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LANDSCAPE OF INCREASING FALSEHOOD IN CONTEMPORARY TOURISM ARCHITECTURE OF MIELNO

KRAJOBRAZ NARASTAJĄCEGO FAŁSZU WE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ ARCHITEKTURZE TURYSTYCZNEJ MIELNA

Abstract

The civilization and cultural changes started in the mid-nineteenth century led to the appearance and subsequent accumulation of falsehood in the architecture of towns located on the Baltic coast. Fishing settlements have become spas and resorts, as a result of an accelerated process, during which the original features of local architecture were supplanted, first by borrowed and then by functionally-accidental forms. In the growing spatial chaos created by advertisements and ephemeral, seasonal buildings and objects not adapted to the broadly understood context, it is increasingly difficult to find true architecture, i.e. one that results from the complex conditions of the cultural landscape of the seaside resort. This search is even more difficult due to the penetration of real forms, such as the original development of fishing settlements, with nineteenth-century borrowings from Swiss architecture and contemporary falsehood visible in the non-reflective repetitions of global architecture.

Keywords: architecture of seaside resorts, false in architecture, protection of the cultural landscape, Central Pomerania

Streszczenie

Rozpoczęte w połowie XIX w. zmiany cywilizacyjne i kulturowe doprowadziły do pojawienia się, a następnie nawarstwiania zjawiska fałszu w architekturze miejscowości położonych na wybrzeżu Bałtyku. Osady rybackie stały się uzdrowiskami i kurortami w wyniku przyspieszonego procesu, podczas którego pierwotne cechy lokalnej architektury zostały wyparte, najpierw przez zapożyczenia, a następnie przez funkcjonalno-przypadkowe formy. W narastającym chaosie przestrzennym, tworzonemu przez reklamy i efemeryczne sezonowe budynki oraz obiekty niedostosowane do szeroko rozumianego kontekstu, coraz trudniejsze jest znalezienie architektury prawdziwej, tj. takiej, która wynika ze złożonych uwarunkowań krajobrazu kulturowego kurortu nadmorskiego. Poszukiwanie to jest tym bardziej utrudnione przez przenikanie się form prawdziwych, takich jak pierwotna zabudowa osad rybackich, z XIX-wiecznymi zapożyczeniami z architektury szwajcarskiej, i współczesnego fałszu widocznego w bezrefleksyjnych powtórzeniach architektury globalnej.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura kurortów nadmorskich, fałsz w architekturze, ochrona krajobrazu kulturowego, Pomorze Środkowe

1. INTRODUCTION

Seaside recreation is nowadays the most popular way of spending holidays in Poland.¹ The Baltic resorts in the summer season are able to receive tens of thousands of tourists, who during their stay temporarily increase the population density of selected cities even several times. Hand in hand with a high tourism load factor² is the need to create the necessary infrastructure that is able to provide accommodation for all visitors. The current Baltic landscape has been formed as a result of long-term transformations caused by human activity: both within the natural environment and architecture. The changes in the structure of coastal towns that have appeared since the first half of the 19th century have often manifested themselves in a clear blurring of the historical identity of the resort space. This phenomenon can be described as a growing falsehood in architecture, resulting in the irretrievable loss of true architecture, i.e. one that results from the complex conditions of the cultural landscape of the place. The article aims to examine the above subject based on the analysis of the tourist architecture of Mielno, which is an example of a historically formed seaside resort in Central Pomerania. The text is divided into two main parts: the first introduces the historical process of formation of the cultural landscape of the village, starting from outlining the features of the original regional architecture to the transformations of the 19th and 20th centuries; while the second part presents an empirical analysis of the contemporary spatial situation. The purpose of the author's research is to define what is the *truth* in the architecture of the place, as well as what will be referred to as sources of increasing *falsehood*.

