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## PROBLEMS OF MODERNIST ARCHITECTURE PRESERVATION IN KRAKOW

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**Abstract.** *This document provides information about the Second Campus of Jagiellonian University. Throughout the twentieth century the development of the University became an important factor for the city authorities. It had happened because in the late 1890s Krakow was transformed from a small provincial town into a modern centre of cultural, scientific and economic activity. In the early 1900s city transformed former fortifications into a modern avenue called Three Poets' Avenue which, for years, has been a symbol of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Krakow's urbanism and architecture. In the 1920s the city authorities donated the so - called Senate's lot to built there the Second Campus of JU. The Senate's lot has had special importance for Cracovian urban and architectural development in Krakow.*

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the twentieth century the development of the Jagiellonian University, which was founded in Cracow in 1364, became an important issue on the political agenda of the city authorities. It was due to the fact that in the late 1890s Krakow was transformed from a small provincial town into a modern centre of cultural, scientific and economic activity. In the early 1900s, the city turned former fortifications into a modern thoroughfare. It was called Three Poets' Avenue which, for years, has been a symbol of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Krakow's urbanism and architecture.

### 1 ALEJE TRZECH WIESZCZOW (THREE POETS' AVENUE).

The best-known examples of the interwar modernist architecture include the residential house of the Jagiellonian University professors and the buildings of Z.U.P.U.(White Collar Workers' Insurance Company), the Jagiellonian Library, Mining Academy and National Museum. They are the city's landmarks. They were erected along Aleje Trzech Wieszczow (Three Poets' Avenue) which, for years, has been a symbol of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Krakow's urbanism and architecture. The origins of the road date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century but new objects are still being built there. It has become a kind of museum of urbanism of the past century where modernist style predominates.

In the late 1890s, Krakow was transformed from a small provincial town into a modern centre of cultural, scientific and economic activity. Until the early 1900s it was constrained by Austrian fortifications which made it one of the most overpopulated cities in Europe.

Urban development in Krakow began in the 1850s and was due mainly to two events. One was the extension of the Austrian fortifications and the other was the great fire of 1850 which destroyed a great number of buildings. However, really systematic urban development started when Krakow gained autonomy. The main goal was to include the adjacent communes in the city but the attempts to do so were successfully thwarted by military authorities.

Finally, after years of struggling, the decision to extend the city's boundaries was made and the city's development plans were prepared. This marked another stage of spatial transformations in Krakow. The authors of the changes were local architects whose work contributed to the city's *genius loci*.

As for the urban design, it can also be said to have specific local features. In fact, it was called Krakow school of urban design whose origins go back to the 18th century and the Commission of Good Order which was established in 1765. The Commission undisputedly contributed to the fact that the developments in Krakow took the right direction. The Commission focused on embellishing the city by taking care of the appearance of particular streets and squares. In this way, it initiated a new approach to the city which was treated as a complex of particular urban interiors. The early 1900s and the interwar years were a continuation of his trend in town planning.

Three Poets' Avenue is a record of the historic transformations that took place in the street, which is one of the most beautiful streets of Krakow, between the late 1800s and recent years. It reflects three architectural epochs and its layout is typical of the turn-of-the century city thoroughfares because it is a magnificent wide avenue with a strip of greenery in the middle.

The origins of the avenue go back to the mid 1800s. It was then that fortification works were carried out around Krakow and in place of the present street there was an earthen embankment. In the years 1887-1888, it was used as a railway embankment to carry the circumferential railway. Streets were laid out along the embankment. The circumferential railway existed until 1911.

In the 1890s, construction works reached their peak. From 1902, intense attempts were made to extend the city's area but it was only in 1910 that permission was granted to include the adjacent communes in the boundaries of Krakow. Meanwhile a competition was held for spatial development of the future Greater Krakow. In 1910 it was won by J.Czajkowski, W.Ekielski, T.Stryjenski, L.Wojtyczko and L.Wyczynski. According to their project, the avenue was to be a part of the circular road. Soon after the embankment had been liquidated, the laying out of a wide avenue started. At the time, there were some houses along the new road, on the city's side.

Walking along the avenue towards the River Vistula we come out into the open ground called Blonia. In the early 1900s, it used to be much larger than nowadays. It started right behind the circumferential railway embankment and via little common continued up to Wola Justowska. Along the common (Blonia) and parallel to the promenade there flowed the River Rudawa. It continued to flow towards the River Vistula through the middle of Retoryka street, parallel to Three Poets' Avenue. It was only after numerous floods that the part of the Rudawa riverbed from Mickiewicz Av. to the mouth of the Vistula was blocked in 1910. The river was diverted into its current riverbed but the muddy stream remained by the promenade for a long time and functioned as the city's sewer. On the other side of the stream there was a sports and games park established by doctor Henryk Jordan In 1887. He used the buildings and grounds that had been occupied by the agro-industrial section of the national exhibition and turned them into modern 'sports and gymnastics' facilities. None of them has been preserved but the park itself has survived to this day. At the time when it was set up, the park became a model for other Jordan's gardens that were established in many places to propagate Henryk Jordan's noble ideas. In 1912, an Exhibition of Architecture and Interiors in Garden Surroundings was held next to the park.

