ARCHITECTURE OF CULTURE AS A WAY TO THE REVITALISATION OF CITIES OF TODAY. WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE POLISH AND SPANISH EXPERIENCE?

Piotr Broniewicz
M.Sc.Eng. Arch, research assistant
Chair of Housing Environment, Faculty of Architecture
Cracow University of Technology
Ul. Podchorążych 1, 30-084 Kraków, Poland
piotrbroniewicz@hotmail.com
a-32@pk.edu.pl

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Abstract
Once again the architecture of culture has begun to play a significant role in the structure of cities, redefining their space, creating their character, and shaping their modern face. This trend has become particularly evident in Europe after year 2000. Cultural objects have been en masse constructed both in big metropolitan areas, as well as in small towns. Based on the observation and the analysis of architecture of music realisations, we can extrapolate conclusions which will allow to ascertain when these buildings became a functioning part of the urban structure. We also get the opportunity to learn from the mistakes: despite significant financial expenses, the architecture of culture has failed to meet users’ expectations, becoming a dead space in many cases. The study of the presented examples forces us to discuss directions and purposefulness of investing in the architecture of culture. Introducing clear goals will provide guidance for creating the city of the future.

Introduction
Besides architecture intended for shows, edifices for culture are the most characteristic new buildings in contemporary cities. They play more and more crucial role in the process of shaping of urban spaces. Edifices, often of quite an iconic character, are able to provide a strong stimulus necessary to revitalise a specific part of a city, or to create completely new areas, attractive for residents. The tempting vision of an easy way to create new city centres, basing on more and more sophisticated buildings of culture, is often dangerous. Cities, allocating enormous funds, create structures in a rescaled form, missing the expectations and needs of their users, and thus failing to meet the hopes placed in them.
After 2000 we are able to observe numerous new implementations which demonstrate that in case of complex investment processes, it is necessary to keep a relevant measure and proportion – otherwise, edifices or complexes of buildings of a high citygenic power become a real nuisance to cities, and a bottomless well for the municipal budget. This problem is aptly described by Magdalena Kozień-Woźniak: 'The project lasts and expresses problems of the city in its style and form (...). It does so when it is not utopian or abstract, but when it stems from specific problems of the city.'

Due to a large number of individual buildings of entire complexes for culture erected from scratch, places which are perfect for illustrating the processes happening there, their negative and positive effect on the city, are Poland and Spain, with the projects implemented there.

City of culture – city of ghosts

The hill of Monte Gaias on the outskirts of Santiago de Compostela was supposed to start fulfilling the role of a new city centre in 2013. The old town had been entered on the world heritage list in 1985. Cidade da Cultura was to constitute a counterweight for the historical centre, predominantly associated with the pilgrim traffic. This project, located on a hill, was dubbed by the authorities of the Spanish Galicia a gift of its inhabitants for the generations to come, which would maintain tourists’ interest in this part of Spain. Today we have the year 2015; the rocky hills designed by Peter Eisenman emerge from the fog. In the middle of the structure there is a gigantic gap, quite frightening, which is the only sign after a concert hall that was to be organised here to hold 1300 viewers, and which right after the final discontinuation of the construction process in 2013 assumed already 2000 seats. The Galician city of culture had been planned with a great swing – a 70ha plot of land was to be covered with buildings of the total floor area of ca. 100,000m². The entire structure, after its completion, was to service most of all the city whose population in 2015 was below 96 thousand.

Figure 1. Cidade da Cultura de Galicia – general view

Source: Photo by the Author

In 1999 an international architectural competition was held, to which the best contemporary architects were invited, with such noteworthy names as Santiago Calatrava, Ricardo Bofill, Rem Koolhaas, or Jean Nouel. The competition was won by Peter Eisenman, who was absolutely on a roll at the time and for whom it was another prestigious competition he had triumphed in (in 1997 he won the competition for the memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe). The design was awarded for its respect for the existing landscape and for the cohesion of such a unique concept. It assumed cutting off the peak of the hill of Monte Gaias, and recreating it in the form of buildings with a grid of medieval streets of the historical centre of Santiago de Compostela, along the paths of pilgrims heading for St. James’ tomb, recreated on the building. Thanks to this measure the architect obtained edifices which in the entire complex resembled a rocky hill intersected with numerous ravines and lines which reflected the street layout of the nearby town. Some critics of architecture additionally notice a form of a shell emerging here, which is the attribute of St. James, but this association seems to be somewhat exaggerated. Undoubtedly, thanks to the original form and scale of the project it was written about by global media, also those which are not interested in architecture on a daily basis. Authorities of Galicia and the city itself quite openly counted on a repeated success equal to that of Bilbao and the Guggenheim Museum.