2. THE HISTORICAL PROCESS OF FORMING CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF MIELNO. AN ATTEMPT TO DEFINE TRUTH IN ARCHITECTURE OF THE PLACE

2.1 ARCHITECTURE OF PRIMAL FISHING SETTLEMENTS

The genesis of the architecture of the coastal belt, covering today's areas of Central Pomerania, is directly related to the development of fishing settlements. Small Slavic villages, such as Mielno, Unieście, Chłopy, Sarbinowo, Czajcze and Łazy, scattered along the coast, functioned thanks to agriculture and fish trade. The impact of various cultural influences in the region and restrictions resulting from communication conditions allowed the development of autonomous ethnographic units, called *cultural islands*.³ They were distinguished by specific habits of residents and original forms of vernacular development. All of the mentioned fishing

¹ M. Dudrywika, K. Duda-Gromada, *Wpływ turystyki na rozwój przestrzenny miejscowości nadmorskich, wybrane aspekty*, Turyzm, 2014, no. 24, p. 67.

² Based on GUS data determining the number of overnight stays granted to tourists in the first half of 2019 in individual voivodships, *Baza noclegowa według stanu w dniu 31 lipca 2019 r. i jej wykorzystanie w I półroczu 2019 r.*, www.stat.gov.pl (access: 29.4.2020).

³ An example of a developed cultural island in the Central Pomerania region is the Jamno culture. Numerous studies conducted on it were collected as part of the exhibition entitled *Cultural Island* in the open-air museum called Zagroda Jamneńska, source: *Wyspa kulturowa. Wieś Jamno pod Koszalinem* [in:] *Muzeum w Koszalinie*, <http://muzeum.koszalin.pl/?q=node/19> (access: 24.4.2020).

settlements, with the exception of the now-defunct village of Czajcze, were the germ for the currently known seaside resorts.

The first mention of the town of *Mëllen* (now Mielno) appeared in 1266 in a document granting municipal rights to Koszalin.⁴ The architecture of the wooden huts of a typical peasant-fisherman village depended on locally available materials and existing climate conditions (Ill. 1). Thatched roofs were mostly made of reeds or straw. The half-timbered walls were built of wood and clay, and later also of bricks. The foundations of the buildings were platforms made of surrounding boulders. At that time, these buildings had to respond primarily to the basic needs of their users – they mainly provided residential functions.

The regional architecture of Central Pomeranian fishing settlements is recognized as *true* for the studied region, i.e. it was created as a result of a long tradition resulting from local environmental and anthropological conditions. The original forms of buildings, built from local materials and using local construction techniques, will be the basic reference point for assessing subsequent transformations.

2.2 19TH-CENTURY TRANSFORMATIONS OF FISHING SETTLEMENTS INTO SEA RESORTS, BORROWING FORMS OF WESTERN ARCHITECTURE

In the first half of the 19th century, due to the popularization of tourism in Europe, Pomeranian villages began to gradually transform into health resorts. Advances in science have discovered the healing properties of sea baths. It was fashionable to relax at the sea, although at first this activity was reserved only for the elite, as an indicator of social status. It did not remain indifferent to the architecture of villages such as Mielno. Sudden spatial development of towns started, in which various types of new tourist facilities began to be built. To the east of the old part of Mielno appeared guesthouses and hotels as well as prestigious villa facilities that were located at green avenues (Ill. 2). The forms of the buildings were taken directly from Western models of spa architecture. The borrowed Swiss-style originated from Alpine resorts and at the end of the 19th century it became a dominant canon also for seaside summer architecture. It was characterized by steep roofs with elongated eaves, as well as richly carved geometric and plant details in wood. Numerous balconies and terraces were supposed to allow taking healing sunbaths, as well as to shorten the distance between man and nature.

