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Museums of Gdansk - Tourism Products or Signs of Remembrance?

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Abstract. Museum buildings constitute a significant element in the composition and functionality of contemporary cities. They are both their attractions and landmarks. The article presents a case study illustrating the relation between museum buildings and their location, as well as the showcased exhibition. The article aims at demonstrating the way in which those elements form a harmonious whole - a cultural tourism product affecting the economics of the region. In the context of perceiving a museum as an element shaping the dynamics of tourism development, the location planned for the museum is not without significance.
Enhancing the popularity of a city on the basis of the existing museums has become a common phenomenon and is viewed as a driving force of museum tourism development. Sometimes, the museum building itself is considered as one of the elements adding to the attractiveness of the city. The relationship between the exhibition as such and the location - the city - is not the most important factor. Gdańsk is an example of a city which contradicts that approach. Four new museum seats built in the 21st century serve to demonstrate how interesting it may be to seek the right architectural form of museums for the places where they are erected. Furthermore, the thematic scope of exhibitions is strictly related to the history of the place. Particularly worthy of attention are the National Maritime Museum, the European Solidarity Centre and the Museum of the Second World War.
The examples discussed in the article prove that the value of a place as such in displaying the building and the museum collections is significant. It is impossible to disregard that connection, if the city aims at promoting not only the architectural form of the museum building, but also the exhibits, especially if they are related to its history. Gdańsk is an example of a place with museum buildings of interesting architectural forms which are not only style icons, but also unique symbols commemorating events important in the history of the city.

1. Introduction

The quality of museum buildings, in terms of their architectural design and the exhibition presented, is of great significance for cities, since they are one of the factors affecting the development of present day tourism. Museums - the buildings - are considered tourism products defined as *"a set of tangible and intangible assets available on the market, rendering it possible to attain the objective of a tourist trip"*. [1] This term reflects the importance of the physical aspect of museums - their collections and buildings. In this perspective, it is impossible to disregard the role of architecture which serves to clearly define buildings of this kind in the urban public space. There is another definition which supplements the previous one and emphasises a broader meaning of the term, noting that tourism products may also comprise places and services. [2] Thus, in this paper I would like to pay particular attention to the role of the place - the city - as a significant factor affecting the process of establishing the museum, its architecture, thematic profile, and, consequently, the creation of a specific tourism product.

Thierry Greub believes that *"museum-building projects have become one of the most desirable contracts which may be awarded to an architect, ever since the cities discovered the marketing factor inherent in museums"*. [3] The aforementioned quote emphasises the power of contemporary museums

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in shaping popularity of cities and, in effect, their economy. It is, however, worth noting that museums are secondary creations in respect of the cities themselves. Had it not been for place-shaping history, many museum buildings would never have emerged. Considering the above, the question arises as to how cities, in terms of their past and specificity, impact the decision-making process leading to the establishment of museums. Taking Gdańsk as an example, I aim to present the relation between the history of a place and location and architecture of museums.

From the perspective of an architect it is not only the structure of a museum building that ignites particular interest, but also its location within the urban fabric. However, as Andrzej Stasiak points out, the museum offer comprises the collection, the manner of its display, the actions aimed at popularising it and the very architecture of museum buildings. [4] The subject matter of the exhibition is not without bearing on the promotion of the museum itself, yet, given the strong tendency to turn museums into entertainment centres, the link between the heritage of the place, the exhibition and the location of the building is increasingly loose. For some time now, museums have been functioning as enterprises - corporations. Their activity is expansionary and aimed at "new market outlets "and new customers. [5] To illustrate, such practices were employed by the Louvre Museum which first opened its new branch in Lens, France, and then agreed on the use of the name Louvre and leased a part of its collection to the so-called new Louvre in the United Arab Emirates. [6]

For the creators, originators and founders of museums, the crucial aspect is for the museums to be prominent buildings in their locations. Their location within the public space is not without significance, which constitutes one of the components of the exhibition itself. Irrespective of the manner of museum management, architects are faced with requirements to establish the link between the building and its surroundings, as that, in turn, translates into its perception - sales. It is important to take account of landscape qualities of the place and convenient positioning of the museum building as an element of its promotion along the cultural route.

2. Museums and cultural tourism

Popularity of museums triggered the formation of museum tourism, whose main purpose is travel mainly to visit museums. However, as Zygmunt Kruczek, an expert on tourism, emphasises, "identifying it as a separate form is purely theoretical; during a single trip, we do not spend the entire time visiting museums; besides, an itinerary based solely on museum visits would be unbearable (except for groups of specialists)". [7] That remark permits the inference that museums constitute an important component of tourism, but museum tourism as such is a rather abstract concept, since it is rarely seen in its pure form.

