



Wojciech Pawłowski*

*Role of architect in creation of ‘culture in architecture’
and new spatial forms in cultural landscape of suburban areas
and rural settlement units on the territory of Western Pomerania*



Fig. 1. Church in Binowo – reconstruction. Photo by author



Fig. 2. Rebuilt church in Bobolin. Photo by author

Throughout centuries, transformations of spatial forms comprising the architecture of a given place were strictly connected with the cultural landscape in which they were located. At the same time, they were subject to the strictly defined canons that were associated with the surroundings and time of their creation.

Nowadays, we can observe a decline or even disappearance of any connections between place and time on the one hand and on the other the form, which process is particularly visible in suburban areas and rural settlement centres, where the awareness of culture in architecture represented by the designer must be confronted with the wrongly understood culture of esthetics represented by the investor.

Perfect examples here are rural areas where the several centuries long tradition of the place clashes with a new, sometimes foreign, spatial form.

In this regard, some of the most significant elements which betoken the roots and maintain the faint cultural continuity of the place and at the same time testify the level of the architect's cultural awareness are architectural structures of religious cult. They ought to be perceived in historical categories and as a link between the past and the present.

After 1945 in Western Pomerania there were 168 churches. During the war they were partly damaged, moreover, in the postwar period the state authorities ordered to pull down 102 churches. Apart from refurbishments, 128 churches were rebuilt until the present times and there are 40 more which are still left as ruins¹.

The most required form of action, which strengthens the cultural continuity of the place and simultaneously maintains its tradition along with respecting the centuries long culture of these architectural structures, is the

* West Pomeranian University of Technology in Szczecin, Faculty of Modern Architecture, Theory and Design Methodology, Department of Building and Architecture.

¹ Source: *Architektura sakralna Pomorza Zachodniego*, http://www.architektura.pomorze.pl/_index.php?link=_straty.

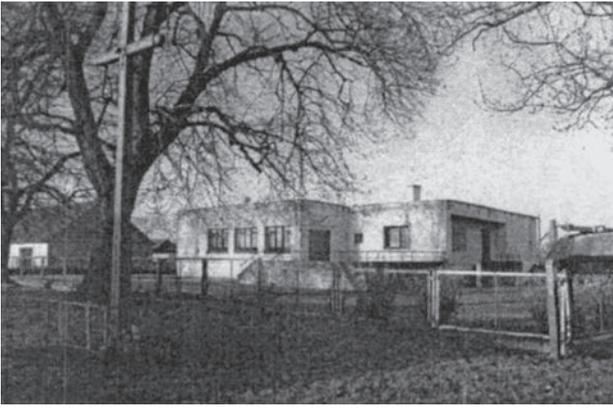


Fig. 3. Kindergarten building adapted to the needs of church in the Kosin village [1]



Fig. 4. Modern church structure on the rectangle plan with a separate presbytery and two towers, designed by Marek Wołoszyn, in Komarowo village [1]



Fig. 5. Church in Chomętowo village, according to the design by Jerzy Koniński. Built in 1988–1996.
Photo by author

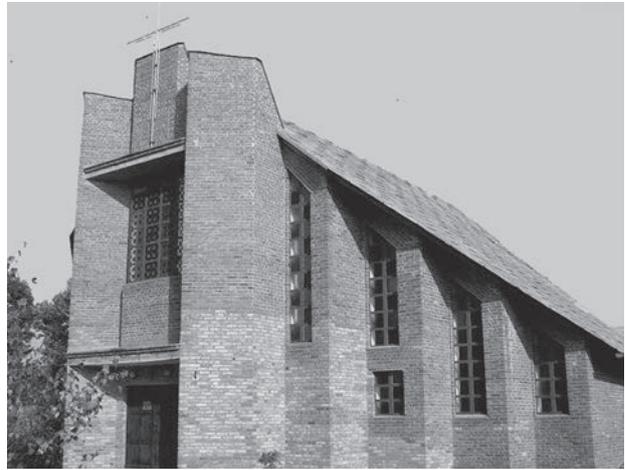


Fig. 6. Church in Gębini village, according to the design by Jerzy Koniński. Built in 1985–1992.
Photo by author

reconstruction of the old form of these buildings and their original location on the basis of the preserved documentation. A good example here is St Maximilian Maria Kolbe Church in Binowo (Fig. 1)².

Similar activities were taken up when rebuilding Our Mother of Perpetual Help Church in Bobolin (Fig. 2)³.

