

REVALORIZAZION OF THE HISTORIC TOWN CENTRE OF JEZIORANY – SOME DESIGN-RELATED PROBLEMS

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Abstract

This paper deals with the question of revalorization (rehabilitation) of some fragments of the centre of a small town. The objective has been to discuss how two public squares in the centre of Jeziorany, such as the Old Town Market Square and Castle Square, are planned to be renovated. Both squares need to be re-arranged, modernized and given a special status. The concept of their renewal contains some ideas for the future use and management of these squares and for the shaping of the rows of buildings which flank them¹. The suggested solutions, once achieved, will prevent the progressing degradation of listed buildings and their surroundings, which in turn will improve the spatial order in the renewed area.

PROBLEMATYKA REWALORYZACJI ZABUDOWY ŚRÓDMIEŚCIA W JEZIORANACH – WYBRANE ASPEKTY PROJEKTOWE

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Słowa kluczowe: architektura, urbanistyka, rewaloryzacja, rewitalizacja, konserwacja zabytków.

¹ This report contains some details from designs prepared by students associated in the *Kreska* Club of Young Architects and Urban Designers, the UWM in Olsztyn and selected elements of designs from B. Sc. dissertations prepared by Maciej Adamczewski and Marcin Czeberkus at the Chair of Civil Engineering and Building Constructions under the supervision of Marek Zagroba, Ph. D., M. Sc. (Arch).

Abstrakt

W pracy opisano zagadnienie rewitalizacji fragmentów przestrzeni śródmieścia małego miasta. Celem opracowania było przedstawienie planowanych zmian w przestrzeni dwóch placów publicznych w centrum Jezioran – rynku staromiejskiego oraz placu Zamkowego. Są to przestrzenie wymagające uporządkowania, modernizacji oraz nadania odpowiedniej rangi. Koncepcja rewitalizacji zawiera propozycje zagospodarowania placów oraz kształtowania zabudowy pierzejowej. Realizacja proponowanych rozwiązań zapobiegnie postępującej degradacji zabytkowych obiektów oraz terenów w ich otoczeniu, co doprowadzi do poprawy ładu przestrzennego.

Introduction

Jeziorany is a small town in Warmia, lying in the central part of the Province of Warmia and Mazury. It is the capital of the commune of Jeziorany (*gmina Jeziorany*). The town was founded in 1310 and granted a charter in 1338. Apart from the well-preserved medieval pattern of the streets, other material remnants of the town's history are St Bartholomew Church in the Gothic style, with an antique pipe organ, the Chapel of the Holy Cross, the 18th century Baroque Gatehouse, a Lutheran church and fragments of a castle raised by the Bishops of Warmia, such as vaulted cellars, on which the present-day building of the Town Council in Jeziorany stands.

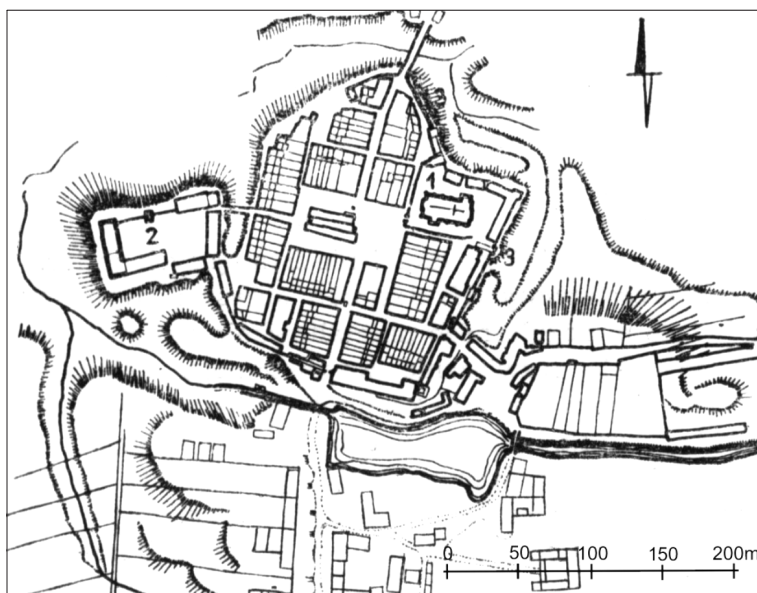


Fig. 1. The street plan of the centre of Jeziorany in the 1950s

1. St Bartholomew Church, 2 – the castle of the 14th – 19th century (today, the Town Council), 3 – fortified walls of the 14th century

Source: Czubieli L., Domagała T. (1969, s. 154).

Unfortunately, many historic buildings have not survived until our time. Among the causes is the fact that over the course of the centuries the town changed hands several times, being owned by Poland, Prussia, France or Sweden. But the major cause of destruction were repeated fires, for example in 1783 the town was ravaged by a great fire, which started when a lightning struck. Practically speaking, the whole town, including the castle, fell into ruin.

