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THEATRE OF COMMERCIALIZATION. ABOUT ARCHITECTURAL STAFFAGE IN SHOPPING MALLS

TEATR KOMERCJI. O SZTAFAŻU ARCHITEKTONICZNYM W GALERIACH HANDLOWYCH

Abstract

What do we understand as true architecture? Is not architecture, being also a field of art, as a rule condemned to simplifications, distortions and attempts to confuse the user with only proper spatial tools? This paper aims to bring the problem of truth and lie of space by analyzing the phenomena occurring in the architecture of large-scale commercial facilities. Features such as temporality, variability and controllability allow to compare these buildings to theatrical scenery. What would remain of any shopping mall building if it were to be rejected from the accepted staffage? The conducted research was based on the analysis of facilities designed and constructed in Łódź, Kraków and Wrocław.

Keywords: shopping center, commercial architecture, architectural scenography

Streszczenie

Co rozumiemy jako architekturę prawdziwą? Czy będąc również dziedziną sztuki, architektura nie jest z zasady skazana na uproszczenia, przekłamania i próbę zmylenia użytkownika sobie tylko właściwymi narzędziami przestrzennymi? Niniejszy tekst ma na celu przybliżenie problemu prawdy i kłamstwa przestrzeni poprzez analizę zjawisk zachodzących w architekturze wielkoskalowych obiektów handlowych. Cechy takie, jak czasowość, zmienność i sterowalność pozwalają przyrównać obiekty te do scenografii teatralnej. Czym pozostałby budynek dowolnej galerii handlowej, gdyby odrzec ją z przyjętego sztafażu? Przeprowadzone badania oparto na analizie obiektów projektowanych i zrealizowanych w Łodzi, Krakowie i Wrocławiu.

Słowa kluczowe: galeria handlowa, architektura komercyjna, scenografia w architekturze

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the simplest definition, a staffage is an unimportant element, supplementing or decorating something, e.g. a literary work or, in case of works of art, human and animal figures or buildings supplementing a painting or drawing whose main theme is landscape or interiors.¹

¹ *Sztafaż* [in:] *Słownik Języka Polskiego PWN*, <https://sjp.pwn.pl/slowniki/sztafa%C5%BC.html> (access: 1.06.2020).

The staffage also includes lively elements introduced into the composition, which do not constitute the main content – the sense of the work, but are introduced in order to diversify, show scale and proportions, and build perspective by introducing elements into subsequent plans of the composition. The staffage is a complementary and decorative element and should not compete with the compositional assumptions.²

In the case of a work of architecture, it is difficult to get such a clear definition. The staffage in the case of a building can be any “ornaments” whose form and understanding has changed over the centuries. Since the statement in 1896 by Louis H. Sullivan, the claim that “form follows function” in the article “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered,”³ which was later developed, among others by Frank Lloyd Wright, it began to be considered as an ornament all the elements in the building, not directly related to one of its three components: function, form or construction in the simplest way that accomplishes a given architectural task.

On the other hand, when treating an architecture as an artistic cannon, a user can be considered a staffage – a man who is a variable element and as a unit less important for the functioning of the building than as an anonymous community of users. However, this side of the definition is the furthest from the truth, because it is difficult to talk about architecture in a situation where it is detached from the purpose for which it was created.

So, can we even talk about architectural staffage in case of a building at all? Architecture, as the science of programming people’s behaviour in connection with a given function, in order to properly (and thus effectively bring people to a particular purpose) fulfil its role also requires this background, filling. It could be realized in an equal way, each time bringing architecture closer to the form of scenography.

To describe the phenomenon, large-size forms of architecture with a commercial function, with historical urban and architectural background were chosen to describe the phenomenon:

- Kazimierz Gallery in Kraków,
- Magnolia Park in Wrocław,
- Aleja Bielany in Bielany Wrocławskie,
- Galeria Sukcesja in Łódź,
- Manufaktura Łódzka in Łódź,
- Stary Browar in Poznań.

