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ISSUES WITH PROTECTING MEDIEVAL URBAN LAYOUTS FROM SELECTED EXAMPLE TOWNS IN LESSER POLAND

PROBLEMATYKA OCHRONY ŚREDNIOWIECZNYCH UKŁADÓW URBANISTYCZNYCH NA PRZYKŁADZIE WYBRANYCH MIAST Z TERENU WOJEWÓDZTWA MAŁOPOLSKIEGO

Abstract

Nowadays the protection of historic urban layouts poses one of the greatest challenges in the field of cultural heritage protection. Even if this protection functions properly in large historic cities, it is sadly insufficient in smaller towns. The testimony to the latter claim is seen in deteriorating centres of small historic towns. Such degradation is a consequence of e.g. inappropriate investments disturbing their historic urban composition, which, in turn, demonstrates insufficient conservation protection. This article presents an analysis of selected medieval towns from Lesser Poland, with attention to both the state of preservation of their historic urban structure and the current form of its protection. Two towns (Nowy Targ, Skawina) are discussed in more detail.

Keywords: medieval urban layouts, historic towns in Lesser Poland, protection of historic towns

Streszczenie

Obecnie jednym z największych wyzwań w zakresie ochrony dziedzictwa kulturowego jest ochrona układów urbanistycznych. O ile ochrona ta funkcjonuje prawidłowo na terenie dużych miast, o tyle na terenie mniejszych ośrodków jest ona niewystarczająca. Dowodem na słuszność takiego twierdzenia jest degradacja centrów małych miast zabytkowych. Degradacja ta związana jest m.in. z niewłaściwymi działaniami inwestycyjnymi, które powodują zaburzenie ich historycznej kompozycji urbanistycznej. To z kolei wskazuje na niewystarczającą ochronę konserwatorską. W niniejszym artykule przeanalizowano, zarówno pod kątem stanu zachowania historycznej struktury urbanistycznej, jak i bieżącej formy jej ochrony wybrane miasta zabytkowe Małopolski. Dwa z nich (Nowy Targ, Skawina) zostaną omówione w pracy szerzej.

Słowa kluczowe: średniowieczne układy urbanistyczne, zabytkowe miasta małopolski, ochrona miasta zabytkowego

1. Introduction

This article addresses the issue of the protection of historic urban layouts in the small medieval towns of Lesser Poland. One of the main aims of the article is to draw attention to the rapidly progressing deterioration of the discussed urban structures, as well as – or perhaps primarily – their insufficient conservation protection.

According to the authors, it seems paradoxical that whilst nowadays there is a lot of pressure to protect historic objects; invaluable urban layouts which are much more difficult to restore or recreate are neglected.

For several years, the authors of the article have been conducting research on historic towns in Lesser Poland, whose origins frequently date back to the medieval period and are associated with King Kazimierz Wielki (Casimir the Great). The monarch founded numerous towns in the area of modern-day Lesser Poland, which have survived to this day, such as Ciężkowice, Grybów, Krościenko nad Dunajcem, Lanckorona, Muszyna, Myślenice, Nowy Targ, Piwniczna, Proszowice, Skawina, Słomniki, Tylicz (former Miastko), Tymbark and Uście Solne.

As mentioned, the authors have analysed these towns regarding the state of preservation of their historic urban structure, as well as the current form of its protection. Two towns (Nowy Targ and Skawina) are discussed in greater detail.

It should also be emphasised, that the described towns with their unique cultural landscapes represent outstanding historic values, and bear testimony to the times when they were established. That observation provoked reflection on whether those towns with their historic urban layouts are properly protected, or if they are protected at all. The question arose mainly from observation of the rapidly progressing deterioration of such town layouts, and frequently incomprehensible urban planning policy which seems to completely ignore the necessity to protect cultural landscape.

2. Current conservation protection in selected historic towns

Considering the forms of monument protection listed in the currently binding Monument Protection Act from 2003 (with later amendments), the analysed towns with their urban layouts could be protected, firstly, by including them in the voivodeship monument register, or by including specific entries in local spatial development plans (or, when those are not approved, by including entries in Ordinances and Zoning Laws etc.) [1].

