

LOCAL VALUES
in a
NETWORKED
DESIGN WORLD

ADDED VALUE OF COMPUTER AIDED
ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

DUP Science

scientific committee

HENRI ACHTEN	TU-EINDHOVEN
ALEXANDER ASANOWICZ	TU-BIALYSTOK
ANDY BROWN	UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL
ADAM JAKIMOVICZ	TU-BIALYSTOK
JONAS AF KLERCKER	TU-LUND
GERNOT PITTIONI	INGENIEURBÜRO DR. PITTIONI MÜNCHEN
MARTIJN STELLINGWERFF	W&K, SINT-LUCAS / TU-DELFT
JOHAN VERBEKE	W&K, SINT-LUCAS

DUP Science is an imprint of
Delft University Press
P.O. Box 98
2600MG Delft
The Netherlands
Phone +31.15.2785678
Fax +31.15.2785706
E-mail info@library.tudelft.nl

Editors

Stellingwerff, Martijn Hogeschool voor Wetenschap & Kunst, Sint-Lucas Architecture
and TU-Delft, Faculty of Architecture, Form & Media Studies
Verbeke, Johan Hogeschool voor Wetenschap & Kunst, Sint-Lucas Architecture

Keywords Architecture, Local values, Globalisation,
Computer Aided Architectural Design.

ISBN 90-407-2507-1
DUP Science

Copyright © 2004 by Hogeschool voor Wetenschap & Kunst, Sint-Lucas Architecture,
Brussels. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, or by
any means without written permission of the author.

Printed in the Netherlands.

And would computer save the magic place?

A Bojary story

AUTHOR

Jadwiga C. Zarnowiecka
Białystok University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture
Białystok, POLAND

Introduction

Each city has its own magic, the spirit of the place. Not always are these ‘magic’ places commonly known. There are cities, however, for which such places are their pride and fame. Is there anybody who would not associate the Golden Street with Prague, or the Spanish Stairs with Rome? In Białystok (Fig.1) the magic quality is attributed to the district of Bojary.

Currently Bojary is one of the districts of Białystok. The town was first created as such in the 18th century (Fig.2) as a result of merging of two villages: Bojary and Skorupy, church grounds and Kolonia Lowiecka known as Krolikarnia. Only Bojary has retained the old communication plan of the former village and characteristic type of wooden structure from the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. (Fig.3,4,5)



Figure 1. Map of Poland

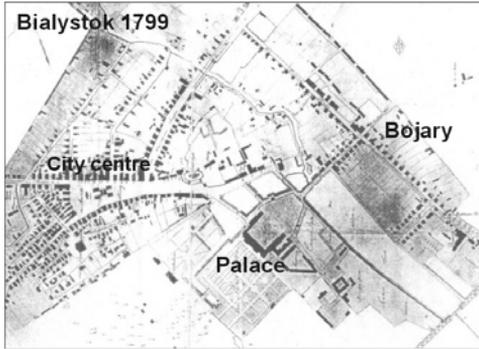


Figure 2. Bialystok 1799

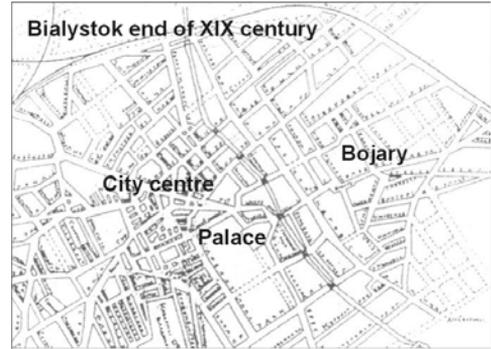


Figure 3. Bialystok end of XIX century



Figure 4,5. Bojary: Wiktorii Street (2003)



Figure 6. Bialystok 1977 – protected zone

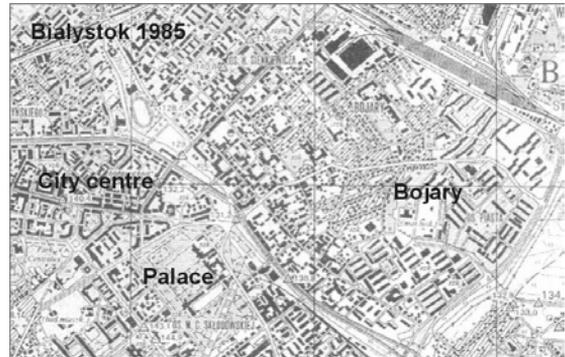


Figure 7. Bialystok 1985

A few facts from recent history

During the Second World War Białystok was almost completely destroyed, but wooden Bojary survived. In the rebuilding efforts after the War wooden houses were built, mostly single or two-storeyed buildings with steep roofs. Until the end of 1970s Białystok was considered to be ‘the largest village with the status of regional capital in Poland’. Indeed the extent of wooden architecture was significant.