This period of changes can be described as the first significant accumulation of falsehood in Mielno's architecture. The Swiss-style did not arise from the tradition and culture of the region of former Pomerania but was artificially applied by the trends of the time. Without a doubt, Mielno's hotels and pensions from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries create an interesting and valuable structure of the village. At the same time, the fact is that these objects have no real reference to the environment and climate in which they found themselves. Roofs with a large slope and strongly protruding eaves are characteristic for traditional Alpine towns, as are wooden decorations and details. A kind of formal falsehood meant that the original architecture of fishing settlements was already partly supplanted and replaced by new tissue. Currently, more than a century after the construction of the indicated facilities, it should be stated that their presence significantly shaped the image of the Baltic

⁴ *Zarys historyczny*, Mielno 2017, <https://www.mielno.pl/o-gminie/zarys-historyczny> (access: 12.5.2020).

seaside resorts. The stylistic mix of rural and spa facilities, which in retrospect can be seen as an added value to the cultural landscape of the place. *The True* architecture of rural farms coexisted then alongside new buildings dedicated to the function of seaside recreation. In this respect, spatial transformations introduced in subsequent years seem to be much more fraught with their effects.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT OF A SEA REST IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

The beginning of the 20th century was a time of dynamic tourist development for Mielno. The growing inflow of tourists in the season caused a steady decrease in the number of prosperous farms, which was associated with their gradual transformation into resort facilities. The direct railway line opened in 1905 between Mielno and Koszalin popularized the accessibility of coastal areas to a larger number of inhabitants. In 1913, an electric “streetcar to the beach” was opened, which operated until 1938. Thousands of tourists reached the beaches each day and used existing beds. The 1920s and 1930s were the times of the largest increase in the inflow of vacationers, and thus the construction of even more tourist structures. It was not until World War I and II that significantly slowed down the further spatial development of the resort.⁵ Military operations in Pomerania limited further investments up to the 1950s.

2.4 POST-WAR TOURISM ARCHITECTURE

The post-war period, associated with changes in the political system of Poland, is primarily a new direction for the development of coastal towns. Since the late 1950s, the tourist and spa movement in Pomerania has resumed – initially mainly based on existing, former German guesthouses and hotels, and in later years also by modern tourist architecture facilities at the time. Recreation centers, hotels, guesthouses and holiday home complexes designed in the 1970s were aimed at significantly increasing the accommodation base to provide space for visitors associated with the *Employee Holiday Fund*.⁶ The architecture of the objects constructed until 1989 was characterized by the simplicity of form and emphasis on functionalism of spatial solutions (Ill. 3). The buildings erected clearly referred to the modernist style and architecture of the Polish People’s Republic. In addition to investments with a standard hotel function, construction of larger service facilities and typical of the era housing estates began. The prefabricated blocks of flats were located among historic villa buildings and country houses, supplementing the available plots at the main avenues and walking routes (Ill. 4). It was also associated with the east-oriented development of Mielno and a significant increase in building density. The character of the town changed irretrievably then and with it the relationship of architecture with the natural landscape. The tourist profile of the village has become much more massive, which directly weakened its character.

⁵ K. Rypniewska, *Mielno – kąpielisko nad Bałtykiem, rys historyczny*, note from the collections of the Museum in Koszalin.

⁶ K. Bizio, *Architektura obiektów rekreacyjnego zamieszkiwania pasa nadmorskiego Pomorza Zachodniego na przełomie XX i XXI w. Urbanizacja i komercjalizacja przestrzeni oraz ich wpływ na środowisko kulturowe i naturalne*, *Środowisko Mieszkaniowe*, 2018, no. 24, p. 154.