Moving on to the analysis of current conservation protection of selected towns, it has been found out that only 5 out of 14 discussed towns have had their medieval urban layouts entered in monument registers. This group includes Ciężkowice (urban layout entered in the monument register in 1987, no. A-313); Lanckorona (urban layout entered in the monument register in 1981, no. A-386/81 [A-896/M]); Muszyna (urban layout entered in the monument register in 1983, no. A-333); Myślenice (urban layout entered in the monument register in 1977, no. A-448 [A-633/M]) and Proszowice (urban layout entered in the monument

register in 1976, no. A-437 [A-628/M]). The urban layouts of the remaining 9 towns have not yet been entered in the monument register. The next step in the analysis is to find out whether these towns have currently binding local spatial development plans (further LSDP), which might enforce effective protection of those urban structures. Such plans function in 9 out of the 14 analysed towns, namely in: Grybów, Lanckorona, Muszyna, Myślenice, Nowy Targ, Piwniczna, Skawina, Słomniki and Tymbark. It should also be mentioned that some towns whose spatial layout is protected by an entry in the monument register, do not have an approved LSDP, e.g. Ciężkowice and Proszowice. Furthermore, it should be emphasised that among the 14 towns, only the urban layouts of Krościenko nad Dunajcem, Tylicz (former Miastko) and Uście Solne fail to fall under any form of protection at all, while three (Lanckorona, Muszyna and Myślenice) are very well protected since they are included in the monument register and have a LSDP approved for their historic centres.

To sum up the above research, it must be said that the current conservation protection of historic structures in selected towns is insufficient because only 3 out of 14 are protected by both the monument register and a LSDP, the combination of which is currently the most effective in the Authors' opinion. Moreover, the majority of the mentioned towns definitely deserve to be included in the monument register, as their urban layouts are very well preserved, and the model on which they were laid out is still recognisable. In order to prove this, the urban layout of two towns (Nowy Targ and Skawina) were analysed, which, in the authors' opinion, are of considerable historical and cultural value, whose original features have been largely preserved.

3. The urban layout of Nowy Targ – cultural values and their protection

The first town to be discussed in greater detail is Nowy Targ, the population of which currently numbers about 33,400 [2].

The cultural heritage of the town includes, first of all, the chartered urban layout, the parish church of St. Katherine with its immediate surroundings, the filial church of St. Anna, the building of the Seweryn Goszczyński Secondary School, the building of Jan Bednarski School Dormitory, numerous roadside shrines, the town hall, the building of the former "Sokół" Gymnastic Association [3], as well as many tenement houses and smaller residential buildings [4].

To briefly summarise the history of Nowy Targ, it should be mentioned that the town was founded according to the Magdeburg Law in the year 1336. Its urban layout was measured out on the land between the Biały and Czarny Dunajec Rivers, and the village of Stare Cło. It is worth mentioning, that the nearby area contained earlier settlements. According to various sources, the aforementioned Stare Cło, associated with the customs house and the church of St. Leonard, was the earliest trade settlement located in the vicinity of the later town [5]. It should also be remembered, that the town established by King Kazimierz had been preceded by an earlier town foundation initiated by the Cistercian monastery in Szczyrzyc, which might have been implemented during the 1320s, according to the Środa Śląska Law [6, p. 161].

The process of the second foundation of the town, which resulted in measuring out a new urban layout, was supervised by the alderman Dytryk, who was granted hereditary aldermanship by the king [7, p. 159]. The urban layout of the chartered town from 1326 can be described as a regular, orthogonal one, based on the 9-square model. Using the 45-meter-long “large cable” unit, a rectangular main market measuring 150 x 115 m was laid out in the centre, with the longer side running in the west-east direction. Single building development plots, 1.5 “cable” deep i.e. around 66 m [8, pp. 227–228], were laid out around the market.

The parish church of St. Katherine, located towards the north behind the market block, was an important object in medieval Nowy Targ. Source documents reveal that it was built from stone probably before the year 1346 [9, pp. 49–64].

Verification of available archival 18th- and 19th-century plans (First Military Photograph – 1779–1783, Second Military Photograph – 1861–1864, and the cadastral plan from the end of 1896), and subsequent comparison with current aerial photos and the orthophotomap, allow us to conclude that the medieval structure of Nowy Targ representing the 9-square model has indeed survived until today. The discussed model is clearly discernible, as well as the communications system in which two streets run from each corner of the market square.