In the 1970s the solution for the lack of flats was seen in the construction of housing districts built of the so called ‘wielka płyta’ (large size panels). In search for areas for this kind of housing the area to the northeast of the centre of the city was noticed. At the border of this area, near former village of Skorupy, the new district ‘Piasta’ was created. Blocks of flats gradually covered larger areas and approached the city centre. Bojary district was in the way. In 1977 the urban planning of the city Białystok was acknowledged to be of historical value and put into the register of monuments. A fragment of Bojary entered the protected zone. (Fig.6) Nevertheless, in 1984 a street connecting various districts was designed, eventually dividing Bojary into two parts. Thus the historically shaped urban plan was destroyed. (Fig.7)

Battle of the ‘magic’ place

In 1987 the architects connected with the Department of Architecture of the Białystok Polytechnic undertook an attempt to involve the professional group of architects and town-planners in the issue of saving Bojary. An idea of rehabilitation of the district was born. Since the low density of the location of buildings was criticized, the rehabilitation process was to involve adding new houses to the existing ones. (Fig.8)

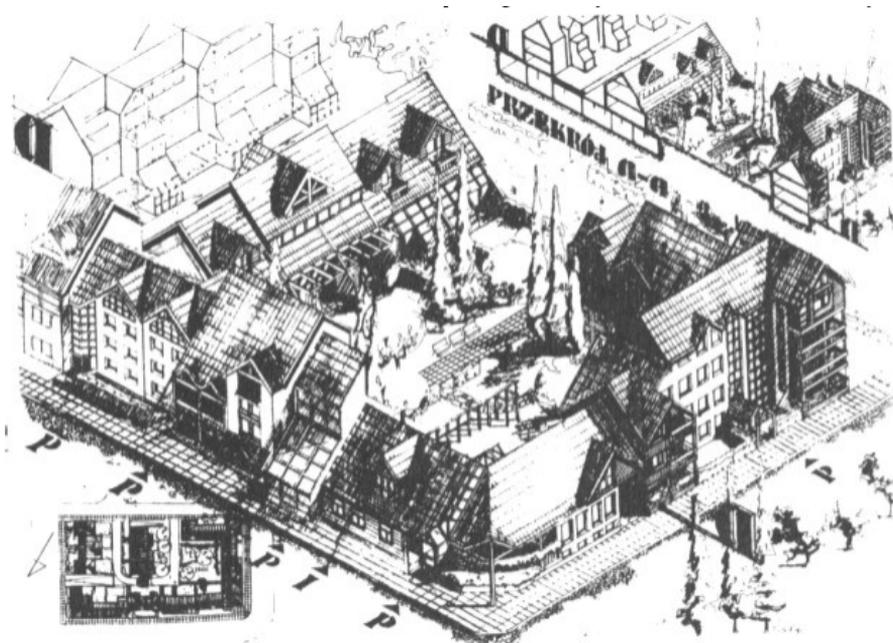


Figure 8. Renovation – student’s project

In 1988 'Karta Bojarska' (Bojary Charter) was signed. The document contained the principles of revitalization of the district. The support for the Charter was expressed by authorities from other places in Poland. But neither the Charter nor the support of architectural, town-planning and conservation authorities helped – the 'real' Bojary kept diminishing in size. The pressure of developers for areas close to the centre was too strong. Bojary Charter remained an unfulfilled dream about the city garden (a kind of a village in the centre of the city). It was not until 1993 that the local plan specifying the use of urban space imposed activities serving functional, technical and aesthetic renewal, also contributing to the preservation of cultural identity of the district.

From the experiences of the others – Woodberry Down

Woodberry Down near London was a degraded housing district covering about 2 square kilometers. After technical assessment the authorities planned to pull down about 2 500 houses in the worst condition and to renovate the others. About 6 000 inhabitants were to be relocated. The scale of this undertaking was so big that a decision was made to prepare action plan and involve inhabitants in it. The employees of the Centre for Advanced Studies in Architecture at Bath University were engaged to run the entire project. They prepared a system of spatial information which would enable contacts of the inhabitants, planners and designers.

The system can be seen on the Internet. It contains diverse pieces of information, from a three-dimensional model of the area through the proposal how to remodel the streets to the schedule of local meetings. The inhabitants visit the site, ask specific questions and are allowed to participate in the discussion of the rehabilitation of the district. It is planned that in the future they will choose the projects which will then be applied, after their own houses have been pulled down.

Communication problems

I believe that the failure in the battle of Bojary had its causes also in problems with communication which excluded local inhabitants from this discussion. Specific words do not carry the same meaning for everybody. When professional jargon is included there will be many who will find it difficult to understand the message and even the best of intentions. Using the language of pictures would facilitate contact. New technologies provide useful tools for communication.

The enormous popularity of computer games caused a rapid development of technologies which they use. The needs of the players are met through technologies of virtual reality. Producers of films based on the most popular games (e.g. Tomb Rider) promise to publish a DVD with an interactive version in which the player will be a director. Sounds unlikely? As many other things from several years ago. Perhaps a way to learn about 'magic' places (and saving them) will be created through virtual reality and 'a city game', or a specific plan of action. Possibly both, as it happened in the case of Woodberry Down.

Conclusions for the future

In the harmonious shaping of the landscape, also urban, the computer as a tool in the designing process may and should be used. I find it hard to agree, though, with a common expressed belief that the computer is responsible for the quality of architecture. It is always the designer who is responsible for quality. (Perhaps the meagre value of the architecture as seen through one's window should lead to revision of curricula of architectural studies and verifying the quality of graduates).

The work to modernize Woodberry Down began in 1999. Thanks to such examples and the available technology of interpersonal communication the chance to save Bojary would be greater. Of course there is no guarantee that virtual Bojary would have saved the real Bojary. But professional assistance, involvement, educating the community as well as using available technological tools give greater chances of investment success in planning, urban design and architecture.

This paper is the result of the research Dean's project 2003.

References

1. Architektura 3-4/1989, p.31-39
2. 'Karta Bojarska', OSAR, Holny Meyera, 1988
3. Plan Miasta Bialystok z 1799 r. (G.Becker)
4. Plan Miasta Bialehostoku z konc. XIX w.
5. Plan Bialehostoku z 1985 r.
6. www.hackney.gov.uk/woodberry