During the interwar period more objects were erected along the avenue. Although their form was markedly different, their mood remained in keeping with the city's tradition. When the second stage of the development of the artery started it was a wide avenue with two narrow streets divided with a strip of greenery which was created after the fortification embankments had been levelled. Trees such as poplars and lime-trees were planted there and the area became a park that resembled the park around the city centre called Planty. It stayed like this until World War II.

Most of the houses that were built during that period have been preserved until today. The majority of the buildings are tenement houses that were modern and luxurious for the time. The flats they contained were spacious and had a high standard which made them attractive then and makes them equally attractive nowadays.

## **2 THE SENATE'S LOT**

Previously the lot had been occupied by Austrian fortifications which were bought out by the city authorities in 1906 after much effort. It was situated between 3 Maja Avenue, Three Poets' Avenue (in this part named after Adam Mickiewicz), Reymont street and dr Jordan's park. The city donated it to the university in the 1920s. So-called Senate's lot was donated with a view to building there the Second Campus of Jagiellonian University. The Senate's lot has had special importance for Cracovian urban development and marked a significant stage of spatial transformations in Krakow. Its layout is typical of the turn-of-the century city located along the magnificent wide avenue with a strip of greenery in the middle. During the interwar period, the modernist objects built on the Senate's lot included, among others, the Jagiellonian Library, the Youth Tourist Hostel, Student Hostel and the National Museum. There were different develop-

ment concepts for the area despite two competitions. Just after the area had been taken over by the university some urban concepts were developed first by the architect Bogdan Laszczka and later by another architect Stefan Piwowarczyk. Both of them departed from traditional concepts of space and planning.

The most remarkable building is the National Museum. It is one of the most prestigious realizations of the time. It was designed by the Cracow architects Czeslaw Boratynski and Edward Kreisler and the Warsaw architects Juliusz Dumnicki, Janusz Juraszynski and Boleslaw Schmidt and came into use in 1938. The massive building with vertical divisions on the façade looks onto 3 Maja Avenue. It was not entirely finished before the war and its second part was only completed in 1989.



Figure 1: The National Museum and the Jagiellonian Library.

The Jagiellonian Library is also worth mentioning. It is situated in the most representative part of the Avenue and is an extremely important object among the other public buildings erected in the interwar period. It was implemented in 1939 according to Wacław Krzyżanowski's plans and the first part of the book collection was transferred there at the beginning of the war, in 1940. The simple volume of the Library was rhythmically divided with vertical strips. In the years 1961-1963, the second stage of the extension of the Library was finished and the third one was completed in the years 1995-2001 according to the designs by Romuald Loegler and Ewa Fitzke.

In the years 1959-1964, to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Jagiellonian University, the so-called Senate's lot was built in. The objects built there included the National Museum, the Municipal Tourist Hostel, the Fusilier Hostel, the Student Hostel and the Jagiellonian Library. Until the 1960s there was no coherent development concept for the area despite two competitions. Some university buildings were erected then such as Physics and Mathematics Institute (Instytut Fizyki i Matematyki), designed by Stanisław Juszczak, co-authored by Ludomira Leszczyńska; Biology Institute (Instytut Biologii), designed by Zbigniew Olszanowski, Collegium Paderevianum, designed by Jozef Golab, Zbigniew Olszakowski; Agricultural Academy (Akademia Rolnicza), designed by Stanislaw Juszczak, co-authored by M.Binkowska; Little Paderevianum (Male Padarevianum), designed by Andrzej Lipski, Konrad Wierzbicki, 1973. Altogether some 400 thousand m<sup>3</sup> of objects were built for various university departments. There were new ideas for planning and architecture enriched by open-air sculptures, mosaics and landscaping, which provided the campus with its own distinct identity.



Figure 1: Collegium Paderevianum and Little Paderevianum.

Agricultural University was the most significant building among those erected at the time. It was built in the vicinity of the Three Poets' Avenue. The university that used to be part of the Jagiellonian University became an independent institution after the war and the building itself is an extension of Collegium Agronomicum built on the opposite side of the Avenue by Jozef Sary in 1912. The spatial layout of the above objects was conceived as juxtaposition of tall, seven-story

high buildings and low, two-story ones. A characteristic feature of their exteriors is the highlighting of the geometry of long, horizontal sequences between the windows. The only decorative details of the elevations, which originate from modernist aesthetics and are thus ascetic and plain, are the fragments outlining the top floors and the ground floors that are treated with slightly more freedom. In the case of Agricultural University, the representative character of the first floor has been accentuated. The University building is set back in relation to the whole site which allowed a big square to be created in front of the building. It features old trees, a fountain and animal sculptures made by Bolesław Chromy in 1964. Next to the fountain there is a spatial composition called 'Heliocentric system' made by Jaroslaw Sowinski as a tribute to Nicolaus Copernicus.