A frequent activity, which was taken up due to the lack of funds to build a new structure, was to adapt the already existing buildings to the needs of a place of worship. Unfortunately, their form, as their previous functions were

² Stone and brick church, Gothic, from the 13th century, erected on the quadrangle plan. In the north part, brick ogival portal; in the east part ogival window hole; eastern top with blends; in the east part, two buttress pillars – added later on. After 1945 it was demolished, in 1979-1982 rebuilt. [Source: Reverend Roman Kostynowicz, *Kościół Archidiecezji Szczecińsko-Kamińskiej*, Szczecin 2000, p. 374].

³ Church made of erratic stone, on the rectangle plan, with a separate presbytery closed by a semicircular apse. The small tower with an ave-bell grows from the body of the church from the west part. In the years 1945-1986 the church was in ruins (it was preserved as high as the windows). In 1986 rebuilding works were started according to the design by Stefan Kwilecki.

totally different, was far from the canons of sacral building. Had it not been for the crosses which were placed on top of the buildings or in their vicinity, nothing would indicate that this was a place of worship.

A significant role in the process of adapting such a building is played by the designer who, while making decisions as to formal actions and employed materials, can show his sense of culture in architecture and in this way, increase the importance of the particular architectural structure. On the other hand, his incompetent actions can lead to the total degradation of the cultural landscape.

An excellent example is the village of Kosin. The local 13th century granite church which was rebuilt in 1891, by order of the state authorities⁴ was demolished in 1945. On its place a kindergarten was built, which in 1991 was adapted to a church (Fig. 3). In this case, the designer's plan is inadequate to the performed function and the form is far from the typical church structure; as a consequence,

⁴ Ks. inf. Roman Kostynowicz, *Kościół Archidiecezji...*, op. cit., p. 70.



Fig. 7. Mierzyn village;
 1 – pre-war village layout;
 2 – residential estates which,
 administratively, are part
 of the village – in black,
 the buildings from
 before 1939 – own study

it is in no way consistent with the pre-war rural architecture [2].

The most important indicator of the architect's level of culture is undoubtedly the fact of designing and building new structures of sacral architecture.

New sacral buildings on the rural areas were started to be erected mainly at the beginning of the 1980s.

Unfortunately, in many cases the designers forgot about consistency of the architectural structure form with the cultural landscape of the place by creating completely alienated forms which by no means can be said to blend in with the existing local architecture (Fig. 4) [1]. By treating the structure of the church as a typical design of the repetitive nature (Figs. 3, 5, 6), they contribute to certain monotony in the landscape which is not a welcome and positive phenomenon.

The results of the negative designer's actions neglecting the proper choice of architectural form can often be observed in the areas which border the great urban agglomerations.

On the territory of Western Pomerania, due to the factors such as the low potential of agricultural land, low quality of the soils – 78% of all the arable lands contain soils which are very poor quality as regards their farmland value – the existence of numerous small farms (80% of the farms do not exceed the area of 10 hectares) as well as unsatisfactory profitability of the farms which border the great urban agglomerations, the level of agricultural activity is extensive. This situation leads to transformations of the existing suburban farmland areas. The adjoining rural settlements were to be changed into residential areas which constitute a natural social hinterland for urban cen-



Fig. 8. Office building in Przylep village near Szczecin
 – condition in 2004. Photo by author



Fig. 9. One-family building in Siadło Dolne village near Szczecin – condition in 2008. Photo by author



Fig. 10. Buildings at TBS at Łucznicza Street in Szczecin – condition in 2010. Photo by author

tres and this change totally distorts the postwar cultural landscape.

Very often, in the direct vicinity of a great urban agglomeration, next to rural areas which are wastelands, there are residential areas with one- and multifamily houses.

Due to intensive urban activities, rural areas after some time may become absorbed by towns not only functionally but also with regard to administration issues. However, this process is often conducted chaotically without paying attention to the harmony in the existing landscape.

We can distinguish two types of such urban activities: one is orderly and it takes into account the landscape values of the terrain as well as the existing rural system. Unfortunately, such situations take place most often only within the administrative borders of a city. The other type involves a spontaneous process of land development, both individual investments which satisfy functional requirements of an investor and these requirements are not necessarily in accordance with the idea of the spatial order (Fig. 7) as well as one family housing or small residential units which are created in between the discussed areas. Those which are built within a rural unit often create chaotic structures which have nothing in common with the typical elements of the village cultural landscape and moreover are not in accordance with the idea of city residential estates which ought to be harmonized architectonically and create a logical urban entirety (Fig. 7)⁵. Most often, these structures are completely beyond a given context, in which an architect performs the role of a machine that produces the materials which are necessary for obtaining a building permit and carrying out the future investment (Fig. 8).

