

Processes of the Reconstruction of Polish Cities against the European Background

Kinga Racoń-Leja, PhD

Faculty of Architecture of the Cracow University of Technology

ABSTRACT

The study shows the phases of post-Second World War processes of the rebuilding Polish cities. The factor of times seems to be a crucial element in the evaluation, showing the changing attitudes and directions. The vast destruction of Poland during the war and enormous demographic movements as post-war consequences of shifted country borders greatly complicated further actions. The distinct Polish political situation caused major problems in understanding the identity of the cities to be rebuilt, leading to a choice between a historical reconstruction on the one hand, or a rejection of historical context on the other. These choices were strongly affected by the ideologies of Socialist Realism, Modernism, and later Post-Modernism, with its nostalgia for historicism. However the specificity of the processes showed a strong tendency among Polish architects for reconstruction. The scale and the methods of the rebuilding processes varied, which was the case of bigger cities – like Warsaw, Gdańsk, Poznań or Wrocław. In some smaller cities attempts to restore the former market places took place—presently exemplified by Opole, Kazimierz Dolny, Racibórz or Bolków. During the post-war processes multiple mistakes and problems occurred. The difficulties involved the lack of survey materials and a lack of qualified

architects and planners. The replacement of the populations of cities became the most crucial matter—a typical condition in so-called Reclaimed Lands. The reconstruction was sometimes loosely conducted, leading to the stylisation of architecture. Other improvements involved reduced density or functional transpositions of the city centres. One instance of material for comparison are cities that have been divided by state borders, such as Görlitz-Zgorzelec or Frankfurt (Oder)-Słubice. The decades that followed the 1980's brought with them distinct examples of reconstruction, carried out in the form of retroversion – in the cases of Elbląg and other cities.

The processes listed by the author involve the clearing of debris and ruins, planning and re-evaluation regarding successive phases of the rebuilding processes. The summarising conclusions involve the evaluation of rebuilding processes based on the issues of: holistic continuation of the process, urban continuity, cultural heritage and “memory places” protection and most of all social engagement. The paper refers to the research conducted in recent years on the “Contemporary conditions of the cities impacted by the Second World War”.

Text

The process of the reconstruction of Polish cities was immensely complex. Its dynamic in different areas of the country, whose borders were shifted after World War II, differed significantly. The enormous destruction and the country's political transformations impacted the shaping of its destroyed cities. Contrary to pressure and imposed ideologies, the idea of reconstruction was still present in the threads of rebuilding. Elements of these complexes still under discussion constitute the focus of this study.

1. Destruction

1.1 The scale of the destruction

The subject of the reconstruction was a completely ruined state. Poland's losses after World War II were multi-planar. It is not possible to determine the entirety of these losses in the face of the sheer vastness of the destruction, as well as the territorial changes that took place. Despite the active participation of Polish forces on all fronts as members of the Allies, Poland had no influence on post-war changes made to its territory. Practically 48 percent of the pre-war territory of the Polish Republic was lost to the USSR, which also constituted a direct effect of the war. In total, Poland was reduced in size by 20 percent. The post-German Reclaimed Lands that Poland received in return were in complete ruin. The problem in evaluating the destruction is a subject that was returned to numerous times, both right after the war and in recent years – when detailed reports on the damage to individual cities were published – for Warsaw in 2004, Łódź in 2006 or Poznań in 2008. “Report on the matter of the losses and wartime damage of Poland in the years 1939–45” of 1947,^[1] which was published again in 2007, still remains most expansive collection on this subject. It was also at that time that “Map of wartime property damage”^[2] was published for the purpose of drafting the National Plan Study. The document depicted the immense losses in, among other cities, Warsaw, Gdańsk, Kielce, Poznań, Lublin, as well as areas of Subcarpathia, in addition to areas along the Narew and San rivers. The map showed the dramatic situation of the cities in the Reclaimed Lands, the current Opole, Lower Silesian and Lubusz Voivodships, and in the north – those of Szczecin, the West Pomeranian, Pomeranian, Warmian-Masurian and Podlasie Voivodships.

Krzysztof Pawłowski estimated that in Western Pomerania, out of 70 cities, 37 were completely ruined, while 26 were destroyed by 50 to 100 percent. In the Wrocław Voivodship, out of 86 cities, 29 were destroyed in excess of 50 percent. Among the large devastated cities in this area, Wrocław and Szczecin particularly stood out. In total, 177 Polish cities that possessed historical centers before the war had suffered more than 50 percent damage.^[3]

[1] Original title "Sprawozdanie w przedmiocie strat i szkód wojennych Polski w latach 1939–45" (1939–45), (1947, publ. 2007).