2. WHAT IS A SHOPPING MALL?

According to M. Twardzik, after J. Dietl, a shopping center is:

a conscious (planned) form of spatial concentration of retail establishments. Shopping centers are located in large cities or on their outskirts, most often on important communication routes. They have a compact space, not separated by communication routes, ensuring easy movement within them. They are characterized by modern architectural and organizational forms in the sphere of trade and services.⁴

² E. Kosiacka-Beck, B.J. Gawryszewska, K. Zinowicz-Cieplik, *Projektowanie obiektów architektury krajobrazu*. Vol. 2, Fabryka Druku, Warszawa 2016, p. 39.

³ J. Craven, *The Meaning of ‘Form Follows Function’*, 1.09.2019, <https://www.thoughtco.com/form-follows-function-177237> (access: 1.06.2020).

⁴ M. Twardzik, *Typologia i znaczenie centrów handlowych dla miast województwa śląskiego = Typology and the importance of shopping centers in the cities of Silesia*, Studia Miejskie, 2014, no. 16, p. 129.

Other definitions give the area value as the limit when defining the concept, specifying a multi-functional commercial facility with a gross leasable area (GLA) of over 5,000 m², in which premises and common areas have been separated.

According to the adopted assumptions, shopping mall facilities are not “real” architecture. They are a certain simplification and distortion, and their form and aesthetics strongly differ from both the aesthetics of the public and industrial facility, masking the function and construction hidden underneath. As in the case of stage facilities – the size of technical and service area necessary for the proper performance of the building’s functions is disproportionately large in relation to what viewers have the opportunity to learn. However, while in the case of a theater there is a full awareness of this “theatricality,” a significant difference between the two sides of the stage, in case of commercial facilities this border is not obvious to most users.

3. THE GROUP OF CRITERIA FOR DIVIDING ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL STAFFAGE IN SHOPPING CENTRES

The basic criterion that was adopted in the analysis is the scale of the analysis:

- building on an urban scale (the shopping center pretending to be a non-gallery, a historical building etc.) – Sukcesja and Manufaktura galleries in Łódź, Galeria Piastów in Legnica, Renoma in Wrocław;
- building on an architectural scale – pretending to be a function and form other than the real one – shopping center Pasaż 13 and Galeria Kazimierz in Krakow, Sukcesja and Manufaktura in Łódź, Stary Browar in Poznań;
- detail – temporary elements pretending to be permanent, new-old.

Creating scenery that pretends to be historical industrial buildings, when in fact a “shell” is created, leaving small parts of original building structure, at best – the outer shell, devoided of historical tissue. Buildings that once performed a real function, most often industrial, often from the current perspective – controversial, are transformed into commercial facilities. This is determined by the attractiveness of the location and the size of available land.

An example of just one function that has been completely eliminated from cities in the last 20 years shows how historical motifs can be used to create a background for a newly created commercial function. A similar fate was met by two urban slaughterhouses, built on the border of the 19th century cities of Kraków and Wrocław.

3.1 KAZIMIERZ GALLERY IN KRAKÓW

The Kazimierz Gallery in Krakow was built on the site of the former Municipal Slaughterhouse, which was the first industrial building in the newly established Grzegórzki district in the years 1877–1878, designed by Maciej Moraczewski.⁵ It occupied an area of about 3.17 ha.⁶

The simple form of buildings, referring to the latest European developments in the design of this type of facilities has been developed with great attention to detail. The

⁵ M. Zawadzki, *Krakowska Rzeźnia Miejska. W tekście 6 ilustracji i plan sytuacyjny*, Gmina Miasta Krakowa, Kraków 1913, p. 46.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 6; According to sources, the plot has an area of 6,961 square fathoms (1 square fathom is about 4.5521 m²).

facility functioned continuously until 2002, in the meantime being entered (in 1993) in the register of monuments of the Małopolskie Voivodeship and also removed from it.⁷ In 2005, on the site of the former slaughterhouse, Galeria Kazimierz was opened – a multifunctional shopping facility designed by the international consortium HOK design and MAAI – Marek Arciszewski Architecture International. Six buildings from the second phase of construction of the abattoir (from around 1910), located along Rzeźnicza Street in its southern part, have been preserved from the original layout and included in the design of the shopping center. These are the only elements that have been preserved from the original structure of the establishment. The administration house, the servants' house and the horned cattle building have been transformed into catering facilities and partially absorbed by the tissue of the new function.