⁵ In the close vicinity of the prewar buildings, some new multi-family houses were erected as part of the estate 'Za wiatrakami', which was an example of typical city buildings as regards their size and form (absorption of village by city). There are also areas of one-family housing estate, but still there is no reference whatsoever to the old tradition. Prevailing here are the structures built on the basis of 'typical designs' and pseudo-residential buildings which are completely not integrated with the existing buildings.

We must admit that civilization progress rarely goes hand in hand with the increase of designing awareness or even more importantly, ethical awareness. This refers to a designer who creates the esthetical and cultural awareness of architecture.

Another excellent example is the process of building great residential estates such as Słoneczne, Bukowe and Majowe (Fig. 9) in Szczecin in the 1970s and 1980s. Although these estates, as well as some other similar ones in city agglomerations of Western Pomerania, employed the solutions of typical residential structures, we can notice here a new urban idea which takes into consideration creating common areas, social facilities as well as securing the needs connected with education, entertainment and trade of the future residents. Paradoxically, we must admit that despite their poor architectonic form, these estates constituted a well planned urban system with 'friendly' space enriched by green areas along with recreation terrains.

Unfortunately, nowadays when designing some residential complexes the priority is given to the maximum usage of space in order to achieve the greatest PUM⁶. The only rules which are adhered to refer to the minimum distances at which the buildings must be placed, in accordance with the relevant technical specifications. As a consequence, we are left with claustrophobic impressions without the possibility of 'breathing' in the created space. An example of such a solution is the TBS estate situated at Łucznicza Street in Szczecin, where we can observe the situation that is contrary to the 1970s and 1980s estates. Attractive spatial form that is created by the particular buildings is located on a very small area which is the property of a cooperative (Fig. 10).

In this situation, the designer is faced with the dilemma: he must make a compromise between the two ways of understanding new space. As a result, we often deal with the total lack of respecting place and time and dis-

⁶ PUM – abbreviation: *powierzchnia użytkowo-mieszkalna* (usable and residential area).

torting the cultural landscape in which some new spatial forms appear and they have nothing to do with 'culture of architecture'.

To sum up, we must ask the following question: what is the role of an architect in a frequently distorted way of understanding the newly created space by an investor and the desire to maintain an appropriate level of architecture

which ought to correspond with the historical as well as the existing cultural landscape of the particular place? We must say that the designer's vision as well as his perseverance in defending his own concepts and ability to conduct talks with the investor are extremely important in shaping the future landscape which for the future generations shall be a testimony of our level of culture in architecture.

References

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Rola architekta w kreowaniu „kultury w architekturze” a nowe formy przestrzenne w krajobrazie kulturowym terenów podmiejskich oraz wiejskich jednostek osadniczych terenu Pomorza Zachodniego

Na przestrzeni wieków przekształcenia form przestrzennych tworzących architekturę miejsca były ściśle powiązane z krajobrazem kulturowym, w jakim były lokowane. Jednocześnie były one poddane ściśle określonym kanonom osadzonym w miejscu i czasie swego powstania.

W obecnej chwili można zaobserwować zanikanie związku pomiędzy miejscem i czasem a kanonem formy, szczególnie w przestrzeniach podmiejskich oraz wiejskich ośrodkach osadniczych, gdzie świadomość kultury architektury reprezentowana przez projektanta musi zmierzyć się z błędnie pojętą kulturą estetyki reprezentowaną przez inwestora.

W tak zastanej sytuacji powstaje moralny dylemat architekta, polegający na stworzeniu kompromisu pomiędzy tymi dwoma stanowiskami pojmowania nowej przestrzeni, którego efektem niejednokrotnie jest całkowity brak poszanowania miejsca i czasu, z zaburzeniem krajobrazu kulturowego, w którym pojawiają się nowe formy przestrzenne niemające nic wspólnego z „kulturą architektury”.

Mając na uwadze powyższe, powstaje pytanie co do roli architekta w powiązaniu z niejednokrotnie wypaczonym sposobem pojmowania nowo projektowanej przestrzeni przez inwestora a możliwością utrzymania odpowiedniego poziomu architektury korespondującego z tak historycznym, jak i zastanym krajobrazem kulturowym miejsca.

Key words: cultural landscape, settlement, Western Pomerania

Słowa kluczowe: krajobraz kulturowy, osadnictwo, Pomorze Zachodnie