

Thursday 13 March 2014 - Session Two - Paper Two

'Critical Assessment of Postwar Cross-Border Heritage'

Anna Wojtun (Exhibition Researcher, Glasgow City Heritage Trust)

In post-1945 Poland the re-urbanisation of heavily destroyed cities was tackled head-on by the communist regime. Areas of pre-war German nationality which were subsequently incorporated within borders of its Eastern neighbours were of particularly unique circumstance. This was the case for the city of Wrocław [formerly Breslau].

This article focuses on one of the Wrocław Old Town's newest markets, Nowy Targ Square [formerly Neumarkt] and provides a critical overview of its documents and records, supplemented by the author's own photographic surveys and interviews. These track the site's redevelopment in the postwar era, contextualised within the conflicted dynamic of this region.

THE SITE

The beginnings of the Nowy Targ market date back to the 13th century, when the quarter was incorporated into the neighbouring town under the Magdeburg Rights (1241). Soon after the regular pattern of the square began to emerge, and this established outline has remained the same ever since.

Throughout the centuries, the integrity of the square's architectural development was upheld by the means of a building code [Die Bauordnungen der Stadt Breslau], which helped sustaining the original morphology of the plots. From the mid-19th century a series of conversions and interventions had taken place. Subsequently, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the southern side was redeveloped to accommodate a vast edifice in a baroque revival manner. This was followed by a new market hall constructed further north from the square, where the merchants' stalls were transferred, marking a tipping point in Nowy Targ's changing function.

In 1945, having escaped damage for most of the war, the quarter's fabric suffered significant bombing damage, and was shortly afterwards dismantled. The only structures left standing relatively intact were the representative edifice and one of the corner houses.

Following the War, under the conditions of the Treaty of Potsdam, Eastern German lands became Polish - these lands, free from encumbrances, were made the property of the Polish State Treasury. This was reflected by a new organisation of planning and development

units, herein in 1951 the management of Nowy Targ Square was handed over to the newly established Workers' Housing Estates' Construction Directory [Dyrekcja Budowy Osiedli Robotniczych].

After 1956 in Poland the pressure for historic reconstruction, applied across towns and cities soon after the war, has lessened. By that time Wrocław was a subject to an almost total population exchange, and a decision was made to redevelop Nowy Targ Square to keep up with pressing housing demands. The construction of a new housing estate commenced in 1960. Today, after years of insufficient maintenance, Nowy Targ Square stands as a neglected remain of a previous political system, at the heart of the historic Old Town of Wrocław City.

BUILDING DATA: ARCHITECTURAL RECORDS AND WRITTEN DOCUMENTS

The main challenge of critically assessing the estate is confronted when considering its shifting topographies. The square's multi-national history is to be traced not only within its physical fabric, but also through associated records: archives, literature, photographs and personal memories.

As Wrocław's new citizens were uncertain of their long-term future, and were lacking both knowledge of local culture and emotional attachment, memories of the city from this period are scarce. Furthermore, resources, such as reports, articles and chronicles from this time often reflect the communist government agenda, and hence cannot be studied without this larger context.

Just as important however, is a critical reading of more recent texts. As Michał Murawski observes, "architecture (and in this sense any debate about architecture / author's note) continues to fulfil a role in the everyday production of social forms and moral values in the paradoxical setting of post-1989 (...) where ideological 'intentions' are generated in part by consciously defining themselves against 'ideology' (...)."

In 1944, with the mass migration of the city's population, the city's conservation officials also evacuated the city, taking with them large portions of archival material. Many of these have been retrieved, however there will always be a number of files damaged or missing - it is estimated that about 80

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percent have survived to date.

The Museum of Architecture, with its branch the Wrocław City Building Archive, is the main source of building data, holding architectural drawings, plans, written records and photographs. The Wrocław City Building Archive builds on the archival legacy of the pre-war city of Breslau, and in addition is in possession of technical documentation relating to the Polish postwar period. Collections on contemporary architecture are however a central domain of the Museum, including a special collection on post-1945 period. The split of resources between these institutional branches may enforce a perception of lack of linearity, creating an opportunity for research selectivity and categorisation.

One of the most comprehensive online photographic resources relating to built heritage in the region are provided by an online crowdsourced database "Wrocławiae Amici". The database was created in 2001 by a group of local enthusiasts to supplement the public archives which were often difficult to access without adequate permissions and until recently were most often not digitised. It holds photographs taken by amateurs and professionals and images retrieved from personal collections, as well as albums, maps and aerial material.

