a precursory undertaking of this kind in Poland, has become one of the revitalization icons of our country, willingly and frequently visited and referred to in studies concerning this subject<sup>10</sup>. “Establishing a shopping centre in this place has reversed the negative economic and social processes of the downtown city by “reviving” Półwiejska street and contributing to positive changes stimulating local development (of course, it can be debatable whether they are revitalization projects or simply ordinary infrastructure or economic pro-development projects)”<sup>11</sup>. However, considering the large number of eager visitors in this place not only because of its commercial and business function but fascinated by it, who – we can say – “decide on their legs”, the authors of the reconstruction and revitalization managed to exceptionally capture tradition in modernity. It remains at the forefront of this type of developments not because of its current function, but thanks to the skilful linkage of

<sup>9</sup> J. S. Majewski, *Rozbudowa Starego Browaru w Poznaniu*, Architektura – Murator, 2007, no. 9, pp. 72–73.

<sup>10</sup> N. Balcerzak, *Rewitalizacja obiektów pobrowarnych i jej wpływ na rozwój przestrzeni miejskiej*, Przegląd Budowlany, 2013, no. 3, pp. 20–21.

<sup>11</sup> P. Ciesiołka, R. Kudlak (eds.), *Diagnoza rewitalizacji miast województwa wielkopolskiego*, Wielkopolskie Regionalne Obserwatorium Terytorialne, Poznań 2015, p. 97.

the market with something more sublime – the historical tradition of the place and the modern art of detail.

### **Planetarium – city gas storage tank in Toruń**

(Author of revitalisation: unknown)



Ill. 3. (source: own materials)



Ill. 4. (source: WordPress.com)

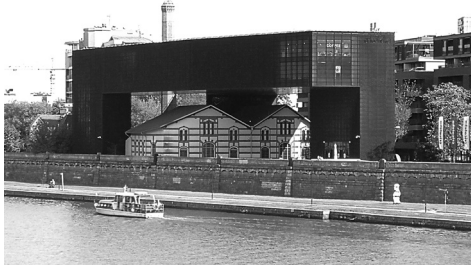
Originally, the Toruń gas plant was located in Kopernika Street and Pod Krzywą Wieżą Street. The adapted property was constructed in Franciszkańska Street in the place of the Franciscan monastery demolished at the beginning of the 19th century. The first location of gas reservoirs within the boundaries of the Old Town caused controversy due to the architecture of the industrial facility substantially disturbing the landscape of the medieval district. The form of the gas reservoir in Franciszkańska Street explicitly refers to the Gothic fortified architecture. In 1994, the gas reservoir was adapted to new purposes. In the brick, telescope housing of the building was established the Planetarium named after professor Władysław Dziewulski, and in 2012 it was turned into the Outer Space Popularisation Centre “Planetarium – Toruń”. Even though the interior of the building holds no more of industrial equipment, it has been fully adapted to the function – the vault of the building dome is used for projection of the sky image. On the ground floor there is a so-called Orbitorium – an interactive museum. Since 2012, the building has also created a new interactive exhibition dedicated to the Earth as a planet. The Planetarium in Toruń is one of 17 stationary facilities of this type in Poland and the only institution of this type using a post-industrial structure. Despite some architectural restrictions of the building body – the gas reservoir – it is one of the four largest facilities of this type in Poland and the only one not maintained from public funds, which undoubtedly makes a measure of its success<sup>12</sup>. The research of the Tourist Organization have confirmed that the Planetarium is one of the most important elements of the tourist image of modern Toruń and an attraction that positively records itself in the memory of domestic and foreign guests. Behind the Planetarium, which has become a significant object in the Toruń tourist area enjoying a supra-regional class and the prospect of becoming an international tourist attraction, are located most of urban objects of the zone included in the UNESCO list. This is

<sup>12</sup> J. Kazimierczak, *Obiekty przemysłowe w krajobrazie kulturowym i przestrzeni turystycznej miasta średniowiecznego. Przykład zespołu XIX-wiecznej gazowni w Toruniu*, *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis Studia Geographica*, 2014, no. 7, pp. 113–114.

due to the fact that this institution has unique nature, is located in a city, whose history shows a clear relationship with the life of Nicolaus Copernicus; a man worldwide recognized and connected just with Toruń. This is perhaps the main reason, which influenced the unique spirit of this place regardless of the fact that the object housing the above-mentioned institution is of secondary architectural significance. Thanks to the inclusion of a modern functional profile into the historical and cultural context of the city, it has been renovated and preserved as a material testimony of development, constituting one of the key elements shaping the traditional urban cultural landscape and tourist space of Toruń<sup>13</sup>.