[2] Original title "Mapa Zniszczeń Wojennych Nieruchomości Miejskich" (1947). The degree of destruction was assessed by presenting the amount of cubic metres of destroyed buildings in relation to the number of inhabitants of a given city in 1939. The study also took into consideration buildings that were damaged by more than 10 percent. The data was collected without including circulation, military and most industrial property.

[3] K. Pawłowski (1986), p. 52.

The type of damage, classified after the war by the architect of the reconstruction of Warsaw, Jan Zachwatowicz, was also of significance to the later rebuilding effort. According to his assessment, in Poland we could list:

- partially destroyed cities, in which some buildings were burned or destroyed – such as Lublin, Brzeg;
- cities where damage was significant, but caused by the burning away of the interior of buildings whose walls had remained – examples being Poznań, Wrocław, Opole, Olsztyn and Nysa;
- cities that were completely destroyed, in which only remnants of buildings could be seen jutting out of debris – this is how Warsaw, the old-town areas of Gdańsk, Szczecin, Malbork, Chojny, Pyrzyce, Głogów, Strzegom, Koszalin, Kotobrzeg and others looked like after the war.

1.2 Population changes and movements

Apart from the significant damage, the immense demographic changes and losses, which also had an impact on the situation of the country, were a separate problem for Poland. It is estimated that 220 out of every 1,000 persons died in Poland during World War II. This is considered to be the highest ratio among all the countries participating in the war, regardless of whether we accept the estimates from 1947, when it was assumed that Poland had lost 6,028,000 of its citizens,^[4] or take into consideration the latest study from 2009 determining the losses at between 5.6-5.8 million. The numbers were verified by attempting to objectively assess German war crimes, and primarily those of the Soviets, although they were still vast.^[5] Around 3 million of the victims were Polish Jews. Out of all the victims, around 644,000 died as a result of direct military operations, while the remaining 5,384,000 died due to the terror of the occupying forces.^[6]

Post-war Poland witnessed major migrations: 1,400,000 Poles and 200,000 Jews from areas held by the Soviet Union were resettled to Poland. At the same time, 480,000 Ukrainians and 36,000 Belarusians were resettled to the USSR.^[7] Internal migration in the years 1951-87 in Poland affected over 2 million people.^[8] At the same time, according to Polish estimates, in the years 1945-50 around 3.5-4 million German people were displaced from Polish lands, while after 1980 another 60,000 of so-called late displaced persons left the country.^[9] Other data shows that, between 1945-1950, 6.9 million German people either were displaced or escaped from areas of pre-war eastern Germany, with 2.9 million in Czechoslovakia and 1.9 million from other countries suffering the same fate.^[10]

2. Conditions of the process

Reconstruction after World War II was accompanied by considerable problems, notably the lack of access to historical archives and iconography, which were essential to setting the conditions for execution. Enormous prisms of debris made it difficult to carry out the surveying of the surviving urban layouts, which were often the only elements making reconstruction possible. Thus, planning processes were delayed as well. The lack of access to archival materials was the norm in the Reclaimed Lands, where a dearth of historical studies constituted one of the fundamental problems, making the recreation of the cities'

[4] Sprawozdanie ... (1947, publ. 2007), op. cit., pp. 27-35.

[5] W. Materski, T. Szarota (ed.) (2009), also see: P. Pleskot (2009).

[6] Sprawozdanie ... (1947, publ. 2007), op. cit., pp. 27-35.

[7] M. Nowakowski, p. 87, za M. Kaczorowski (1980), also see: A. Swanston, M. Swanston (2008), pp. 341-42.

[8] Z. Czyżowska (1990), p. 70.

[9] From: <https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl/haslo/wypedzeni;3998939.html>, retrieved on 12.12.2017.

[10] R. Jóźwiak (2009), p. 97.

forms impossible. If it were not for the surveying documentation of pre-war buildings in Warsaw prepared by the Polish Architecture Division of the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology that had been saved from burning ruins, it would have been difficult to even initiate any reconstruction processes. Immense gaps in documentation also applied to Gdańsk.^[11]

[11] J. Zachwatowicz (1965), p. 52.