The slaughterhouse buildings represented the so-called “French” type – open, with free-standing abattoir buildings, separated by streets.⁸ Red brick halls, connected in technological lines, had a characteristic way of recording visual information in the form of ceramic reliefs depicting animal species, located in the tops of the halls.⁹

The urban scale of the scenery proposed by designers of the shopping center caused that the original urban layout of the area was also affected. Rzeźnicza Street has ceased to merge with Podgórska, and the spatial interference not only covered the area of the slaughterhouse itself, but also changed the nature of the adjacent quarters. Instead of a clear axis of entry, a square was created with two closed frontages made of pseudo-historical buildings whose appearance is nothing like the old urban layout.

Although the construction of the shopping center, especially in its conservation layer, has received numerous praises for exemplary performance, it concerned only small part of the facility with a total retail and service area of over 36,200 m². Comparing the scale of the spatial activities discussed, it can be seen that the appearance of a small, in the scale of the entire investment, detail with a historical color causes that it becomes precisely that previously defined staffage – filling, accent, but not – the main content of the architectural work.

The purely economic factor causes a conscious departure from the use in the design of a shopping and service facilities elements clearly associated with the former purpose of the area and the “infamous” former function. The very fact of taking up the issue of function proper or inappropriate for the city, omitting such obvious issues as sanitary, epidemiological and logistic considerations, becomes one of the crowning evidences of the theatricality of the solutions adopted by these facilities. Not using the place history in the process of creating a shopping mall due to its significant, nowadays often negatively understood emotional charge, is a fully conscious action. By creating a function commonly called the “temple of commerce”, the designer aims to evoke only positive emotions and associations, by no means inciting the user to deeper reflection on the sad history of the place where he found himself. In this respect, the building is like a theater – it is intended to evoke programmatic emotions, this time unambiguously positive, which, however, will

⁷ J. Janczykowski, *Krakowskie zabytki postindustrialne – kłopot czy szansa?*, Wiadomości Konserwatorskie, 2007, no. 22, pp. 102–105.

⁸ A. Gryglewska, P. Gerber, *Wpływ rozwoju technologii produkcji oraz higieny na architekturę przemysłową na przykładzie dawnej rzeźni we Wrocławiu*, Ochrona Zabytków, 2002, no.3/4, p. 264.

⁹ M. Lisowski, *Ciągłość – trwanie w architekturze* [Continuity in architecture] [in:] D. Kozłowski, M. Misiągiewicz (eds.), *Definiowanie przestrzeni architektonicznej. Trwanie i przemijanie architektury*, vol. 2, Wydawnictwo Politechniki Krakowskiej, Kraków 2011, p. 224.

not be associated with the place itself, but with temporary events in its space, just like the theater art in the theater building.

3.2 MAGNOLIA PARK IN WROCLAW

Another urban slaughterhouse shared the fate of the Kraków abattoir. The Municipal Slaughterhouse in Wrocław, together with the animal market, was established in 1893–1896 at Legnicka Street (formerly Frankfurter Strasse) on a plot of 38.5 ha, enlarged to 1912 to 50.8 ha.¹⁰ Author of the design was the Berlin architect Georg Osthoff, however, already at the construction stage, changes were introduced, whose authors were, among others, Friedrich Rimpler and Karl Klimm.¹¹ The complex was expanded immediately after its main part was completed, in 1897 (Rimpler's sanitary slaughterhouse) and 1898–1899 (cattle market hall).¹² Due to the quality of architecture, an important element of the whole composition was the new cold store built in 1913–1916 by Georg Müller – according to sources – an example of early functionalism, erected in a reinforced concrete structure with the composition of the body emphasized by the rhythm of simplified Doric semi-columns.¹³