In light of the discussions on the place and role of museums, it is undeniably true that they are elements to a great extent contributing to city life on a social and also economic level. The essence of cultural tourism is not based solely on sightseeing and visiting museums. It is also concerned with modern buildings, entertainment centres, music events, lifestyles and ways of living of the local communities in the visited city or products of their contemporary culture. [8] The architectural design of museums has become as important as the exhibition. Besides, as Marek Wasilewski points out: "Members of the public do not come to museums any more, it is the museum that needs to appear where they are". [5] The packaging of the exhibition - the building - must be unique enough, so that it encourages people to check what is inside. Here, modern architecture and bold design solutions prove useful. Locating such buildings in city centres, in close vicinity to other cultural buildings and important pedestrian routes, bolsters their attractiveness.

The perception of the museum itself, i.e. its exhibition and architecture, without acknowledging the specific nature of the site is impossible. The previously cited Andrzej Stasiak claims that a museum viewed as a building-type product forms a part of a broader concept of a tourism product comprising: events, routes or places. [4] The link between the building and the place exerts an impact on the city which becomes the background for new, spectacular architecture. What is important is the interplay between the thematic profile of the museum and its location, properly accounted for; it increases credibility of presentation and strengthens the relation between the building and the city.

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According to Tadeusz Jędrysiak museums constitute the most credible element in cultural tourism which serves to demonstrate its scope. At the same time, a museum appearing in the city leads to the inclusion of said city in the list of tourist attractions, which frequently leads to identification of the place with the new building. The offer of museums contributes to the value of the city on a tourism marketing map. [9]

In the context of perceiving a museum as an important element shaping the dynamics of development of tourism as a part of the economy, the location planned for the museum is not without significance.

3. Gdańsk and its museums

In 2017, Gdańsk was voted the third most interesting tourist city in an online competition called "European Best Destinations 2017", organised by a European tourist organisation based in Brussels. It is a competition in which the cities that are most often visited by tourists and have a very good reputation among internet users fight for the title. In the recent edition Gdańsk competed with such cities as Amsterdam, Berlin, Paris, Vienna, London and Madrid. In the end, all of them were classified further down the list. The only cities which managed to overtake Gdańsk were Porto and Milan. [10] It was the first time Gdańsk took part in that competition and the very good result, as it is mentioned in the verdict, was due to its special location, history, uniqueness and mystery. [11]

The decision of the jury emphasises the unique character of the city which derives from the tourist attractions within its borders, including museums. Gdańsk houses 26 museums, of which 17 are located in the city centre (Śródmieście). The National Museum and the History Museum in Gdańsk were mentioned among the seven highlights of Pomorskie Voivodeship. [12] The Gdańsk History Museum has eight branches, six of which are located within the historic area of the city. The two remaining ones: Guardhouse No. 1 on Westerplatte and the Wisłoujśce Fortress are situated outside the city centre. All of the branches are established in historic buildings. [13] The National Museum in Gdańsk comprises six branches, of which two are located within the historic city centre.

The collections held by the museums of Gdańsk are varied, yet their value is not high enough to be considered as the sole purpose of the visit, contrary to the situation in Paris (the Louvre), Vienna (MuseumsQuartier) or Berlin (Museumsinsel). Nevertheless, they do constitute a significant added value for the city itself, whose architectural and urban layout, recreated after wartime destruction, is unique. [14] The city prides itself on numerous precious architectural landmarks related to its rich history which is displayed owing to, among other things, the location of those buildings and assigning the museum purpose to them (the Main Town Hall, the Artus Court (Dwór Artusa), the Gdańsk Crane (Żuraw)).

Because of their location, the museums of Gdańsk may be divided into those organised within the premises of heritage buildings adapted to the needs of museum exhibitions, and the new ones, erected solely for that purpose.

In this paper, I would like to pay particular attention to new and most recently built museums. There are four museums in this group: **The National Maritime Museum, the Maritime Culture Centre, the European Solidarity Centre and the Museum of the Second World War**. They are all located in the city centre.

3.1 The National Maritime Museum

In 1989, exhibition rooms were opened on the Ołowianka Island in the rebuilt "Panna", "Miedź "and "Oliwski "granaries, and in 2000 further granaries were developed: "Mała Dąbrowa "and "Duża Dąbrowa". It is the main seat of the National Maritime Museum. The Baroque "Panna "and "Miedź " granaries and the Gothic "Oliwski "granary as one of the few in Gdańsk having the original walls preserved following the war damage. **Figure 1.**

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Figure 1.
The reconstructed wall of the Baroque "Panna" granary.

They have been rebuilt with the original fragments left intact, at the same time finding a brand-new function for the buildings, rendering it possible to boost the recovery of the part of the city which is separated from the mainland by the Motława River canal. This location has a significant landscape value. The museum buildings are clearly visible from the Long Embankment (Długie Pobrzeże) - a commercial route of historic value - currently serving as a walking trail. **Figure.2**

Figure 2.
View from Długie Pobrzeże Street on buildings of The National Maritime Museum. The boat is a water tram which connects Ołowianka Island with the Main City through Motława river.