Revalorization (restoring the former value) as well as broadly understood revitalization of fragments of urban space are at present very popular solutions applied to the existing urban structure. Revalorization and revitalization comprise many technical aspects, and revitalization additionally includes some economic and social undertakings, whose aim is to improve the spatial order and to aid development of degraded areas. For small and often neglected towns, it is particularly important to be able to restore adequate functions of the town centre. This paper focuses on the spatial aspect of revitalization, and the actual reconstruction of two squares in the centre of Jeziorany. The renewal project encompassed the Old Town Market Square and Castle Square.

The design concept – the Old Town Market

Jeziorany is one of the many small towns which suffered much damage during the World War Two, later compounded by the post-war urban zoning, reconstruction and lack of adequate conservation of listed buildings. The sad consequences are evident on and around the Old Town Market Square in the way this space is managed today and how the buildings flanking the square have been reconstructed. The structure of the Old Town has been destroyed partly because some pre-war buildings have not been rebuilt and partly because they have been replaced by new buildings which completely disagree with the historic part of the town (Figs 2 and 3).

A road has bisected the square into a loosely arranged car park and a green area surrounded by streets. Today, the square seems oversized compared to the frontage houses, which is due to the lack of the Town Hall (which burnt down during the Swedish Deluge).

The preliminary stage when planning a revalorization project for the town centre consisted of analyzing iconographic materials documenting the former and present buildings around the square (Fig. 4) and making a photographic inventory of the current situation.



Fig. 2. Fragment of the west frontage of the Old Town Market Square
Photo: M. Zagroba.



Fig. 3. Fragment of the north frontage of the Old Town Market Square
Photo: M. Zagroba.



Fig. 4. The pre-war buildings on the Old Town Market Square in Jeziorany
Source: The Archives of the Municipal Office in Jeziorany.

The arrangement of the townhouses with their roof ridges parallel to the streets, the small-scale houses and narrow land plots, the rhythm of doors and windows as well as historicizing details have all superimposed the way in which the new buildings completing gaps between the existing ones have been designed and the ones which disagree with the historic houses have been re-designed. Most of the proposed changes concern the west frontage of the square and new buildings in the north frontage. The designed architectural solutions draw on the historic buildings, and are therefore an attempt at connecting the rows of houses along each side of the market square (Figs 5, 6).



Fig. 5. The buildings along the north frontage of the square – the current situation



Fig. 6. The buildings along the north frontage of the square – a revalorization concept
 Source: A concept for the revalorization of buildings in the town centre of Jeziorany. The design made by students associated in the the *Kreska* Club of Young Architects and Urban Designers, the UWM in Olsztyn, in 2010.

In addition to the suggested designs of houses, a new surface of the square and some street furniture have been proposed. By suggesting to pave the surface with small stone blocks and cobbles it is hoped to achieve the benefits attributed to using natural building materials. Besides, some interesting patterns on the paved surface can be created.

Among the street furniture, noteworthy is the irregular layout of the walls of the town hall, as a memento of the former building. This solution carries a symbolic meaning and important information.

The town centre can be viewed as a landmark, and when small towns or villages are involved, like Jeziorany, this function is highlighted by the presence of offices, a church, shops and services. The renewal of the buildings around the market square is of great importance to the whole structure of Jeziorany. Through a harmonious combination of contemporary houses with listed buildings we can highlight the small-town character of Jeziorany.

The design concept for Castle Square

Castle Square occupies another part of the town centre in Jeziorany. It lies near the Old Town Market Square and likewise needs to be re-arranged in order to gain an appropriate status (Fig. 7). Castle Square is important for the whole town because of the Town Council, which stands here, on the foundations of the former medieval castle. The concept of the renewal of the square encompasses suggested modernization of the square, the Town Council building and the rows of houses along the sides of the square.

The function of the square has changed over the years. Originally, it was a castle ward; today it is mainly a car park for the council staff and customers.



Fig. 7. Castle Square in Jeziorany – the current situation

Photo: M. Adamczewski.