In Poland, the recording of architectural heritage is put largely in the hands of art historians responsible for the documentation of monuments inscribed on the National Registry; there is no official body devoted solely to this purpose. As to date very few postwar buildings have been granted a place on the list, the recording of these structures is under particular threat. In this respect the "Wrocławiae Amici" online database serves yet another vital role. With no restrictions on agenda, its database includes photographic records regardless of the buildings' listed status or age.

The author's survey of Nowy Targ compensated, in some aspects, for the lack of official inventorisation records, and also captured the buildings at their most current state, including details such as fabric decay, and social organisation. Complementary to this were interviews with the square's architects - an invaluable resource when verifying the data found in reports, and access to architects' personal photographic collections.

ESTATE AS SEEN THROUGH ITS RECORDS

A record-led assessment of Nowy Targ Square's heritage assets was carried out, centring on two main aspects: sensitivity towards the historic surrounding of the estate and its innovation value:

- an early situation plan shows sensitive approach to the original street pattern and outline of the square. The buildings continue to face the square and do not contradict the pre-war plot arrangement, as seen in many postwar redevelopments. The square is still legible within the urban layout of the Old Town (il. 2)
- drawings of the estate provide evidence that the architects carefully studied the remaining historic architecture, its proportions and scale, and not only did not erase the history from their proposal, but invited it into the scheme. (il. 3)
- the interviews provided details about architects' technological ambitions and goals: the construction was based on in-situ rubble recycling, an innovative idea which fast tracked the building process and allowed the incorporation of pre-war fabric into the new scheme. Furthermore, the housing proposal was considered flexible and open to user modifications, hence the lack of subdividing load-bearing walls within the interior space of the flats - a precedent at that time in Poland and beyond (1956). (il. 4)
- photographic records of architectural models and early proposals, obtained from privately held collections reveal the value of landscape and diversity of form in pavilions and street furniture - their purpose was to soften the cubical blocks and break the monotonous outlook of the estate. (il. 5)
- photographic surveys followed by interviews with local residents highlighted tenants' self-determination to maintain the estate, and evidence of negligence on behalf of local authorities causing further disrepair and decay. (il. 6)
- reconstruction drawings show significant differences when set against the 1939 survey, resembling a kind of cherry-picking through historical periods. (il. 7)

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POSTWAR MODERNISM AND HERITAGE DEBATE

In 2008 the Nowy Targ's Square estate was inscribed on the so-called "List of Contemporary Cultural Goods".

This Polish national document was initiated in response to the increasing demolition of buildings erected between 1945-1980. The list however does not form part of the monuments registry. Instead, it was authorised by the Law on Spatial and Land Use Planning. This has implications for the level of protection, provided here not by tools available to conservation authorities, but within local land management plans. Due to the aim and methods of such plans, as well as lack of support for itemised specification, the integrity of existing architectural objects cannot be effectively ensured.

Paradoxically, the author of the 2005 conservation guidelines in support of the local land management plans for the area, advised the demolition and recovery of the historical (pre-modern) pattern of the square as the only means for its successful rehabilitation.

The architecture of Nowy Targ Square embodies the present day commonplace belief of inseparability between a political era and architectural production. This results in a vicious circle of politico-cultural misunderstanding and stigmatisation, from which a further decay and disintegration seems the only outcome. As Andrew Benjamin said: "repeating the destruction that created the present city by a further act of destruction is not an intervention (...) Hence the force of the question: how not to continue?".

NOTES AND REFERENCES

ⁱ This data is comprehensively discussed in articles by Prof. Rafał Eysymont and Dr Łukasz Krzywka: Rafał Eysymont, "Wrocławski Nowy Targ, Jego Dzieje i Rewaloryzacja" [Wrocław Nowy Targ, Its History and Revaluation], *Quart* no. 1 (2006): 55-73; Rafał Eysymont, Łukasz Krzywka. "Plac Nowy Targ We Wrocławiu - Reaktywacja?" [Nowy Targ Square in Wrocław - Reactivation?] *Ochrona Zabytków* no. 2 (2006): 41-56.

ⁱⁱ Workers Housing Estates Construction Directory replaced the Workers Housing Estates Company and was established in 1948 in Warsaw, followed by satellite offices located in bigger cities of Poland: Piotr Majewski, *Ideologia i Konserwacja. Architektura Zabytkowa w Polsce w Czasach Socrealizmu* [Ideology and Conservation. Historic Architecture in Poland During Socialist Realism] (Warsaw: Trio, 2009).44; Edmund Malachowicz, *Stare Miasto We Wrocławiu: Zniszczenie, Odbudowa, Program* [Wrocław Old Town: Destruction, Reconstruction, Programme] (Wrocław: PWN, 1976), 119.