Having spent 600 million euro, nearly four times more than initially assumed, it was necessary to revise the plans. After several suspensions of the works, at the end of 2013 it was decided to withhold the works completely. Instead of a state-of-the-art culture centre attracting enormous crows of tourists, not necessarily connected with the pilgrim traffic, visited by 12 million people a year, St. James’ city acquired contemporary ruins near the old town. Many factors contributed to the failure of the entire project. Some blame the designer, who allegedly calculated the budget erroneously. Eisenman himself explained that since the launch of the works, their scope had risen several times, which had obviously contributed to the increase of the costs. Others believe that politicians who ruled at the time are guilty as they wanted to create a new tourist attraction in an easy way, not considering the costs of construction or of operation of the facility in the future. Nevertheless, it seems fair to state that the fundamental cause of the failure of the project was its scale – the total lack of cohesion between the proportions of the old and the new, and the lack of a coherent development vision for the city which was to be provided with such an enormous culture centre in such a short time, to make matters worse very badly linked with the existing urban tissue. Considering the global financial crisis, which overlapped with all these problems, all conditions that had to be satisfied for this ambitious project to be a spectacular disaster were fulfilled. The failure was all the more painful as due to a misguided political decision a poor region of Galicia had to spend ca. 60 million euro a year for the maintenance of the already erected buildings, which constitutes nearly 30% of the budget allocated to culture, transport, and education.

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Figure 2. Ciudad de la Cultura – view from the centre of the complex of the never finished concert hall

Source: Photo by the Author

Broken ‘spaceship’

The north-western part of Spain abounds in numerous spectacular buildings, which due to the crisis remain unfinished, or there are no funds to maintain them, which leads to the deterioration of their technical condition. Similarly to Cidade da Cultura de Galicia, the problem is the size of the buildings, the unbridled programme, and the fact that the majority of the structures do not address the current needs.

Figure 3. Auditorio Palacio de Congresos Príncipe Felipe in Oviedo – general view

Source: Photo by the Author
A building of a slightly different character and situated differently than the aforementioned Cidade da Cultura, is El Palacio de Exposiciones y Congresos in Oviedo – an edifice designed by Santiago Calatrava, extremely futuristic in its form, resembling a spaceship rather than an edifice of a congress centre. A characteristic white shape made of concrete, steel, and glass, with strongly marked structural accentuations, characteristic for this architect, exposed to the local climate, believed to be one of the most demanding in entire Spain, is aging very quickly. Already 5 years after the opening of the facility, which took place in 2010, there are many visible traces of its wear and tear. The initially snow white congress hall now has a dirty grey colour, the walls are decorated with numerous graffiti, and the entire complex looks as if it was abandoned. It is quite surprising, as compared to Cidade da Cultura the programme of the building provides for more commercial functions. Besides the congress hall for 2144 seats, it holds exhibition space, 2 large multifunctional halls, 12 smaller conference halls, seats of offices of the authorities of Asturia, a hotel with 150 rooms, and a large shopping gallery with an underground car park for 1777 cars.\[4\] The entire complex, which could be a gem of many capital cities of large countries, was erected in a city with the population of ca. 222 thousand. The costs of construction, initially estimated at the level of 76-79 million euro, according to unofficial reports were 5 times higher, despite the failure to complete a movable dome over the congress hall. Due to some design errors it will be immovable forever. This error cost the office of Santiago Calatrava the total of 7 million euro, which was adjudicated as a compensation for the developer and workers injured during the construction.

Figure 4. Auditorio Palacio de Congresos Príncipe Felipe in Oviedo — the main entrance to the auditorium

Source: Photo by the Author

In 2001 it was probably difficult to predict the financial crisis which came several years later and had a negative effect on this investment. Another issue is that this project was way too big in the concept of the contracting entity, as well as its creators, from the very beginning. The lack of a dialogue with the environment and the total strangeness of form of the new edifice are responsible for the fact that both parties: the designers and the investors seem to do whatever they can to forget about this extremely expensive mistake.