### **Cricotekain Cracow**

(Authors of revitalisation: Wizja Sp. z o.o. – Stanisław Deńko, nsMoon Studio Sp. z o.o. – Piotr Nawara, Agnieszka Szultk from Cracow)



Ill. 5. (source: own materials)



Ill. 6. (source: National Archive in Cracow)

In 2005 local government authorities initiated establishing of new head office of the Centre for the Documentation of the Art of Tadeusz Kantor “Cricoteka” in the former Podgórska Power Plant in Nadwiślańska Street in Krakow as a multifunctional, cultural institution. As a result, an international architectural competition was announced for the concept consisting in revitalization and adaptation of historic buildings of the former power plant and creation of a modern, integrated with them object for the needs of the Centre. “The project was awarded for an ambitious attempt to create a public space, which is the stage and the audience at the same time – the place of a continuous spectacle, where, as in the Kantor’s Theatre, the boundaries between the actor and the viewer are dissolved. The work makes the inspiration of artistic concepts of the artist clear, particularly the idea of emballage and the art of conflict and “clash”, breaking stereotypes and conducting unusual collisions of forms and content. The transformation of the characteristic drawing of a man carrying a table on his back (by Tadeusz Kantor) is a symbol of the “clash” of matter, of an object, with a human being. The project creates a distinctive spatial accent requisite in this part of the city, a form that markedly builds a new panorama of Podgórze. It respects the context of the place, treating the object as Kantor’s “prop” corresponding to the spirit and scale of this post-industrial district of Krakow”<sup>14</sup>.

As a result of the renovation works of the Podgórska Power Plant construction and the construction of the new Cricoteka building, a multifunctional building was created, which is

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 118–119.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.cricoteka.pl/pl/o-nas/> (access: 24.06.2019).

an attractive venue for residents and tourists visiting it. The new seat of Cricoteka is not only one of the most original buildings in Krakow, but also a place of multiple artistic events in the spirit of theatrical experiment. The building comprises a room of permanent T. Kantor works exhibition, a space for temporary exhibitions, and a multi-purpose and educational hall. The object has permanently changed the landscape of the foothills of the Vistula River, referring to the climate owed to the neighbourhood of the river and the work of Tadeusz Kantor. The historical character of the Podgórze Power Station has also been saved thanks to the object existing chimney – a witness of a bygone era – which is the highest point of the new, extended part of the complex. The implemented form of the power plant revitalization has shown an interesting way of enlivening the Vistula River embankment through enriching the architecture of public facilities and adding individual and unique character to this site in Krakow. “The concept of the Cricoteka building makes a very distinct spatial accent in this area of the city, creating a new panorama of the Podgórze district. Unusual material solutions used on the modern Cricoteka façade emphasize the individuality and artistic design of the project”<sup>15</sup> and the philosophy of the theatre creator attesting to its uniqueness in the context of a historical object – an element of tradition that deserves protection.

## 5. SUMMARY

In conclusion, the above-mentioned examples of post-industrial buildings adaptations prove how vast potential of aesthetic, cultural and social possibilities can old traditional post-industrial structure offer and how interesting material it can be for creating contemporary, modern human life when it is perceived not only as a single object, but also as an urban complex of structures. The present modernity embodying unification of form and function is the opposite of what is understood as tradition. Such adaptations, of often degraded objects making part of industrial heritage, are going against the today globalization of architecture, commonly and quite wrongly understood as modern. Indeed, according to Edwin L. Lutyens (1869–1944) “Architecture begins where function ends,” or John Ruskin depicting architecture as an ornament, which is only an addition to the building construction, what in historical, post-industrial buildings may show its distinct reflection and allows an easy way to meet the traditional external tissue of such objects with the modernity of contemporary function. Such objects are great for such purposes making creative inspiration for today creators of architecture. Looking from the perspective of adaptation possibilities in former post-factory objects, we can say today that it is a valuable dialogue between historical substance and modern functional and technical solutions, which – as in the given examples – often testifies to the mature role of the architect, his understanding of the significance of the past, knowing how to intentionally combine the mythical opposites: “Spontaneous modernity with calmed and ennobled tradition”.

Therefore, it is the good answer to the endless competition between uncompromising modernity immersed by definition in utopian timelessness and a responsible continuation of cultural tradition overly attached to the past.

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<sup>15</sup> A. Sobotka, A. Radziejowska, *Budowa Cricoteki Projekt*, Builder, 2015, Vol. 70, no. 2, pp. 71–72.

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### Author's note:

Ph.D. Studies Faculty of Architecture Cracow University of Technology. Interests: architecture of industrial facilities 4.0, architecture psychology, history of architecture. Active architect.