An important element of the composition of the facility was to separate a representative administrative, residential and commercial complex together with the stock exchange and restaurant in the front part of the plot, from the Frankfurter Strasse. To this part, distinguished in the plan by the scale of the buildings and the complexity of their body, there were two building lines separated functionally in a parallel system – a slaughterhouse and a market. Significant modernization in this case was surrounding of the plot from three sides by a railway siding. The slaughterhouse buildings represented the so-called “German” type – closed, in which all production rooms were under one roof, and the halls were used jointly by all butchers, which significantly improved the use of equipment, transport and control, and therefore, general sanitary conditions.¹⁴ A characteristic element of the concept was the transverse communication hall and the use of basilica system for better sunlight access and ventilation of individual parts of the building.

The destruction of the historic slaughterhouse was carried out in two stages. In 1945, the front – representative part of the building complex was destroyed, while the plant which was functioning just a few months earlier was demolished in 1999. In its place in 2005–2007, Magnolia Park was created – a shopping, recreation and entertainment center with a total retail and service area of over 100,000 m² after the 2015 extension. The concept was developed by the YG Project studio. Nothing, except for the layout of buildings perpendicular to the line of Legnicka Street, has not been preserved from the historical development of the plot. It is difficult to find any references to the original form and function of the site. The only reference, however illegible to anyone but a narrow group of specialists, is the use of clinker cladding in natural color to cover the front facade, which in its form refers (though in significantly changed proportions) to the form of the basilica market hall which was once a part of the premise. Unfortunately, the convergence of forms ends there.

¹⁰ A. Gryglewska, P. Gerber, *op. cit.*, p. 272.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 270.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 272.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 273.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 264, 272.

As in the case of Galeria Kazimierz, the Wrocław facility has used only the “safest”, the least negative element of the historical assumption. Associating the shopping centre with a place of mass slaughter of animals would not be appropriate from the point of view of the need to commercialize the facility. In the case of Magnolia, this is all even more theatrical because an imitation of a historical “detail” was created in a technology completely different from the original. Massive masonry walls with a highlighted brick drawing were replaced by a lightweight curtain structure.

3.3 SUKCESJA GALLERY IN ŁÓDŹ

The example of the Sukcesja Gallery in Łódź shows another case of commercial assumptions being implemented in a collision with a historic building. This shopping center was established on the premises of former textile factories (consisting of a court weaving mill and finishing plant) founded in 1878 by Juliusz Albrecht and Józef Gampe.

Within a few years, a new mechanical weaving mill and a finishing building were built over the owned area. Due to lack of space, it was decided to build a new factory, which started working in 1894. It was a large, 3-storey, cotton spinning mill and weaving mill, which was further expanded in 1898 and 1911.¹⁵ In 1913, the factory was transformed into the Joint Stock Company of Gampe and Albrecht Cotton Manufactory. In 1945, the factory was under compulsory state management and then nationalized, and in 2008, as preparation for the construction of the gallery – demolished. Only small interior elements, cast-iron columns, gantry, etc. were preserved. At that time, it turned out that this building, although being a valuable element of the architectural and cultural history of the city, was not listed in the register of monuments of the province.