ⁱⁱⁱ Records documenting the period of 1945-1956 were collected and thoroughly discussed by Piotr Majewski in Piotr Majewski, *Ideologia i Konserwacja. Architektura Zabytkowa w Polsce w Czasach Socrealizmu...*

^{iv} Authorship of Włodzimierz Bronic - Czerechowski, Jerzy Tarnawski, Anna Tarnawska and Ryszard Natusiewicz

^v Zawada, Andrzej. "Mity założycielskie powojennego Wrocławia" [The founding myths of postwar Wrocław]. In *Przestrzenie Komunikowania* [Spaces of communication], edited by Igor Borkowski and Karina Stasiuk-Krajewska, 45-55. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2010.

^{vi} Michał Murawski, "(A)political Buildings: Ideology, Memory and Warsaw's 'old' Town," (Docmomo e-proceedings 2, Edinburgh, December 2009), http://www.fredmussat.fr/e-proceedings2_dec09/mirror_of_modernity_murawski.htm (accessed on 11.04.2013).

^{vii} <http://ma.wroc.pl/zbiory72.html> (accessed on 30.04.2014)

^{viii} <http://dolny-slask.org.pl/> (accessed on 30.04.2014)

^{ix} The survey was undertaken in June 2013.

INVENTORISATION OF MODERN HERITAGE: URBANISM AND LANDSCAPE

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^x Włodzimierz Bronic - Czerechowski, E-mail interview, July 8, 2013 (copy available upon request); Włodzimierz Bronic - Czerechowski, Telephone interview, July 9-10, 2013 (copy available upon request); Jerzy Tarnawski, Interview, June 2013.

^{xi} Originals held in the Museum of Architecture, reprinted in: Rafał Eysymont, "Wrocławski Nowy Targ, Jego Dzieje i Rewaloryzacja" ..., 69; Rafał Eysymont, Łukasz Krzywka. "Plac Nowy Targ We Wrocławiu - Reaktywacja?" ..., 47.

^{xii} As understood by the 23rd of July 2003 Law on Protection and Care of Monuments

^{xiii} As understood by the 27th of March 2003 Law on Spatial and Land Use Planning

^{xiv} Andrzej Siwek, "Między Zabytkiem a Dobrem Kultury Współczesnej" [Between a historic monument and a contemporary cultural good], *Kurier Konserwatorski* no. 10 (2011): 9.

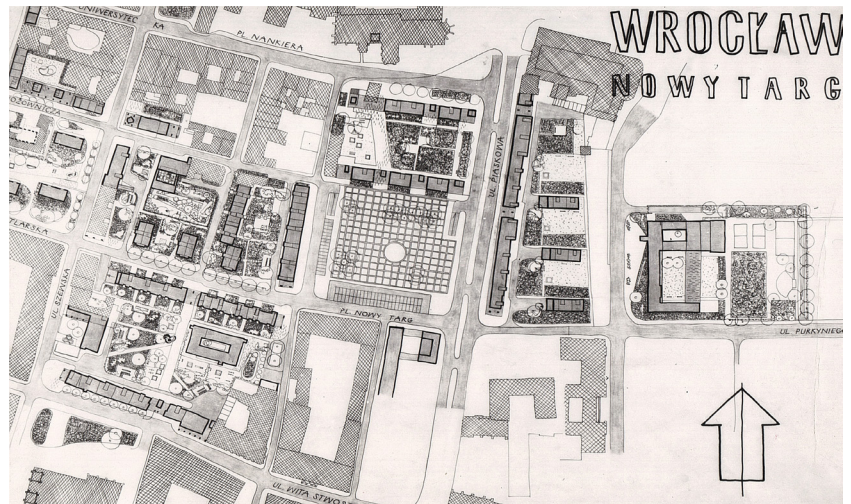
^{xv} Rafał Eysymont, Łukasz Krzywka. "Plac Nowy Targ We Wrocławiu - Reaktywacja?" ..., 54.

^{xvi} Andrew Benjamin, *Architectural Philosophy* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000), 96, 197.