Another hurdle was the lack of a qualified cadre of architects and urban planners in post-German areas. Few had as much experience associated with the process of the revalorization of larger urban complexes as Jan Zachwatowicz, who was involved in works on the Zamość Fortress.^[12] The activity of Kazimierz Wejchert and Hanna Adamczewska-Wejchert, who in 1946, along with a team of young architects, drafted simplified plans for 68 cities of the Olsztyn, Szczecin and Wrocław voivodships as a part of their studies can be considered pioneering in this difficult, post-war period. Their actions coincided with attempts to prevent unplanned urban development after the war – particularly in post-German areas. These designs were used in later planning documents.^[13]

[12] A. Gaczot (2017), pp. 74-75.

[13] M. Nowakowski (2013), op. cit., p. 101; H. Adamczewska-Wejchert (1986).

One subject often overlooked with regard to the execution of the reconstruction process was the demolition of damaged buildings that could have been rebuilt. Oftentimes more buildings essential to the structure of a city, including historical ones, were demolished than those whose technical condition demanded it. The demolitions, as a part of clearing cities from ruins, also applied to buildings that did not fit well within the historical context of a particular city or its new urban layout. Demolitions largely applied to townhouses from the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, as they were not considered historical and were directly associated with the period of the partitions^[14] in Poland. Additional demolitions were often later listed as effects of wartime destruction. Another element that is difficult for us to understand today is the destruction of the details of façades and thus their simplification. Examples of many detrimental actions were documented in Warsaw.^[15] In a few Polish cities, a complete “replacement” of buildings surrounding market squares took place, such as in Lwówek Śląski and Nysa, while the renovation of the fronts of townhouses was an alternative solution.^[16] This subject still requires documenting in Poland. In territories of the Democratic Republic of Germany, there were cases of demolishing damaged religious buildings, such as in Dresden and Magdeburg. Clearing debris and removing buildings that did not fit with the later conceptual plan of Rotterdam constituted one of the most extreme cases of eliminating the historical elements of a city.

In many damaged cities an almost complete replacement of the population took place as well. In Wrocław, for instance, the process of the displacement of the German population ended in 1947 and those who remained in the city had no influence on its further development. The percentage share of the native Polish population was negligible. Dorota Wolniczek pointed out that most of the newcomers had been people from small towns (41.2 percent) and the countryside (40 percent), resettled from the former Polish Eastern Borderlands. To them, everything had been, as the author wrote, “different, alien—neither familiar nor their property, for it constituted neither a national possession nor a possession amassed by a family’s multigenerational efforts.”^[17]

[14] Partitions time – years 1795 (1772) – 1918, a period when Poland was not an independent country.

[15] A. Bojarski (2012).

[16] K. Pawłowski (1986), op. cit., p. 61.

[17] D. Wolniczek (2012), pp. 32-34, quote: p. 35.

Another problem that influenced the identity of a city was nationalisation in destroyed areas. The process was inevitable in light of the scale of the devastation and applied to the majority of cities that had been significantly affected in particular, such as Warsaw, Le Havre, Rotterdam or Dresden, although it was carried out in different ways^[18]. These decisions later carried over to the later execution of the reconstruction process – most often performed by the state or in a collective manner, tearing away the still-living residents from their places, and often from centuries-old family history. Former membership and identity were being erased in this manner. The protection of “memorial sites” in cities and adjacent areas, which could also mean the necessity for expropriation, was a separate issue. The more it was postponed, the harder it was to perform.

The reconstruction was a long-term process. In the 1980s, one could still encounter cities, whose centers were empty – such as Elbląg, Głogów or Dresden. Krzysztof Pawłowski reminisced that for the first 40 years after the war the scope of the work was constantly being changed, as were the methods of carrying it out, with the expansion of the research toolset and the wealth of the construction experience. Historical and urban planning studies were of great importance to the results obtained, as was the perfecting of documentation techniques and the cooperation of urban planners with conservation services.^[19]