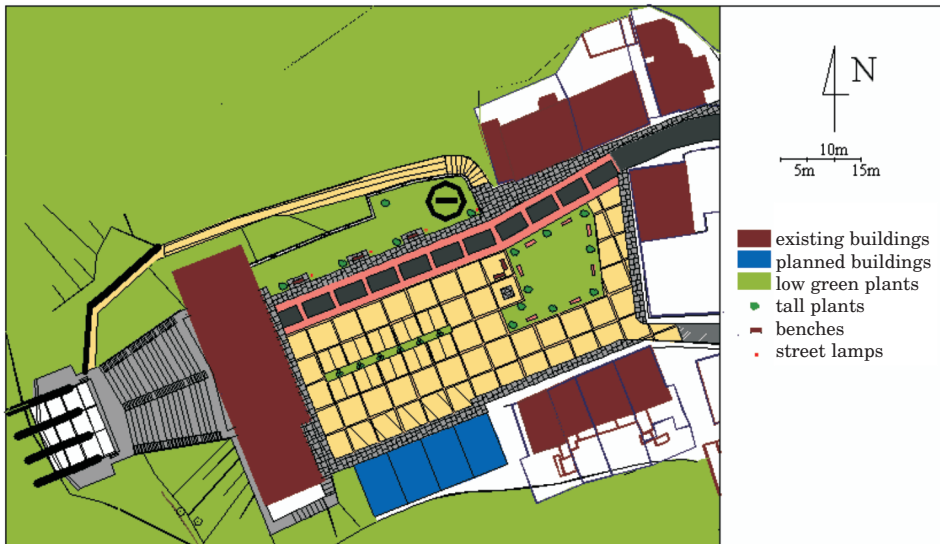


Fig. 8. A management concept for Castle Square in Jeziorany

When re-designing the square, the current accessibility requirements were taken into consideration as well as the need to preserve its role as a stately space. One-way traffic was suggested alongside some car parks in the central and southern part of the square. The road surface and footpaths are to be paved with stone blocks and cobbles in colours resembling the actual tint and texture of stone used for paving roads in the past (Fig. 8). The pattern of the square surface puts emphasis on a broken axis leading from the market place to the Town Council, which helps to associate the two public spaces.

Elements of street furniture have been included in the management plan. Drawing on the historical iconographic documents, it has been suggested to reconstruct a well in the middle of the square and a fortified building, such as a keep, in the northern part of the area. It is also presumed that the square will be illuminated at night. There will be some historically styled benches placed on the square.

Moving on from the market place towards Castle Square, we notice a protruding fragment of the row of buildings along the north side of the square. It consists of residential houses, one- or two-storey tall, with gable and pediment roofs, and with partly habitable or completely unused attics (Fig. 9). The revalorization of these building should include converting the attics into habitable space, adding more light to the existing interiors, tampering with the facades by changing the colour of the walls, bringing some order to the whole composition and completing the missing architectural ornaments.



Fig. 9. Castle Square – the north frontage

Photo: M. Adamczewski.

By converting the attics into habitable lofts, the residents will be offered more living space and the roofs will be enlivened with the added dormer windows and skylights. The renovation of the facades will consist in restoring the plinth wherever missing as well as adding cornices and door and window trims. In some of the buildings, it is planned to build roofs over the entrance doors. The walls are to be painted in light, pastel colours, but in some places applied in contrasting combinations.

Similar design-related solutions have been suggested for the east and south frontages of the square (Fig. 10). The idea is not to interfere with the existing state so as to be able to carry out the renewal plan at a relatively low cost.



Fig. 10. The north frontage of Castle Square – the current situation and the revalorization concept
Author: M. Adamczewski.

The most prominent building located at Castle Square is the one housing the Town Council. This is a three-storey building with a hipped roof, visually divided into two parts, which occupies the whole west frontage of the square (Fig. 11). In order to emphasize the stately function of the building, a historicizing, columned portico crowned by a tympanum with the town's coat of arms featuring in the middle has been designed. Several other architectural ornaments contribute to the whole design, such as cornices between the storeys and under the roof or door and window trims (Fig. 12).



Fig. 11. The Town Council in Jeziorany – the current state
Photo: M. Adamczewski.



Fig. 12. The Town Council in Jeziorany – the revalorization concept

Author: M. Adamczewski.

Among the greatest advantages of the planned revalorization of this building is the idea of assigning a new function to the medieval vaulted cellars underneath the building, the only surviving fragment of the former castle of the Bishops of Warmia. The project assumes that the cellars could be renovated and converted to house either a stylish restaurant or a registrar hall for wedding ceremonies.

Conclusions

Jeżiorany is a good example of a town which – due to a number of various factors – has somehow lost its character of a town with centuries-long history and building tradition. The remaining fragments of the architecture in its centre document the latter. The renewal of the Old Town Market Square and Castle Square could give the town a chance to improve the way its centre looks like and functions today. The changes, once carried out, will affect the processes contributing to creating a true town centre by shaping a friendly space with new opportunities for development. The suggested solutions, which aim at correcting the urban structure and enhancing the architecture in the town centre, once supported by the local council, could serve as a foundation for developing a more detailed plan for the renewal of the town centre in Jeżiorany. Based on the assumptions expressed in the present design, the following conclusions can be drawn, which could also be taken as guidelines for improving the town's image:

- improvement of the spatial structure of the town squares (urbanistic and architectural changes) positively affects the town's image and the public functions the town performs,

- the functions of the town centre (shops, services, housing) proposed to be located in the buildings flanking the two squares help to create a true town centre, in a way that is adequate for the discussed space,

– the small-town character of the discussed area is emphasized by small houses, fine divisions and subtle ornaments. The proposed contemporary architecture goes well with the historic buildings.

The street furniture is an element contributing to the attractiveness of urban spaces (the market place and Castle Square). The suggested materials and colours correspond to the atmosphere of a centre of a historic town.

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