**Spanish ‘Brasilia’**

The problem of establishing relations between a newly erected building and its surroundings was tackled much better by Oscar Niemeyer. In Aviles, a city located to the north from Oviedo, he designed Centro Cultural Internacional Oscar Niemeyer. It consists of an auditorium with a multifunctional hall for 1000 people, a small hall for chamber concerts, and exposition space in the foyer, a dome holding a museum and additional exhibition spaces, a tower holding a restaurant and a drink bar, a multifunctional building with the seat of the administration, coffee shops, conference halls, as well as tourist information. All these buildings are arranged around a spacious square, which is to support all sorts of artistic activities. The centre was erected on the grounds of a former port, located right by the historical old town, separated from it by a road and a river, intersected by an interesting footbridge and bridge, quite interesting in their form. The white reinforced concrete architecture of the new buildings, here and there emphasised by bright red or yellow, contrasting with the renaissance old town, does not overwhelm with its bulk, it constitutes a complementation of the urban tissue in the form of a new attractive urban space. Despite quite a complicated access from the side of the city, Centro Niemeyer has had a positive effect on the post-industrial grounds located the closest to the centre, reviving them to a great extent, and improving the position of this town with its 85-thousand population in the international scale.⁵

**Figure 5 and Figure 6. Centro Cultural Internacional Oscar Niemeyer — general view**

Source: Photo by the Author

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The International Culture Centre seems to be functioning in compliance with the intention of the author and the investors. It constitutes a certain magnet for tourists and numerous people of culture, science, business, and politics. This institution gets involved in numerous cultural projects. Within international programmes such personalities as actor Kevin Spacey, director Sam Mendes, or writer Wole Soyinka, winner of the Noble prize in 1986, have worked here. The supervisory board of Centro Cultural Internacional Oscar Niemeyer consists of such celebrities as e.g. Stephen Hawking, Woody Allen, and Vinton Cerf.

Contrary to the examples provided in the previous paragraphs, one could speak of a great success here. It was made possible thanks to good collaboration of the design team, the investors, and inhabitants of Aviles. Since its very beginnings, the design approved for implementation addressed the needs of this place; its scale was appropriate for the city of this size, and the municipal authorities had a clear plan of how the institutions which was to occupy the new buildings should function. Centro Niemeyer focuses on the diversity of the artistic expression, and apart from cooperation with such powerful institutions as the Cervantes Institute, it also engages in the organisation of small cultural events. Thanks to the seat perfectly adjusted to the needs, even these most minute activities make the buildings alive and become a rightful part of the urban space. The project is definitely an example of successful revitalisation of post-industrial grounds.

**Katowice Culture Zone**

Just like Aviles, the Katowice Culture Zone is an example of successful revitalisation of post-industrial grounds. It is also a great reference for the comparison of the scale of the project, which in its size resembles the Galician City of Culture, although it is located in a city that is 3 times as big, round which there live nearly 3 million people - potential users.

Silesia, the most industrialised region of Poland, was subjected to changes during the political transformation after 1989 in a very special way. Numerous industrial plants started to have financial problems, which led them to bankruptcy. This was the fate of e.g. the oldest mine in Silesia, ‘Katowice’, in operation since 1823, located in the city centre, only several steps from ‘Spodek’, an iconic building designed by Maciej Gintowt and Maciej Krasinski. In 1999 the plant was liquidated, some of its buildings were demolished, and in return for its debts the city took over a gigantic plot of land in the very centre of the city. In several years, after thorough analyses, it was decided to allocate these grounds to the Katowice Culture Zone, which is to group institutions of culture important for the city itself and for Upper Silesia. The project holds new seats of the National Symphony Orchestra of the Polish Radio, the Silesian Museum, and the International Congress Centre. Unlike the Spanish projects, here it was decided to conduct an international architectural competition separately for each new edifice. Undoubtedly, this decision was influenced by the fact that the plot was located near ‘Spodek’ and the historic buildings of the former mine. Staging of the investment allowed to minimise the risk that affected the Spanish projects, due to which despite much higher funds invested in those constructions, they still seem to be unfinished.
The competition for the design of the seat of the Silesian Museum was won by an Austrian office of Riegler Riewe Architekten, which proposed a minimalist structure of glass cubes fitted in the existing building of the former mine. The main exposition hall with the floor area of over 6 thousand m² is located underground, which constitutes an interesting reference to the history of this place. The building was erected in the years 2011-2013. The next competition selected the winning authors of the new International Congress Centre. In terms of the scale of difficulty, it was the most complicated topic, because the plot where the Centre was to be placed is located in the direct vicinity of the modernist ‘Spodek’. A design by a Warsaw-based design studio JEMS won the competition. The architects juxtaposed the oval shape of ‘Spodek’ with a black cuboid form of a new building, in the place where until the 1990s there was a waste heap of the nearby mine. The colour of the edifice directly corresponds with hard coal, the symbol of Upper Silesia. The interiors, partly finished with perforated sheets in the same colour, are brightened up with warm wood. The most interesting element of the new edifice is the ‘green valley’, which intersects the building in one third of its length, demarcating an axis that links ‘Spodek’ with the quarter of Bogucice. Via a green flat roof there lead black concrete stairs, which from the side of ‘Spodek’ constitute a kind of gate to the entire complex. The edifice was put into use in 2015 after 5 years of construction. The last competition selected a designed of the National Symphony Orchestra of the Polish Radio, who was a local architect, Tomasz Konior. The competition jury chose a design characterised by a simple and functional floorplan, which