The newly designed buildings of Mielno were much less in tune with the natural and cultural landscape of the coastal belt, especially in relation to thatched regional half-timbered architecture. The objects inspired by the international style did not explicitly refer to the existing character of the historically formed seaside resort – neither in terms of materials, nor in terms of shaping the architectural form. Modern facilities mostly had flat roofs, and their walls were covered with plaster or exposed prefabricated elements, which in no way referred to the Pomeranian regional architecture or to the borrowed Swiss style. Buildings began to clearly dominate in the Mielno's space. As a result of the progressive devaluation of the traditional settlement buildings from before the 19th century, the *true* tissue of the buildings was almost completely supplanted by subsequent development stages of the seaside resort. The last manor farms survived only in the oldest district of Mielno, called the Church Estate. The complex political and economic situation of the Polish People's Republic significantly contributed to this state of affairs. There was a second stratification of falsehood in Mielno's tourist architecture, which had a decisive impact on weakening the values of the cultural landscape. Lack of proper protection of the historic parts of the resort caused irreversible loss of many valuable objects that testify to the traditions and culture of past eras. At that time, the special heritage contained in simple fishing huts and farmsteads was not appreciated yet.

3. INCREASING FALSEHOOD IN CONTEMPORARY TOURISM ARCHITECTURE OF MIELNO

3.1 DIRECTION OF SPATIAL CHANGES AFTER 1989

After 1989, the ownership structure of existing boarding houses and Mielno investment areas changed. As a result of the opening of the free market economy, there was mass privatization of holiday and tourist centers. The number of state-owned accommodation facilities decreased gradually. Inhabitants of the region and local companies have become new investors. Initially, their development was mainly based on the transformation of existing residential buildings into guesthouses and on the construction of small accommodation facilities. Their functionally-random architectural forms were very often a manifestation of the creative freedom of architects. New buildings significantly stood out from the surroundings, so again it is difficult to talk about skillful entry into the landscape and cultural context (Ill. 5). Coming out of the closed stylistic frames of the Polish People's Republic architecture opened completely new perspectives in design, giving much more freedom. Aggressive color solutions and the complicated geometry of building forms are a testament to the unbridled fantasy of designers of the late 20th century in Poland.

3.2 CONTEMPORARY HISTORIZING ARCHITECTURE

Against the background of many objects of the indicated type, there were also newly designed buildings that tried to relate better to the history of the village, and in particular to its nineteenth-century curative buildings. Historicizing architecture imitates the half-timbered wall and the proportions of details, turrets and soaring roof finials (Ill. 6). It should be noted that the buildings in question were already erected with the help of modern building techniques.

This brought the risk of dishonest expression of form. An example of this situation is the facades of a modern building located on the promenade (Ill. 7). The walls of the building were covered with wooden cladding imitating a half-timbered structure. As a result of the aging process of the building, the destructive elements of the building's skin have delaminated, showing the falseness of the way of creating the architectural form. The discussed situation shows that an attempt to reconstruct the historical character of the village, in addition to the positive aspects of preserving the identity of the place, may at the same time expose its space to further symptoms of visible falsehood in architecture.

3.3 INTENTIONAL DEVASTATION OF HISTORICAL TISSUE OF OLD MIELNO

The newest times bring also a problem of intentional devastation of the historic structures of the region. The historic residential buildings of the Old Mielno district have suffered considerable losses in recent years. It happened, among others in connection with recorded fires of valuable architectural objects. At the beginning of 2013, one of the most beautiful post-German villas located at 1st May St. burned down.⁷ The abandoned and neglected holiday house Jantar, which has been included in the register of monuments since 1983, stood out in the landscape of Mielno by decorative wooden details and a soaring tower (Ill. 8).⁸ Less than three years later another historic guest house located on the same street burned down. The fire caused significant losses, affecting the building structure, which means that today it is only suitable for demolition.⁹ In the vicinity, there was the Millennium villa, which was demolished due to its poor technical condition. Earlier, an important culture-forming public space, which was the Curative Park, was closed (Ill. 9). The concert shell located in it once gathered resort guests around common musical events. Currently, the area of the historic park is only a private part of the property, belonging to the Floryn cafe. As a result, the overall availability of this space has clearly decreased, and the characteristic concert shell has fallen into ruin.

What has happened in recent years within the most representative street of Old Mielno is the evidence of the lack of sufficient protection of the cultural landscape of the resort. The way valuable monuments are eliminated should be particularly alarming for local authorities. Destructive fires and demolitions could be a manifestation of practices leading to the disposal of buildings requiring conservation arrangements.