ILLUSTRATIONS:



Left: Image 1. Nowy Targ Square, early 1970s (source: dolny-slask.org.pl)



Right: Image 2. Nowy Targ Square Situation Plan (courtesy of Jerzy Tarnawski)

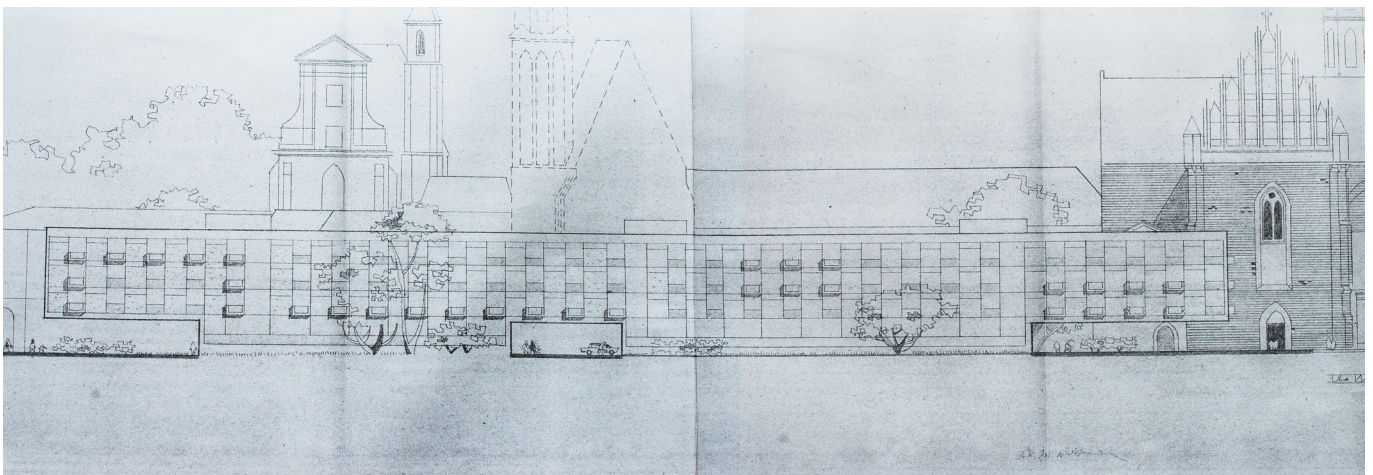


Image 3. Archival Drawing (source: the Wrocław City Building Archive)

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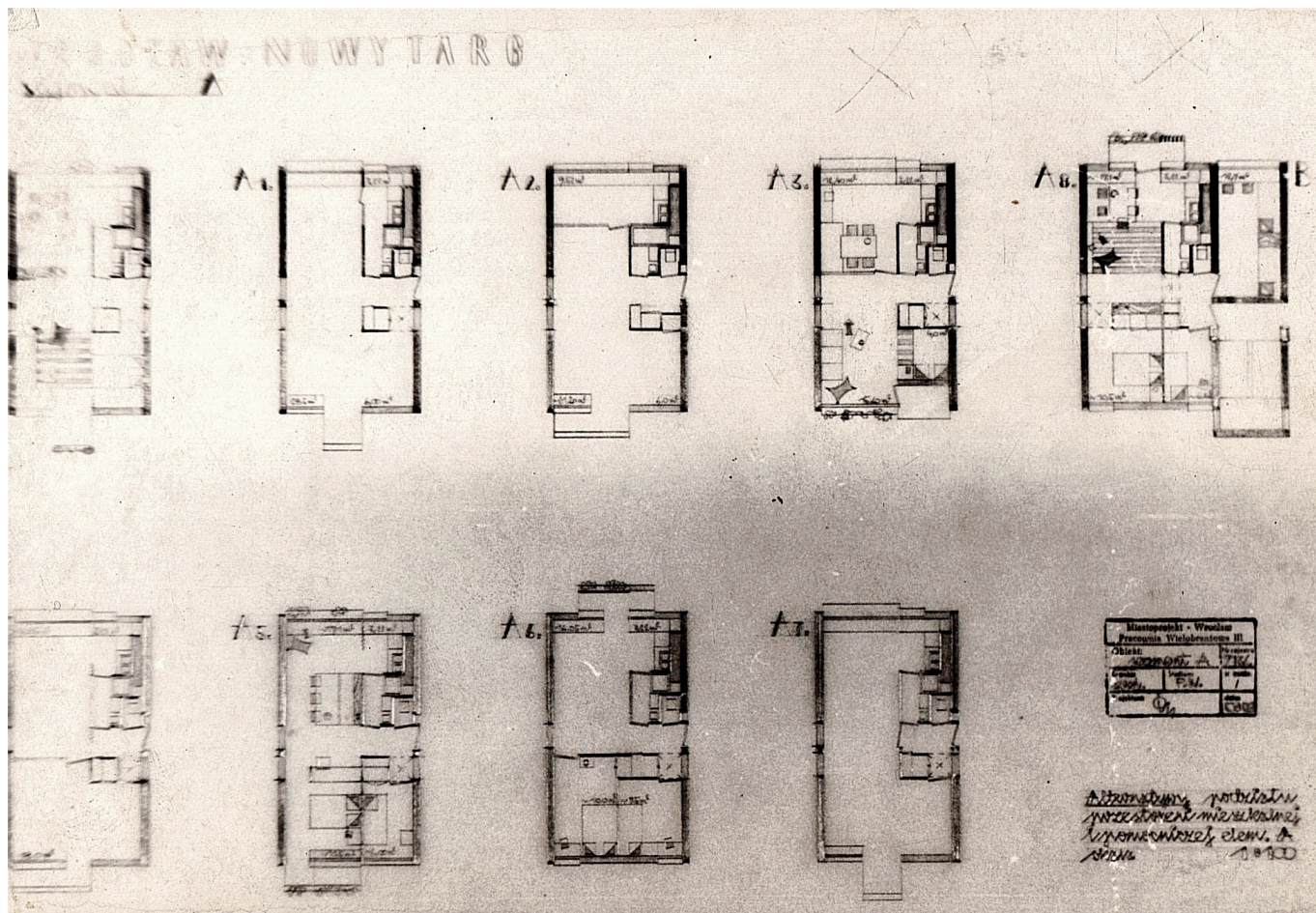