3. Spectrum of the reconstruction

The belief in the need for a post-war reconstruction of cities, which was quite widespread in Poland, was a result of the patriotism of Polish architects. The nascent Polish statehood, which had just been reborn in 1918, was chained down once again after 20 years by the totalitarian activity of the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Poland had found itself in a peculiar situation after World War II, one that was made permanent by the post-war divisions in Europe, in which the interests of one of the most important members of the Allies were not taken into consideration – those of Poland. The destruction of cities, primarily of the capital, sealed Poland’s fate. Warsaw was hit particularly hard, as it had been deliberately demolished by Nazi Germans. Its planned reconstruction was meant to symbolize the re-birth of ‘Polishness’ at its site, counter to the enemy’s prior intentions. Of note are Jan Zachwatowicz’s words, which reflect the manner of post-war thinking. “The feeling of responsibility for future generations demands a conscious reconstruction of those of our possessions that have been destroyed, a full reconstruction, one that is fully aware of its conservatorial falsehood.” He highlighted this patriotism even further: “Not content with monuments of culture being taken from us, we will rebuild them, we will rebuild them from the ground up, in order to show other generations the precise form of these monuments, and if not their authentic one—then the form that lives on in our memory and is accessible in materials.”^[20] This peculiar attitude toward reconstruction efforts in Poland, burdened by a spirit of patriotic tradition, can be called, after Jacek Purchla, the “reconstructivism syndrome.”^[21]

This phenomenon was also present in Western Europe, although to a lesser degree. The traditional approach to the process can be found, for instance, in the first post-war years in Germany. Examples of the reconstruction of fragments of downtown buildings can be seen in Münster, as well as in the more stylized forms of Freudenstadt and

[18] In Warsaw the contexts of Bierut’s Decree, among others, see M. Popiótek (2016).

[19] K. Pawłowski (1986), op. cit. pp. 52-53.

[20] Both quotes from Rymaszewski B. (1986), p. 14.

[21] J. Purchla, statement delivered during the Second Congress of Polish Conservators, Warszawa-Kraków 6-10.10.2015, [in:] J. Jasieńko, A. Kadłuczka, K. Stala (ed.) (2015), p. 27.

Neubrandenburg. Among the larger cities that had suffered significant destruction and were rebuilt in their pre-war character, one can mention Nurnberg and the center of Munich. Attempts at recreating historical cities under the influence of the so-called 'Delft Dictatorship,' associated with Granpré Molière, made themselves evident in the Netherlands. These influences were visible in the reconstruction of smaller cities, like Middleburg or Rhenen.^[22]

The current of traditional reconstruction found its fullest expression in the rebuilding of Warsaw. Despite complete reconstruction being assumed in this case, the process of recreating the city was impossible, both due to the scale of the damage and the intentional improvement on the original. None of the rebuilt cities copied their original form, not even Warsaw, which, in Zachwatowicz's vision, was meant to be a total reconstruction, based on preserving the historical plan, scale and property divisions. The previously mentioned care for architectural matter and detail became an equally essential element of faithfulness to the tradition of a place. However, the shape Warsaw was to take was determined by the desire to recreate the city in its 'perfect,' 16th- and 17th-century form, with a visible line of historical fortifications. Such efforts, with immense respect to the designers, led to an obvious over-interpretation of the lost city. However, the symbolic value of rebuilt Warsaw is indeed undeniable.

In post-war Poland, many attempts were made to reconstruct urban complexes with architecture referring to history, and the efforts led to the recreation of the historical layout of streets and the atmosphere of the city. The extent of the restoration of the urban layout, the scale of reconstructed areas, as well as the character of architectural solutions were all dependent on a series of factors – ideological, social, economic and others. This is why there were so many differences among the rebuilt cities. The reconstruction of Warsaw's Old Town was, among the examples of post-World War II reconstructions, a unique project, despite the fact that it was impossible to cover the entire area of the historical city. Two other large cities, Gdańsk and Poznań, took the path to reconstruction as well. In Gdańsk, the reconstruction was focused on the Main Town, with several streets that were parallel to Długa Street being recreated. The reconstruction, by including the trails of the main streets, did not, however, recreate the perpendicular streets – those that closed off urban blocks. It also considerably reduced the density of the interior courtyards. In Poznań, areas of the Old Town were filled in, while the frontages of the market square and its adjacent streets were rebuilt. The town hall, as well as the townhouses and palaces near the market square were reconstructed. The historical market stands, which lacked sufficient documentation, were designed in modern, slightly brutalist forms, signalling a change in established reconstruction trends. Gradually, the scale and level of reconstruction became reduced and limited to the few most important elements of the former downtown areas. Increasingly selective efforts were being undertaken in other cities. In Wrocław, the frontages of the market square, primarily the southern one, as well as Salt Market Square, were rebuilt and filled in. The later phases of the reconstruction did not respect the historical shape of the city. The contrast between the aforementioned Salt Market Square – its character referring to a historical city – and Wrocław's New Market Square, which had a modernist expression, took on a symbolic dimension.