The historic building, which survived until the beginning of the 21st century, consisted of 3 storeys topped with two towers, which housed staircases with water tanks at the top.¹⁶ The brick facade was captured by the rhythm of brick breaks. What aroused a lot of criticism, despite the fact that the building no longer existed, was the fact that while applying for funding for the investment its name was adopted as “revitalization”. The author of the concept was the Group-Arch studio. While creating the Sukcesja concept, an attempt was made to reconstruct and incorporate a drawing of the previously demolished building, although the newly created cubature exceeded the historical building many times, occupying completely the available area. Although the facade from the side of Aleja Politechniki was recreated in great detail, it was still not a copy of the historical facade, because it was only recreated in the main part, without reconstructing of the turrets and with the changed and idealized line of the ground floor, without maintaining the original layout of the entrances, but with the shop windows in the ground floor on each axis. This creates an impression of loyalty to the original, though not entirely. A large amount of detail attracts an attention of the recipient and diverts it from the massive and quite typical building body that appears in the back. Although the original design assumptions also included the reconstruction of the rear facade, which in this form would constitute the gallery’s internal facade, separating a sequence of service premises along

¹⁵ *Manufaktura Bawełniana Gampe i Albrecht Spółka Akcyjna w Łodzi*, sygn. 39/491, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, <https://szukajwarchiwach.pl/39/491/0#tabZespol> (access: 1.06.2020).

¹⁶ A. Mastalerz, *Oblicza transformacji obiektów przemysłowych w kontekście rewitalizacji i ochrony dziedzictwa kulturowego – na przykładach zespołów pofabrycznych z regionu łódzkiego*, *Architecturae et Artibus*, 2017, vol. 9, no. 4, pp. 33–37.

Aleja Politechniki, this did not happen eventually (mainly due to the significant cost of such reconstruction). So, in the case of Sukcesja, we deal with the pseudo-historical set design of one of the facades, which is enlivened by elements of conscious stylization, but without the permanent binding of historical and contemporary elements into a coherent whole.

3.4 MANUFATURA IN ŁÓDŹ

Compared to the previously discussed, the Manufaktura in Łódź facility is much better presented. The commercial and service complex established at the former Izrael Poznański factory is currently an example of actual revitalization of the post-industrial area in Łódź. The development history of the complex dates back to 1871 and the construction of the first weaving mill, a housing estate of workers' houses, and in 1877–1878 – the largest building of the complex, now transformed into a hotel. From the currently existing buildings there is also, among others, the high weaving mill built in 1895.

The complex of buildings of the I.K. Poznański Cotton Products Joint Stock Company took up an area of over 30 ha with 22 buildings, a railway siding, creating a unique complex in the very centre of Łódź. While preparing for building a shopping and cultural centre in the years 1999–2002, the reconstructions and extensions with no historical value, mainly from the period after 1950, were demolished.¹⁷

Manufaktura was designed by the SUD Architects studio from Lyon, and its implementation lasted in the years 2003–2006. In order to preserve the character of analyzed area, most of the original urban layout has been preserved, partly including preserved buildings in the designed commercial and service function, and partly separating them into museum facilities, specific hotels and apartments.

Preserving the visible proportion between historical tissue, restored and adapted to new needs, and the newly designed elements allowed to maintain the character of the place without the need for theatrical procedures. An important fact in this case is that the activities aimed at creating an internal, extended pedestrian courtyard also resulted in the inclusion of the palace of I.K. Poznański in the complex. At this point, the staffage is designed to direct the client to the courtyard, leaving him/her free to use the space.¹⁸ Therefore, it is not surprising that the main body of the shopping mall appeared as a closing of the square in a form adjusted to the whole, but not stylized.

4. SHOPPING MALL AS A THEATRE OF COMMERCIALITY. THE CONCLUSIONS

The main feature proving the large role of staffage in creating the space of shopping malls is their temporariness. Variability, and above all, even programmatic adaptability to changing socio-political conditions, which cause an upsetting of the rental structure and the current needs of clients, and also causes great variability in case of the user himself. The legibility of the form of the building is important because during the design process only a small fraction

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

¹⁸ M. Galkowski, *The Effect of Privatization and Commodification into the Functions of Pedestrian Public Space: Case Study of the Central Plaza at 'Manufaktura' Shopping Centre in Lodz (Poland)*, 2019 IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering, 2018, vol. 471, art. 072039, p. 3.