On the opposite side of the Avenue, at the end of Krupnicza street, there is Collegium Paderevianum. The building has an interesting story because it was the first object to be raised in 1965 from the legacy left by the world famous pianist Ignacy Paderewski. He wrote in his diary; ... *Krakow is a university city. It has one of the oldest universities in the world established in 1364. It is our Oxford – the atmosphere is similar. It is a charming and interesting city, one of the most beautiful places in Europe.*<sup>1</sup> He considered the money he had earned to be property of the Nation and therefore he wanted it to be given to the Jagiellonian University in Krakow.<sup>2</sup> In recognition of the donor's merits, in 1972 his bust sculpted by Andrzej Pitynski was placed in the square in front of Collegium Paderevianum. Next to it Little Paderevianum was built.

In 1973, another university building was constructed in the square. It combines hotel and office functions and was designed by Andrzej Lipski and Konrad Wierzbicki. Its original architecture catches the eye and only slightly disturbs the harmony of the frontage between Czysa street and Krupnicza street because the designers adjusted the size of the new building to the adjacent ones. The object houses workshops, research institutes, lecture halls, a library as well as guest rooms. The variety of functions has been reflected in the elevation. As a result, the volume of the building has a vivid, plastic expression. In the 1970s, it became the subject of many discussions about the principles of shaping new architecture in the existing built environment.

Auditorium Maximum is hidden behind Collegium Paderevianum. It was designed by Stanislaw Denko with the team from the Wizja studio. It was completed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and its sophisticated ceramic and glazed facade attracts attention. It is massive and yet elegant and seems to refer to the monumental architecture of the Avenue.

The university buildings were the silent witnesses of the political, cultural and social transformation of the eighties and both represent the best local interpretation of High Modernism. But the good times are over and the most recent initiatives of the Jagiellonian University authorities are very controversial, especially with regard to the Paderevianum complex and its neighbourhood.

### 3 EXTENSIONS, RECONSTRUCTIONS AND DEMOLITIONS

For the Senate's lot and the buildings there time has not stopped. New needs and new challenges involve functional transformations that are enforced by law and new standards of use. As a result, some spectacular changes have been made to the above buildings, namely the National Museum and the Jagiellonian Library. The Museum, whose construction has been going on for 55 years, has finally reached its final shape according to the authors' original project guidelines.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from W. Bodnicki, *Muzy na Krupniczej*, Krakow 1982, ss.166-166.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem

It is now awaiting further extension in the form of a new wing. One can only hope that its design will follow the principles of good continuation of tradition and function.

As for the Jagiellonian Library and the completed two stages of the extension, it ought to be noted that the result is a harmonious whole and can be regarded as good and valuable architecture.

All in all, both realizations in terms of architecture and the form which combines the valuable original solutions with recent additions can be said to have complied with the standards of appropriate and justifiable conservation intervention and the resultant objects can still be listed as contemporary Polish cultural heritage. As such, they are living and functioning elements of the cultural environment and therefore they are subject to aesthetic and functional changes.

On the other hand, the ongoing construction of Paderevianum II on the most prestigious site on the corner of Krupnicza street and Mickiewicz Avenue is a scandal. The project was selected despite the protests of the city residents and doubts raised by the architect of the city of Krakow. In 2009, the decision was made to erect two new buildings (designed by the Archimedia office from Poznan). After protests and invalidation of the building permit, a new project was made. This time, the disputed plot, which had been the bone of contention between the investor and the neighbours, was not included. The second project was worked out by the consortium of Budostal 2 and Elektromontaż, which won the tender for design-build contract. This means that basing on the lowest price, the firm will both design and construct the new objects. Thus in a perfect location, in the protected area and surrounded by valuable architecture of the 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism, a randomly designed solution is emerging and ruining the quality of the space. It is a shame since the decision cannot be appealed.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

The above presentation is a brief outline of the origins and development of Three Poets' Avenue. The subject is worth mentioning because attempts have been made for years to fell the trees and reduce the size of the lawns or do away with them altogether and even some plans have been made to do so. Despite some degradation due to heavy traffic, the area is an excellent urban interior with good architecture that bears witness to the city's uniqueness and its architectural achievements also in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The most significant elements of the interior are the modernist objects of the inter- and post-war periods. Krakow's architecture of the time is quite remarkable and has a place in the history of architecture as a representative of modernism tinted with expressionist and neo-romantic moods as well as local traditions. It originates from classicism which has made a compromise with simpler forms and has attempted to adjust to local conditions in order to achieve its own formal expression which can be said to have stayed away from the main trend of the 20<sup>th</sup> -century European architecture. It is noteworthy even though it lacks outstanding individual works that could be regarded as fundamental to the development of this area. Apart from the authors' talent and skill, it reflects the city's atmosphere. This atmosphere is worth protecting since the architecture reflects the social evolution and is a material witness to transformations and achievements. It determines the contemporary image of the city and combined with the old architecture and the historical structure of the medieval city centre builds its identity.

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