[22] The dualism of reconstruction processes was also pointed out by A. Kadłuczka (2000), p. 68 and later, A. Billert (2013), p. 79; German cities in J. Düwel, N. Gutschow (2005), pp. 149–153; Neubrandenburg, also in E. Małachowicz (1988), p. 216; Dutch cities in H. Van Dijk (1999, 2006).

Despite the difficulties in rebuilding the immense areas of devastation, in some smaller cities attempts were made to reconstruct their past market squares. These efforts limited the scale of the reconstruction in the face of later modernist influence, leading to a loosening of the neighboring built-up areas. Today, however, a reconstructed market square layout, with buildings fitted into frontages, constitutes the most essential place that links a formerly damaged city with its history, often being the only one to do so. In cities in which market squares have been rebuilt, they remain the main center of urban life, just as they had been before the war. Opole's market square was also rebuilt after the war. As was the market square in Kazimierz Dolny, which had already been destroyed during World War I. In some cities, work on rebuilding market squares continued in modernist forms as well while still preserving frontage lines and façade divisions, even creating contemporary forms of urban arcades. In many cities, only a single frontage or a fragment thereof was restored, as for instance in Racibórz or Bolków. The remaining parts of the envelopes of the squares were filled with modernist buildings, sometimes featuring references to historical ones. In Bolków, it was a contemporary interpretation of the historical arcades of the market square.

The reconstruction of cities took on numerous forms, with the degree of similarity to a historical city being marked in different ways. The city of Ulm in Germany is an example of the reconstruction of a cohesive complex of buildings in the spirit of tradition, with buildings reflecting the 1950s and the 1960s. Buildings in a similar vein, although slightly more simplified, can be found in Neubrandenburg, where an orthogonal grid of streets, referring to the historical original, was repeated inside the ring of fortification buildings. In the 1950s, the center was built up with simple buildings featuring high-pitched roofs, weaving in threads of socialist realist architecture as well.^[23] However, the entirety was later disrupted by a later intervention in the form of a tower building, which had probably been intended to function as a landmark. Nevertheless, both cities made attempts to recreate parcellation divisions. In the case of smaller losses, fragments of built-up areas were filled in while maintaining the fronts of streets, like in French Rouen. One of the more interesting examples of the assessment of the possibility of such procedures in terms of filling in street-based built-up areas is Budapest. The excessive simplification in the design of the façades of buildings led to their peculiar monotony.^[24]

The authenticity of the architecture in the cities undergoing reconstruction in Poland was a matter of contention during both the process itself and its assessment.^[25] In Warsaw, Gdańsk, Poznań, as well as Wrocław or Opole and other cities, attempts were made to create an atmosphere of a historical city. This practically meant a more or less faithful recreation or mimicking of traditional architecture. In light of the growing housing demand, architecture had to undergo simplification as well. In Gdańsk, the scale and character of the buildings were maintained in a historical vein, although this was not authentic. The style of buildings was based on using or copying original preserved fragments and architectural details. One element that was treated with much attention was the form of the attics, referring to the Hanseatic character of the city. In Poznań, some of the authentic 19th and 20th-century buildings were preserved. Sometimes, however, elements of detail dated to the period of the partitions were removed^[26]. Infills were adapted to scale, but the architecture was stylized in a

[23] E. Małachowicz (1988), op. cit., p. 261.

[24] Cf. A. Kadłuczka (2000), op. cit.

[25] Discussed as well by: J. Zachwatowicz (1965), op. cit., K. Pawłowski (1986), op. cit., also in J. Pruszyński (1989), R. Cielatkowska (2001) [ed.], P. Lorens (2010), P. Lorens and J. Martyniuk-Pęczek (2013) et al.

[26] The removal of details associated with partitions also occurred in Olsztyn, from: B. Rymaszewski (1986), op. cit.

modern manner, making it different from the original structures. The composition of the façades of townhouses that was developed at the time is currently a defining feature of the uniqueness of Poznań's old town. High-pitched roofs and the proportions of plot divisions were maintained across the entire complex. In Wrocław, apart from reconstruction and infills that were in accord with historical documentation, there appeared loose interpretations, most often in the Baroque or classicist style. High-pitched roofs and similar dimensions were used in the market square, while frontages, particularly the southern one, were filled in. Attempts at stylization in the architecture of the time can now be seen in the frontages of Salt Market Square. In many smaller cities, architecture became a subject of interpretation as well. In Łomża, for instance, the Baroque gables of buildings were built over.