of the “permanent” recipients who know the facility should be assumed each time. Shopping centers in terms of architecture are therefore designed for a one-time customer. This customer pays less attention to detail, there are elements much more important, like the so-called “first impression,” reading the general character of the place where it is located. That is why solutions in some way conventionally treating historical tissue are allowed, forcing some simplifications and distortions. The illusion of forms is often forced by the desire to mask the real size of the building and the shapelessness of the body erected with the fastest possible techniques. Shopping malls are built to achieve specific socio-economic goals, and therefore their entire form is subordinated to it.

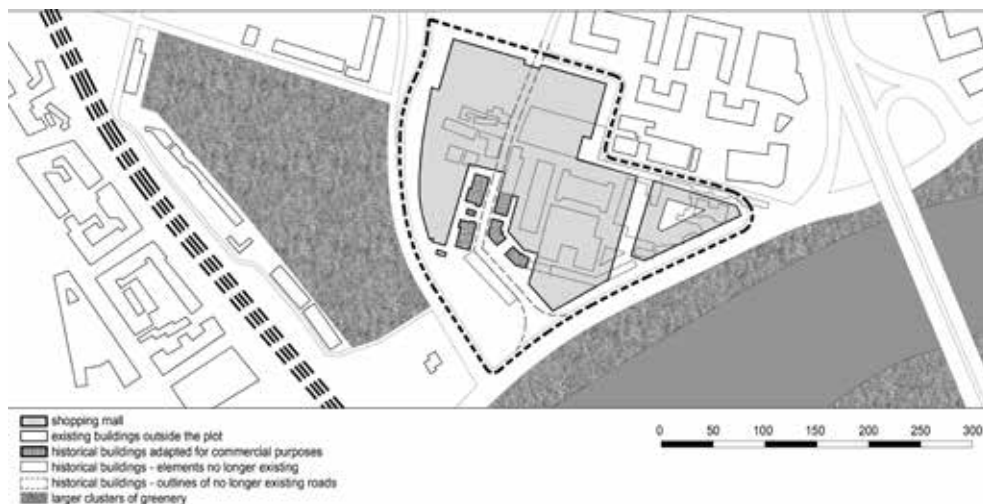
Shopping malls are variable, and their main feature is adaptability – adaptation to frequent changes, but also to quick rearrangement related to the change of tenants of a given premises, the need to expand the entire premise without closing the functioning facility, but equally often – with the need to change the adopted style of the facility, making the visual information system more clear, etc.

The form and aesthetics of the commercial architecture means that it becomes a kind of architectural costume that assumes a given function in a given place. The architecture of a shopping mall is a disguise – when it is created in a place of historical value, it often adopts the features of a place at least in minimal form. Another thing is that in this case we are dealing with the illusion of form – typically industrial function and construction, dressed in a costume of durability, historicism and “everyday life”. In fact, the gallery’s facilities are much closer to industrial forms with strict modularity, repeatability and blocking, which aims to achieve lightness and changes within the internal structure. After the temporary elements are removed, the bare structure remains, which in theory can be transformed into a building of any other function. In practice, however, we are dealing with too large floor areas and too scaled proportions to economically justify transforming them into anything else.

A characteristic feature is schematic and simplifying in relation to historical forms. Many examples include the use of contemporary brick for historical restorations, or, as in the case of Galeria Bielany near Wrocław – the use of the mountain motif to create the facade and transform the connectors between the voids to give them the form of bridges, as Wrocław is also called the “city of 100 bridges”. The use of dummy props “authenticating” architectural fiction becomes the simplest method to personalize the gallery and, as a rule, a rather primitive attempt to put it in the context of the area. The visitor’s gaze is guided from the attractor to the attractor in order to convince him that he wants to stay in the place as long as possible.