3.4 COMMERCIALIZATION OF THE RESORT SPACE

After 1989, new threats emerged in Mielno to reduce the quality of existing tourist architecture. When assessing the quality of the space of seaside resorts, one should pay attention to the growing flood of aggressive advertisements and signs (Ill. 10). The advertisements are accompanied by ephemeral commercial and service facilities located along pedestrian routes (Ill. 11). The ineffective spatial strategy of local authorities, combined with the poorly

⁷ K. Szpakiewicz, *Pożar zabytkowej willi w Mielnie*, *Gazetka Mieleńska*, 2013, no. 1, p. 10.

⁸ Based on the data from monument card No. 1165, materials made available for research by the Provincial Office for the Protection of Monuments in Szczecin, the delegation in Koszalin.

⁹ I. Domurat, *Przedwojenne wille znikają z Mielna*, *Głos Koszaliński*, 2016, no. 7, <https://gk24.pl/przed-wojenne-wille-znikaja-z-mielna/ar/10436632> (access: 5.6.2020).

developed aesthetic awareness of the inhabitants, are the main reasons for the occurrence of current foci of falsehood in the landscape of the place.¹⁰

3.5 NEW DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT, SPATIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Due to the intensification of tourism at the beginning of the 21st century, larger hotels and guesthouses were built in Mielno. More restaurants opened, as well large chain stores. In addition to the positive economic aspects resulting from increased tourism, which clearly fueled the coastal economy, it is also worth paying attention to the dynamics of spatial transformations causing severe disturbances in the tissue of the village. Smaller entrepreneurs began to develop intensively, which allowed them to continue investing – this time in much larger tourist facilities. After 2010, large development companies became interested in the coastal belt of Mielno, whose activities led to an increase in the scale of planned investments and the incorporation of new development areas. Attractive areas along the main seaside promenade began to be built in turn by apartment buildings of an unprecedented cubic capacity (Ill. 12). Their forms can be described as universal, drawing on the trends of global hotel architecture. Again, it is difficult to speak of a reference to the tradition and context of the historical architecture of Mielno. Modern tourism architecture in its form is more reminiscent of the extensive resorts of the French Riviera or the buildings of the Mexican Acapulco. The similarity observed is undoubtedly the result of the intensive globalization of tourism.

The latest development movement should be described as strongly affecting the protected natural landscape of the Baltic Coast. The large size of buildings situated in compact clusters causes the escalation of problems related to the loss of valuable biological areas, creating a natural ecosystem for the habitats of rare animal and plant species. The commune of Mielno is also located in the protected area of the Koszalin Coastal Belt, which is a significant contraindication to situating objects in the immediate vicinity of the dunes. Despite this, it seems that the future of the village is associated primarily with increasingly tight buildings on the shoreline, which will result in the creation of the so-called *seaside wall*.¹¹

In addition, other tourist infrastructure facilities are being created within the beach to make the seaside rest more attractive. Among them is the construction of a new fragment of the *Friendship Promenade* (Ill. 13). The type of raised platform stretches in a straight line over a distance of 350 m. The name of the investment implemented from European Union funds suggests a place for joint walks and meetings. The problem lies, however, in the fact that the object does not have a single bench or a clear bay that could encourage to stop and make new relations. In practice, the object defines a monotonous walking axis, which significantly underestimates the values on the theoretical *impressions chart*.¹² One standing at one end of the Promenade, get the impression of its seemingly infinite length.

In recent years, the Norwegian investor Firmus Group has presented the largest development project to date for Central Pomerania. The award-winning urban concept of *Dune*

¹⁰ The provisions in force of *Studium uwarunkowań i kierunków zagospodarowania przestrzennego gminy Mielno* from 27.4.2010 are not effective, regarding restrictions on the positioning of advertisements and advertising signs in designated conservation zones. The lack of an effective Landscape Act results in a constantly deteriorating spatial situation.