Image 4. Variations of flat systems (courtesy of Jerzy Tarnawski)

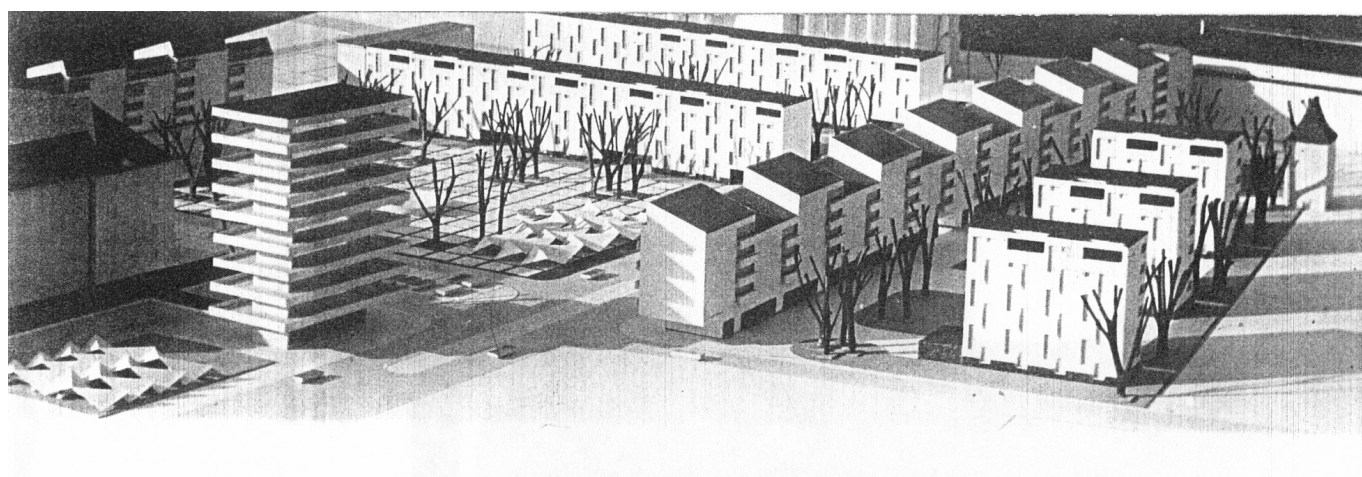


Image 5. Model of the Estate (courtesy of Jerzy Tarnawski)

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Image 6. Hazardous balconies' slabs secured by tenants



7. East Side Reconstruction drawings: TOP - 1939 Survey; CENTRE: 1950-53 Kaliski's Reconstruction Plan; BOTTOM: 2005 Siechankiewicz's Reconstruction Plan