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additionally secures good acoustic isolation for the centrally arranged concert halls for 1800 and 300 people. It was ordered to redesign the elevations, which were to refer more to the cultural heritage of Silesia.

Figure 8. National Symphony Orchestra of the Polish Radio – Concert Hall

Source: Photo by the Author

The architect decided to reach for the motif of a clinker brick, so characteristic for traditional multi-family Silesian houses. Persons who enter the building are surprised by the black reinforced concrete external wall of the main concert hall, where imprints of the shuttering are clearly visible. This brings into mind an enormous lump of coal. The large concert hall is a true masterpiece in terms of acoustics. The vineyard-style hall came into being thanks to the cooperation with Nagata Acoustics. According to many specialists’ opinions, the effect is one of the best concert halls in Europe.\footnote{Malkowski, Tomasz. \textit{Narodowa Orkiestra Symfoniczna Polskiego Radia}. "Form Follows Freedom. Architektura dla kultury w Polsce 2000+." Cracow: International Culture Centre, 2015. p. 224-233.}

The entire project composed of the edifices referred to above is stringed along a path running from ‘Spodek’ to the Silesian Museum. Between the buildings there are public spaces, parks, and piazzas. The Culture Zone is still an unfinished work, the city plans to erect several new buildings. Nevertheless, even now one could speak of a considerable success of this project, which restored the grounds of this fallen colony to the city residents. According to the municipal authorities and the designers who participated in the development of the Katowice Culture Zone, it is an expression of longing for urban space subordinate to a pedestrian, which is very scarce in the Upper Silesian agglomeration. It does not, however, seem to be the key factor that decided that this complex satisfies the hopes placed in it. Once again, the appropriately
selected scale of the project, without any unnecessary swank, should be mentioned here. The budget of the entire investment at the level of ca. 250 million euro makes it much cheaper than its Spanish counterparts, and at the same time it fulfils the tasks posed before it. The architecture that came into being here does not fall behind the projects implemented abroad. What seems to be extremely important is the appropriate operation of the institutions that function here, which treat their new seats as a chance for development, and not just an unnecessary burden on their budgets.

**Summary**

Undoubtedly, centres of culture are extremely important elements of modern cities. It seems that the situation will not change in the future. These buildings testify to the potential of local populations, as well as the strength of the civilisation and cultural impact of countries. The examples referred to in this paper clearly indicate that there is no one universal method that could be adopted to make use of this potential. Nevertheless, it should be remembered to select an appropriate scale of new structures, so that they could satisfy the local needs. It is necessary to remember how European cities were developing over centuries. Organic development with respect for the tradition of the place is also a recipe for the future. Attempts to evade this reasonable approach in the European reality end up the way they did in Santiago de Compostela. The European city of the future should focus on a creative development of the heritage it stems from. Attempts of revolutionary changes, disregarding the scale of the place, are responsible not only for failing to make use of the chance for development, but also have a negative effect on the existing urban structure. Frequently it takes long years to rectify wrong decisions; nobody wants to assume political and design responsibility, not to mention the financial one.

This paper aims to demonstrate changes over recent years in the process of designing of complexes of public facility buildings intended for institutions of culture. A factor that undoubtedly took its toll was the financial crisis from 2008, which in a very brutal way annihilated many plans, especially in Spain. New centres of culture must be definitely erected, their strong citygenic role provides a strong stimulus in the process of revitalisation of urban spaces. Just like in every task, the essence of success is looking before you leap. Otherwise, in cities of the future we will be haunted by deserted quarters, which nobody will be able to develop, in spite of billions of euro spent for this purpose.

**References**


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