In the Reclaimed Lands, stylistic interpretations were an element of restoring 'Polishness.' The search for references to the Polish identity could mean the recreation of architecture from the period during which an area had been a part of the Commonwealth, or a loose interpretation of architecture in the national spirit. In Racibórz, attics were erected on buildings of one of the frontages – attics that had not been there earlier.^[27] In Olsztyn, references were made to Renaissance and Baroque architecture from the period when the city was a part of the Commonwealth after the Peace of Thorn, which also created architectural fiction. These actions are unthinkable to us, contemporaries, as they create urban landscapes that are stylized instead of being authentic. Artificially formed architecture that mimics historical buildings led to the depreciation of the value of authentic monuments. Post-war architects were excused by the sheer scale of the destruction and the replacement of the population, as the foundation of the idea of searching for any possible reference to the Polish identity of these areas. Stylized architecture, including references to Polish traditions in particular – one that is difficult to justify in cities that had been redeveloped under German influence for the previous several centuries – became an element of making cities more familiar, transforming them into forms that were closer to their new residents. Every reconstruction was associated with change. Deliberate efforts were made to improve the layout of cities. The previously mentioned straightening out or widening of some streets were some of the more common processes of 'improving' cities. City squares were sometimes expanded by including neighboring urban blocks, as was the case in Frombork.^[28] Improving the urban layout while using street-based layouts in densely built-up downtown areas was primarily being carried out by reducing the density of the outer urban blocks – hence, the sanitation of backhouse buildings and the shortening of bays. This happened in the case of cities that replicated historical layouts of streets and squares – Gdańsk, the German Ulm or the outer urban blocks of reconstructed Warsaw. The lowering of the density of urban structures improved housing conditions in downtown areas, introducing light and air into apartments. It simultaneously led to a disadvantageous drop in building density. A complete correction of the layout meant a change of direction from reconstruction to redevelopment. As a part of the later modernist reconstruction, lowering the density of the cities' structure was clearly observable, for instance, in the perforated structure of Dresden.

Structural changes corresponded with the new programming of down-

[27] J. Zachwatowicz (1965), op. cit., p. 67.

[28] E. Matachowicz (1988), op. cit.

town areas. Complexes reconstructed in various manners, despite attempts to refer to the form of traditional cities, were already built under the influence of new ideas. New programming of downtown areas followed the ideology of modernism that made a breakthrough after the war. This programming affected both reconstructed and redeveloped cities to a similar degree. Modernism brought with it a belief in the necessity to structure the function of the old downtown areas. The historical concept of a mixed-use city was abandoned. This is why downtown districts were being converted into residential ones – in essence an almost universally occurring procedure, particularly in light of the demand for housing. Because of this, downtown areas saw the introduction of daycares and kindergartens. In the reconstructed historical complexes of Warsaw, Poznań and Gdańsk, the additional functions, such as retail, gastronomy and culture, were primarily meant for tourists. These changes were conducive to the shifting of the actual downtown areas outside of historical centers. In Gdańsk, it was only the modernization that started in the middle of the 1970s that broadened the spectrum of the functions of the ground floors to include new, regenerating forms of use.^[29]

4. The legacy of rebuilding processes

In Eastern European countries, the use of modernist solutions was not permitted up to the end of the Stalinist period. In the sphere of influence of the USSR, socialist realism was imposed as a model of urban and architectural reconstruction. Despite its traditional architectural form, it implanted alien structures, thus becoming a part of the currents of the redevelopment of post-war cities. Socialist realist models took on the form of a peculiar template, an urban-planning alphabet composed of places for manifestations – expansive squares or broad streets – and sometimes symbolic landmarks in the form of palaces of culture, with the entirety being dressed in the trappings of classicist-like architecture. Trips of architects to the Soviet capital were one of the recurrent themes of post-war history. They influenced the spread of influences and architectural fashions. Many common threads that referred to the original Moscow can today be found in the central districts of Kiev, Minsk, Voronezh, Warsaw, East Berlin, Dresden or Magdeburg. Soviet influence was also observable in smaller cities – in Lublin, for instance, a ‘people’s gathering square’ was planned at the border of the Old Town and the former Jewish quarter^[30]. The model of the socialist city was met with a lack of acceptance for an ideologically and formally alien model. Here, the element of the architects’ search for identity was the use of local detail.