The shopping mall is created as a place to spend time pleasantly. Therefore, it escapes in every possible way from martyrology, history and “difficult” topics in architecture, such as industrial slaughter of animals, work without social protection during the first capitalism towards what is “quick, easy and pleasant.”

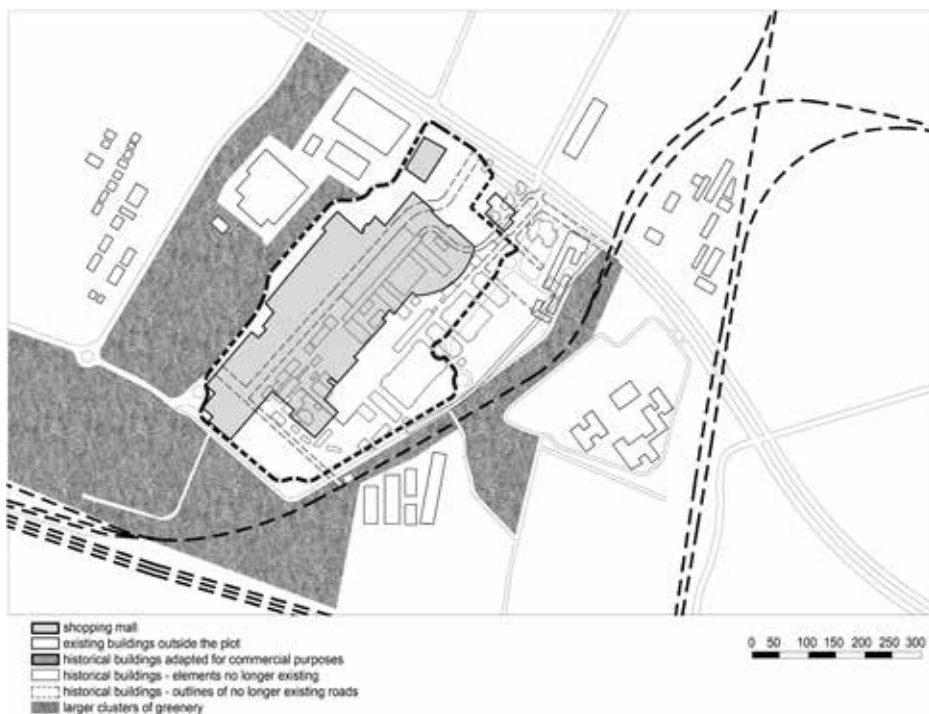
When analyzing the creation process, from the design concept to implementation and daily functioning, there is a clear tendency to use buildings and sites historically relevant to the city. Using the legend of the place (and not necessarily the physical space itself, which in the case of historic buildings is in the best case a necessary evil for most investors, as shown by the history of activities in facilities throughout the country) to build the image of a traditional and permanent brand, as well as associated with local history, has become a path used by many shopping center designers. At the same time, there is a clear tendency to simultaneously silence those elements of a given area, which become uncomfortable for the commercial vision of a commercial facility.



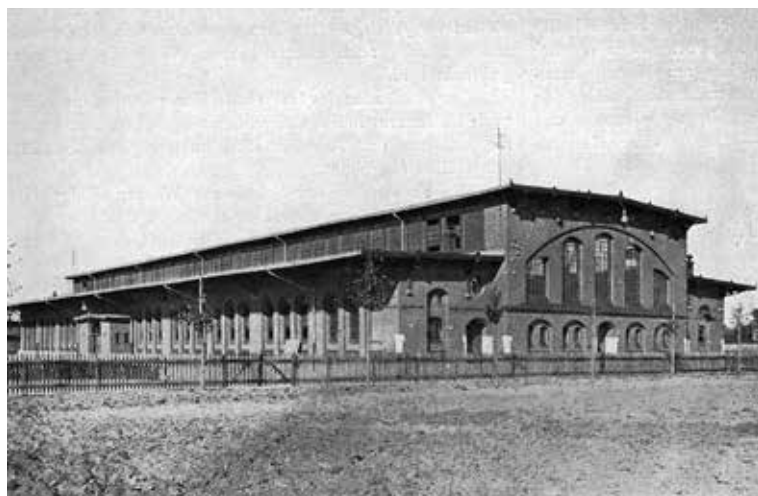
III. 1. The scheme of the location of Galeria Kazimierz in Kraków against the background of the historical urban layout of the district. Author's own elaboration based on: M. Zawadzki, *Krakowska Rzeźnia Miejska. W tekście 6 ilustracji i plan sytuacyjny*, Drukarnia Związkowa, Kraków 1913, p. 46 and <https://dawnemapykrakowa.pl>, accessed 1.6.2020