The view of two latest granaries, "Mała Dąbrowa "and "Duża Dąbrowa "is obscured by "Sołdek", the first ocean-going ship built in the Gdańsk shipyard and docked at the island's quay. [15] It is possible to reach the museum via the bridges over the Na Stępce Canal (Kanał na Stępce), the Stonecutters Bridge (Most Kamieniarski), as well as by passenger ferry. Currently, works are underway by the Motława River to construct a shared zone footbridge connecting the Ołowianka Island with the Old and Main Town in the vicinity of the Fish Market (Targ Rybny). **Figure.3** It will increase availability of the island for walkers. The architectural design of the museum is an attempt to make a reference to the historic forms in the rebuilt part, whereas in the new part it is a spatial interpretation, alluding to the stylistics of the turn of the centuries. As a whole, the buildings form a frontage closed off with another granary under reconstruction and a former heat and power plant - currently the seat of the Philharmonic. All the buildings form a cultural complex visible from the opposite embankment where the Maritime Culture Centre, related in terms of theme and organisational structure, is situated.

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Figure 3.
The place of a new bridge connecting the Ołowianka Island with the Old and Main Town

3.2 The Maritime Culture Centre

The Maritime Culture Centre, established as a new building in 2012, is a branch of the National Maritime Museum. It is located in the frontage of Długie Pobrzeże street at the site of former boiler house and directly adjacent to the Gdańsk Crane. The form of the building is the outcome of the necessity to meet the conservation requirements providing for the inclusion of historical building lines, land property divisions, continuity of frontage and references to the historical development in the roof layout. At the same time, one of the basic architectural assumptions was to create a building which would blend into the historical urban morphology of Gdańsk, yet without reconstruction and eclecticism, [16].

The facades of the building recreate the rhythm of the former development, but with contrasting finishing materials: glass, dark wood and brick. **Figure.4** This way, the unique character of the building may be emphasised which, at the same time, remains consistent with the aesthetics of the historic hallmark - the Gdańsk Żuraw. With a view to adapting to the existing architecture to the fullest extent possible and in the best manner possible and to make a reference to the past, a decision was made to incorporate ceramic materials, such as the Monk and Nun roof tiles, as well as manually formed and traditionally fired bricks of Gothic measurements.

Figure 4.
View from Ołowianka Island on The Maritime Cultural Center next to historic hallmark of Gdańsk - Żuraw.

The architecture of the Maritime Culture Centre in Gdańsk is harmoniously integrated with the panorama of the Main City, visible from the Ołowianka Island.

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3.3 The European Solidarity Centre (ECS)

Another cultural building is the European Solidarity Centre (ECS) opened in 2014.[1] It is situated in Śródmieście district, within the territory of the Young City, at Solidarity Square, in the vicinity of Gate No. 2 and the Three Crosses Monument - places related to the Solidarity Movement. The building houses permanent exhibition which in an interactive manner recounts the story of the Shipyard trade union - a movement which played the key role in the process of defeating communism in Poland and later in other Eastern European countries. **Figure.5**

Figure 5.
European Solidarity Centre is reminiscent of the hull of a ship. Three Crosses Monument, the symbol of the the Solidarity Movement is at the front of building.

The ECS building is a massive, expressive body covered with COR-TEN (weathering) steel, reminiscent of the hull of a ship docked near the legendary gate leading to the Gdańsk Shipyard area. **Figure.6** The interior of the building reminds a hall with massive crane guides structures. Apart from its exhibition function covering 3,000 square metres, the building houses a library with a reading room estimated to store 100,000 volumes, a multimedia library, a multi-function room for 430 listeners, archives to store 40,000 files with a reading room for special collections and a server room, research and science centre, education and training centre and creative workshop laboratories. [17]

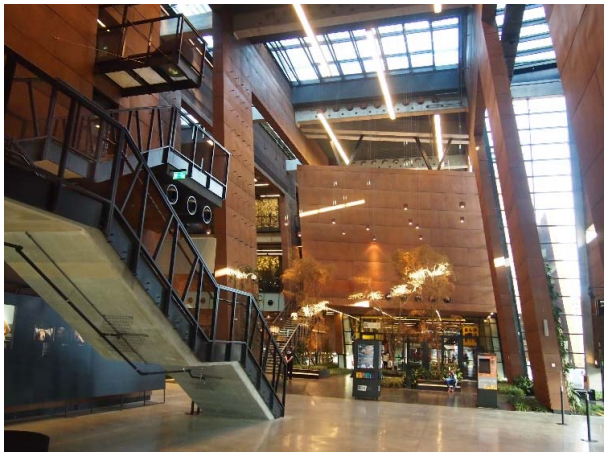

Figure 6 .
The main hall of The European Solidarity Centre brings to mind the interior of the ship.