Simultaneously, Europe became a testing ground for the urban planning and architecture of modernism. In Poland, most reconstruction work was completed in the mid-1950s. In the following period, such work was carried out in Gdańsk, Poznań and Warsaw – during the reconstruction of the Royal and Ujazdowski castles, as well as other historical structures.^[31] It was also in this period that the time of modernist influence began in Poland and other countries of the Eastern Bloc. On our own domestic grounds, the breakthrough date, which was symbolically pointed out by Bogusław Szmygin, was 1956, when the conceptual design of the redevelopment of Szczecin was first put on display.^[32] The design assumed reconstruction work on only a select few historical buildings, including the Loitz family townhouse, the town hall, the castle and the city’s religious buildings. The remaining part of the city was to be developed along its former streets, but using

[29] M. Nowakowski (2013), op. cit., 130 refers to a design by W. Peszkowski, N. Sienkiewicz, A. Walczyk and S. Zawiejski.

[30] B. Rymaszewski (1986), op. cit., p. 15, K. Pawłowski (1986), op. cit., p. 55.

[31] E. Małachowicz (1998), op. cit., p. 280.

[32] B. Szmygin (1998), also in P. Lorens and J. Martyniuk-Pęcze (2013), op. cit.

loosely placed structures. The disregard for the former setback lines in the historical center, which were not recreated, caused a complete departure from the historical city. The destruction was made complete through expansive circulation projects.^[33]

[33] The authors of the conceptual plan of Szczecin were W. Furmańczyk, L. Kotowski, I. Okrój and W. Jarzynka; E. Małachowicz (1988), op. cit., p. 280, who dated the plan to 1955.

Modernism as a method of post-war urban redevelopment led to an enormous spatial destruction of Polish cities. Damage was particularly done to small towns, whose market-square-based layouts could not be saved. We can point to examples such as Malbork, in which all efforts were focused on the reconstruction of the Castle of the Teutonic Order and its few other historical monuments. The Old Town, meanwhile, was schematically built up using apartment blocks. There were more similar examples. In Legnica, the Old Town area saw the construction of 11-story apartment blocks. Block buildings were also built in historical downtown areas of Lublin, Stargard or Lwówek Śląski.^[34]

[34] See also: E. Małachowicz (1988), op. cit., p. 280, S. Wróblewski (2013).

Cities that became divided by new borders also found themselves in a difficult situation. The double cities of Görlitz-Zgorzelec or Frankfurt on the Oder-Słubice constitute an interesting comparative study of post-war processes. Görlitz is an example of a city that has survived the chaos of the war and is a unique complex of authentic architecture and urban planning. Frankfurt on the Oder is an example of the redevelopment of a city in the modernist style, with comfortable solutions of pedestrian and retail spaces. Zgorzelec and Słubice, both on the Polish side, could not deal with the post-war processes of reconstruction and redevelopment, which had been carried out selectively and, unfortunately, chaotically, largely due to the lack of a crystallized primary structure of the city's public spaces that had been created after its division. They became the victims of the lack of urban reconstruction, both the post-war and the later one of the 1980s.

5. A return to the reconstruction

The return to the reconstruction phase in Poland took place in the 1980s. The year 1980 was a watershed moment for Poland, and not only due to political changes and the hope for freedom that was brought about by the registration of the first Independent Self-governed Labour Union "Solidarity." Warsaw's Old Town, rebuilt after the war, was placed on the UNESCO World Heritage Sites List in the same year. The listing symbolically acknowledged the reconstruction work in the area of the former city that had previously been criticized by global public opinion as going against the precepts of conservation. In a sense, it became an impulse for architects who thought of architecture and urban planning in a traditional manner, and there was never a lack of such in Poland.

Postmodernism found fertile ground in Poland, which was, in truth, conditioned by history. The critical attitude toward the socialist period of urban reconstruction was also an element of the turn away from modernism. These phenomena coincided with critical reconstruction in Germany.



Reconstruction of the market squares in smaller Polish cities, various typologies. From the left top: Opole, next to it Łomża, below Bolków and Racibórz.



Meanwhile in Poland, there were still empty damaged city centers that were not rebuilt – in Elbląg, Głogów, or in Pasłęk – and which remain in this condition today. Their reconstruction broke away from the dogma of modernism, attempting to restore the value of the historical city. The center of Elbląg, which was completely destroyed in the war, functioned as a green park with a few remaining buildings, such as the Market Gate, for years. The downtown area was subjected to many different approaches, depending on the period – planned as a park, a housing estate composed of apartment blocks or the location of a large shopping center.^[35] The method of Elbląg's reconstruction constitutes a model example. The method of retroversion was used here, which had been developed and described by Maria Lubocka-Hoffmann, a long-term Voivodship Conservator of Historical Monuments of Elbląg. The method was based on the protection of the preserved authentic historical buildings and the recreation of the 13th-century city structure. As part of the conceptual plan that was being carried out since the 1980s, the historical outline of the city's plan, the scale of