III. 2. Galeria Kazimierz in Krakow from the side of preserved slaughterhouse buildings. Source: https://fotopolska.eu/Galeria_Kazimierz_Krakow?f=786777-foto, accessed 1.6.2020



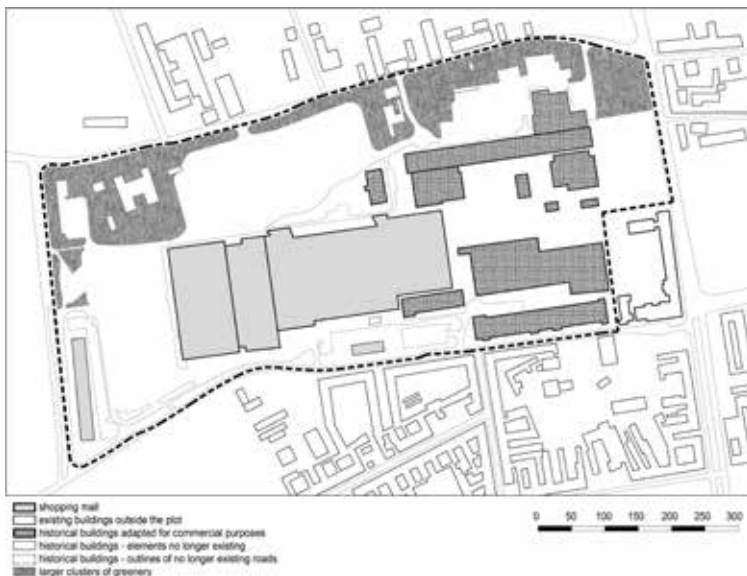
III. 3. The scheme of the location of Magnolia Park in Wrocław against the background of the historical urban layout of the district. Author's own elaboration based on: A. Gryglewska, P. Gerber, *Wpływ rozwoju technologii produkcji oraz higieny na architekturę przemysłową na przykładzie dawnej rzeźni we Wrocławiu*, Ochrona Zabytków 55/3/4, Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa, Warszawa 2002, pp. 261–278



III. 4. Market Hall of the Municipal Slaughterhouse in Wrocław with a characteristic basilica layout. Source: <https://polska-org.pl/>, accessed 1.6.2020



III. 5. Magnolia Park shopping center, view of the entrance from the south-east, referring to the basilica layout of the Municipal Slaughterhouse. Source: J. Kulesza, *Zamykają Tesco w Magnolii i przy Długiej. Zastąpią je sklepy znanych sieci*, 15.4.2020, <https://wroclaw.wyborcza.pl/wroclaw/7,35771,25873303,zamkneli-tesco-w-magnolii-i-przy-dlugiej-zastapia-je-klepy.html>, accessed 1.6.2020



III. 6. The scheme of the location of Manufaktura in Poznań against the background of the historical urban layout of the district. Author's own elaboration based on: M. Galkowski, *The Effect of Privatization and Commodification into the Functions of Pedestrian Public Space: Case Study of the Central Plaza at 'Manufaktura' Shopping Centre in Lodz (Poland)*, 2019 IOP Conference Series: Materials Science and Engineering, 2018, no. 471 072039

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