The popularity of ECS reflected in the visitor turnout figures is considerable. Within less than two months from the opening it was visited by 100,000 people. [18]

[1] The design was prepared by Przedsiębiorstwo Projektowo-Wdrożeniowe FORT, the winners of an architectural competition organised in 2007.

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3.4 The Museum of the Second World War

The last museum building awaiting its official opening is the Museum of the Second World War.[2] This modern building is situated at Wałowa street, at the confluence of the Radunia River and Motława River canals, in close proximity to the historic Polish Post Office in the Free City of Gdańsk - one of the places where WWII broke out. The buildings take up 23,000 square metres and the main exhibition - one of the most extensive exhibitions presented by historical museums worldwide - about 5,000 square metres and is located in the basement section of the building. The exhibitions comprise three narrative blocks: "The Road to War", "The Terror of War "and "The Long Shadow of War".[3] The entrance to the building is situated 4.5 metres below ground. The part above ground has an expressive shape of a leaning prism with a triangular base and 40 meters high at the top point. The tower houses, among others, a library, lecture rooms, a cinema hall and a restaurant with a viewing terrace. **Figure.7**

Figure 7.
The square at the front of Museum of the Second World War with a view on the 40 meters high tower.

All of the aforesaid buildings are located in relatively close proximity to one another. Each of them is unique in the design, as well as thematic profile. The Maritime Museum along with the Maritime Culture Centre are situated by the Motława River, at locations frequently visited by tourists. At the same time, the Museum offers an exhibition which popularises the coastal and maritime cultural heritage with the use of European standards of presentation.

The buildings of the ECS and the Museum of the Second World War, given that they are somewhat distant in their designs with the historical development and due to the proximity of industrial buildings, are considerably bolder architecturally. Modern finishing materials were used in their construction. The way these buildings look and their designs reflects the thematic scope of the exhibition itself, along with the anxiety it induces. Their locations - especially in the case of the Maritime Museum and ECS - are closely linked to the presented exhibitions. The Museum of the Second World War, erected at the site of former bus depot and in the vicinity of the Polish Post Office where the fights of September 1939 took place, demonstrates the connection with the area. Furthermore, the choice of a land plot with no limitations due to the existing development rendered it possible to create a building which may be admired from all sides.

4. Conclusions

The Museum of the Second World War which is currently under construction is a building whose thematic profile is strictly related to Gdańsk and its heritage. The architectural design of the museum

[2] The winning design among the 129 works submitted was prepared by Studio Architektoniczne Kwadrat from Gdynia.
[3] The exhibition was designed by the Belgian TEMPORA studio whose interior design formed the starting point for the architectural design.

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stands a good chance of becoming the icon of the city. However, spectacular architectural form and the proposed functional solutions will not be yet another architectural tourist attraction. This building is going to become also a symbol of remembrance about the place where the Second World War broke out.

Gdańsk has a unique exhibition to offer, and, along with that, has the change to create a space touching upon the most recent history so unique on a European scale. The above pertains both to WWII, which began in Gdańsk, and the changes in the political system which originated from the Solidarity movement in the 1980s.

According to the records of the Central Statistical Office from 2008, historical museums in Poland accounted for 17% of all museums. Among the visitors, school students constituted 30.3%. However, as the data indicate, in 2008, the percentage of young people visiting historical museums in Pomorskie voivodship was the lowest in comparison with other voivodships, even though historical museums are the main attraction of the city. [19] It may be presumed that the new museum seats, including the Maritime Culture Centre, ECS and the Museum of the Second World War, will contribute to improve the statistics of the Gdańsk museums.

The museums of Gdańsk may gain prominence not only due to their architectural designs, but also due to the strong link between the exhibitions and the historical sites they present. The architectural style further highlights that interplay. In order to emphasise the coherence between particular museums and their related thematic profiles, it might prove useful to designate a route connecting the places located further away from the strict city centre, such as, for instance, Westerplatte peninsula or Wisłoujście Fortress. The aforesaid spaces are unique on the European scale and worth promoting. Another significant factor is the Road to Freedom delineated to lead to the ECS, in the direction of the former shipyard. It would be possible to establish other routes linking the museums and places of historical importance.

Contemporary museums of Gdańsk are not only products boosting tourist traffic in the city. It is also difficult to call them icons, especially in the case of the Museum of the Second World War whose name is viewed pejoratively in the context of treating museum buildings as commercial sites aimed at selling a product - its exhibition or building. Both ECS and the Museum of the Second World War are icons - but ones which commemorate important events of global impact. The term *"*icon *"*used in respect of the most recently established museums of Gdańsk is viewed from a different angle - it designates not so much to the building as a unique symbol, but rather as the one commemorating events of significance for the city.

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