[35] M. Nowakowski (2013), op cit., pp. 367-369.



the building and the city's former skyline were maintained. Individual townhouses were designed on "old foundations, using traditional dimensions, proportions and façade divisions." In terms of architecture, "the possibility of reconstruction and historical stylisation, as well as [...] modernist solutions were rejected."^[36] The contemporary form of even hundreds of townhouses was meant to refer to local tradition. The works were based on the plans of a team led by J. Bocheński, after 1992, taking into consideration the modifications introduced by the team under the supervision of A. Baranowski.^[37] The works led to the restoration of the main axis of Stary Rynek street in the public space of the Old Town, which culminates at Market Gate.

The restoration of the role and significance of Elbląg's city center constituted an undeniable success of the project. Today, the reconstruction is, however, accompanied by voices of criticism, whose important argument is the adopted postmodern architectural aesthetic. To what degree is it a reference to the architecture of the Hanseatic city and to what extent a rather random fantasy? The adoption of concordance with conservation doctrine, in the case of Elbląg, has led to the development of an original concept of the townhouse, and this is something which always leads to a discussion. In a sense, the reconstructed city of Elbląg is a monument of the period and its architecture. As the

[36] M. Lubocka-Hoffmann (2008), p. 248.

[37] Remaining sources: M. Lubocka-Hoffmann (1998), p. 148.; Nowakowski (2013), op. cit., pp. 366-374; A. Baranowski (1998), S. Wróblewski (2013), op. cit., B. Engel (ed.) (2018).

work continues, however, extending the deadline is conducive to corrections in the adopted approach.^[38] We can also currently encounter retroversion in other Polish cities, like Głogów or Szczecin. The yearning for the atmosphere of a historical city is returning in Germany as well, as in the restitution of Neumarkt in Dresden, or the recreated historical forms in Potsdam.

[38] This is noted in S. Wróblewski (2013), op. cit.

6. Conclusions

The process of reconstruction was immensely complicated and long-lasting, and has not ended yet for some cities. Considering the expansive destruction, reconstruction became a patchwork process that brought additional, significantly differing concepts into the scope of a structure, as was the case in Warsaw, Berlin, Minsk or Dresden. The fragmentary character of the solutions was also a consequence of not seeing processes to their completion for various reasons, including the changing visions of cities in terms of urban planning.

Processes that were often overlooked, like the excessively eager clearing of cities from debris and ruins, could cause the complete elimination of historical substance from a given city. The demolitions of larger complexes led to the erasure of the cities' structures. The initial stages should include the delineation of protected areas, including those of cultural heritage, as well as "memorial sites." The early delineation of the borders of areas aids in preventing future conflicts.

Examples of the reconstruction of smaller Polish cities have shown that the recreation of the buildings around central market squares and the main streets extending from them are an immensely essential element that structurizes future efforts. The structures, built over entire centuries, created characteristic social ties, typical of a given place and city. Central squares were also simultaneously the centers made by their inhabitants. Repeating the previous scale of the complex and the divisions of the plots constituted an important reference to the historical city. The possibility of getting the community involved in the process, including having the former owners rebuild the parcels, while providing support in terms of design, materials and even construction work, could form an important relationship between a place and its resident. The experiences of modernism currently warn us of excessively correcting cities, both in terms of their morphological layout and their functional program.

Many mistakes could be observed in the reconstruction, mistakes that lead us to formulate conclusions and guidelines. Reconstruction is a multi-stage process, with each stage composed of many different phases, from clearing debris, through planning, construction and successive phases of re-evaluation, and adapting the process to current needs. An immensely essential element in the execution of such projects is constant control of the process and all its elements. Among the basic assumptions in ensuring a successful reconstruction we can list: planning that is understood as a holistic continuation of the process, maintaining urban continuity, preserving cultural heritage and "memory places," reinforcing references to the urban identity of a place and, as a necessary condition, the social involvement of residents in the process.

The experience of the reconstruction of Polish cities after World War II requires further evaluation. The comparative study chiefly demon-

strates that cities where reconstruction were attempted – in a more or less appropriate manner – have created a certain thread of identity between the destroyed city and the one that was rebuilt, thus providing the possibility of continuity.

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[Il. 2] Elbląg photos of an author (2011).