¹¹ K. Bizio, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

¹² K. Wejchert, *Elementy kompozycji urbanistycznej*, Arkady, Warszawa 1984, pp. 171–184.

City provides for the construction of a new tourist center that would combine recreational and tourist functions with the conference and congress center (Ill. 14). The whole gigantic structure would occupy an area of about 38 ha (from the border of Mielno with Unieście, to the center of the Jamno Spit). Until now, the investment has been implemented only in a small part – mainly due to the fact that the project has not obtained all the necessary formal and legal arrangements. In this case, the Regional Director of the Environment in Szczecin refused to agree on the project due to the anticipated ecological threat scenario.¹³

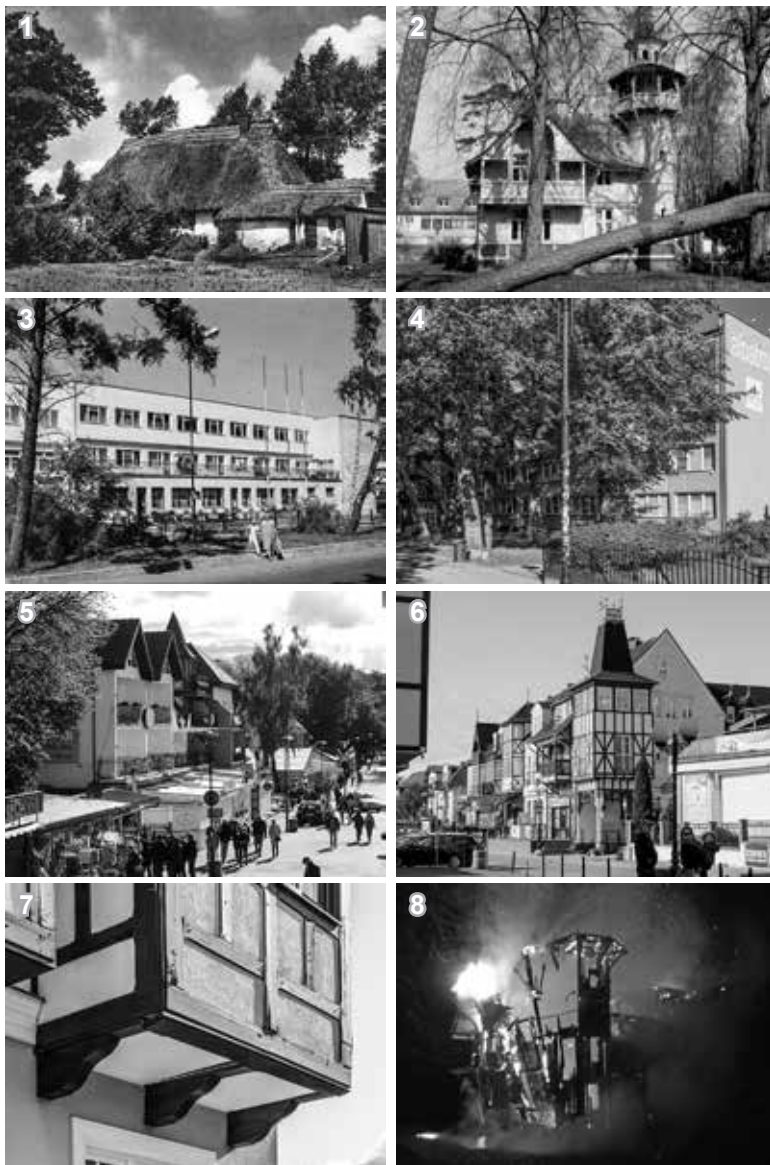
According to the author, the implementation of such a large investment would be associated with a complete disruption of the existing cultural landscape of the region, which is why the decision to suspend the implementation of the rest of the concept seems absolutely right. The structure known as “Polish Dubai” would undoubtedly be detached from the scale and broadly understood the context of the place. It is also difficult to even imagine the irreversible consequences that would be taken up by the natural environment. At this point the question arises: is it ever worth risking the loss of the coastal landscape in order to obtain the planned benefits for economic development?

4. CONCLUSION

As a result of the described civilization processes, the true architecture of the coast has evolved under the influence of the analyzed set of spatial factors. For the most part, they can be described as elements leading to the blurring of the valuable cultural landscape of Mielno, which grew out of the tradition of Pomeranian villages. Through the nineteenth-century transformations, primal fishing settlements have become resorts and spas, thus becoming part of the industrial and cultural revolution. This caused that the features of the original local architecture were gradually supplanted by borrowings modeled on the European curative architecture and the subsequent influences of the architecture of the Polish People’s Republic. Nowadays, the spreading repetitions of global architecture are characterized by a multiplication of functionally-random forms that cause an escalation of commonly noticeable symptoms of disharmony and deepening spatial disorder. The biggest problems of modern times include the uncontrolled flood of kitschy forms and advertisements, the loss of coherence of public spaces, as well as the intensifying aggressive development movement, which negatively affects the natural environment of the coast. The described sequence of historical transformations showed that due to subsequent layers of falsehood in Mielno’s architecture, the character of traditional buildings was almost completely lost. In just two centuries, the original architecture, which grew out of the natural conditions of the coast and the traditions of Central Pomerania, was forgotten. Today, few open-air museums are refuges for dying culture, which allow for real protection of the heritage of coastal areas (Ill. 15).

Currently, the only chance to reverse negative trends in Mielno’s tourist architecture seems to be to publicize the most important problems of the disappearing identity of the resort. Improvement of the difficult situation will be possible only thanks to the effective promotion of the region’s history, as well as increasing the aesthetic awareness of the society. If the wave of growing falsehood in Mielno’s architecture is not stopped, the priceless heritage of the place with the undiscovered potential for the development of sustainable tourism will be lost.

¹³ “Polski Dubaj” nie może ruszyć z budową. Cały czas brak jednej zgody [in:] Business Insider, <https://businessinsider.com.pl/wiadomosci/problem-z-budowa-miasteczka-dune-city/kmvby3n> (access: 24.5.2020).



- III. 1. Beautiful thatch fishing huts, Czajcze 1930, photo: J. Sterczyński
- III. 2. Jantar Pension from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries on 1st May St., Mielno 1984, photo: F.J. Lechowicz
- III. 3. Holiday center of the Technical Agricultural Service Company "Mechanizator", Mielno 1985, photo: L. Surowiec
- III. 4. Holiday house "Albatros", the main walking route on Kościuszko St., author's photo
- III. 5. Postmodern buildings on Kościuszki St. from the 1990s, author's photo
- III. 6. Historizing frontage on Nabrzeżna St., author's photo
- III. 7. Detail of a modern building located on the Seaside Promenade, visible stratification of the historic facade, author's photo
- III. 8. Willa Jantar during a fire on January 1, 2013, photo: K. Skrzypczyk



- III. 9. Concert in the Curative Park on an old postcard, Mielno 1931, source: <https://polska-org.pl/7727438,foto.html>, date of access: 10.06.2020
- III. 10. Contemporary buildings in Mielno on Kościuszki St., restaurant advertising signs significantly obstruct the visibility of the building's facade, author's photo
- III. 11. Ephemeral forms of objects located along main pedestrian routes intensify the sense of spatial disorder, author's photo
- III. 12. Dune apartment buildings on the Seaside Promenade, author's photo
- III. 13. Friendship Promenade in Mielno, the effect of the infinity of the view axis, author's photo
- III. 14. Dune City – aerial visualization, Studio Architektoniczne Sietnicki, source: <http://sasstudio.pl/gallery/dune-city/>, date of access: 12.06.2020
- III. 15. Open-air museum of Jamno culture in the former village of Jamno, author's photo

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