Surprisingly, the urban layout of Nowy Targ described above is not included in the voivodeship monument register. Therefore, it is vital that the town gains a binding LSDP [10], containing regulations to protect the historic downtown and its urban layout [11].



Fig. 1. A recent orthophotomap of Nowy Targ. The yellow colour indicates the urban model upon which the town was founded. Photo: W. Gorgolewski, 2017; prep. by the authors

To recapitulate the above observations concerning the urban layout of Nowy Targ, it should be emphasised that it is of significant cultural value because of its good preservation, and its recognisable 9-square model. Therefore, its lack of inclusion in the monument register shows serious negligence, in the Authors' view. In such a case, it is important that the urban layout is protected by the regulations of the LSDP. It is also worth emphasizing that the commune, including the town, has an approved Commune Monument Protection Programme, whose regulations determine the priorities related to the conservation policy and the protection of the most valuable monuments in the town.

4. Urban layout of Skawina – cultural values and their protection

The second town selected for a more detailed description is Skawina, located within the Krakow County and inhabited by about 24,500 people [2].

Evidence of the considerable cultural value of the town is its still impressive cultural heritage. It consists of the medieval urban layout from the time the town was granted its charter, the parish church of St. Simon and Jude with the adjoining churchyard, the filial church of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary, the synagogue, the 19th-century town hall, the railway station complex, the building of the former “Sokół” Gymnastic Association, historic tenement houses around the market square [4], relics of former wooden buildings, relics of industrial buildings from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and numerous roadside shrines.

When describing the origins of the town and its subsequent spatial development, it should be remembered that the town was granted its charter in 1364 by King Kazimierz Wielki. Before the chartered town was established, a customs house had been functioning since 1334 by the ford on the Skawinka River along the old “Salt Route” leading from Wieliczka to Oświęcim and Silesia [12, p. 31]. The land used to belong to the Benedictine Monastery in Tyniec, and encompassed three villages: Pisary, Babice Nowe and Babice Stare [13, p. 40], which became the royal estates probably as a result of being forfeited [14, p. 32].

The town was laid out on the site slightly sloping towards the Skawinka River. It was given a regular, orthogonal urban layout based on the module of a 45-metre-long “large cable”. The 9-square model, popular in the Krakow Region at the time, was applied to lay out the town. A rectangular market square, measuring 2 x 2.5 cable between the built-up lines (with the 2.5-cable sides running along the north-south axis), was measured out in the centre. Originally, a single strip of 1-cable deep building development blocks was marked out around the market square. The communications system in the medieval town was typical for the applied model and meant that two streets ran out from each corner of the market square [15, pp. 103–104].

An important element in the urban complex of Skawina was a (pre-existing) defensive castle erected by King Kazimierz Wielki. The stronghold was a part of the defensive system of Poland at the time, created by the monarch. The building was situated to the west of the market square, behind the market block, and had its own fortifications [16, p. 146]. Soon after the foundation of the town, also on the king's order, the parish church of Skawina was



erected and dedicated to the Holy Spirit, and later to St. Simon and Jude. It was built in the block furthest from the market square, on the north-east side, close to the town walls. The church was built from stone, probably from limestone easily available in the area [13, p. 40].

An analysis of archival cartography (First Military Photograph – 1779–1783, Second Military Photograph – 1861–1864, and the cadastral plan from the mid-19th century) in which the town layout was marked, subsequently compared with current aerial photos, allows us to claim that the foundational layout of Skawina and the medieval 9-square model have been very well preserved. That observation also refers to the communications system associated with the described model.

Even though the foundational urban layout has been preserved to a great extent, it has not yet been included in the voivodeship monument register. Hopefully, that will change in the near future. However, the town has a binding LSDP, the regulations of which protect the cultural landscape of the town, including its urban layout, to a certain degree. In the centre of Skawina the authors of the LSDP created a zone to be under strict conservation protection, which encompasses objects and areas of significant cultural value. All investment activity in this zone should be conducted in accordance with separate regulations which are meant to protect the area, both in the urban-planning and architectonic context [17].

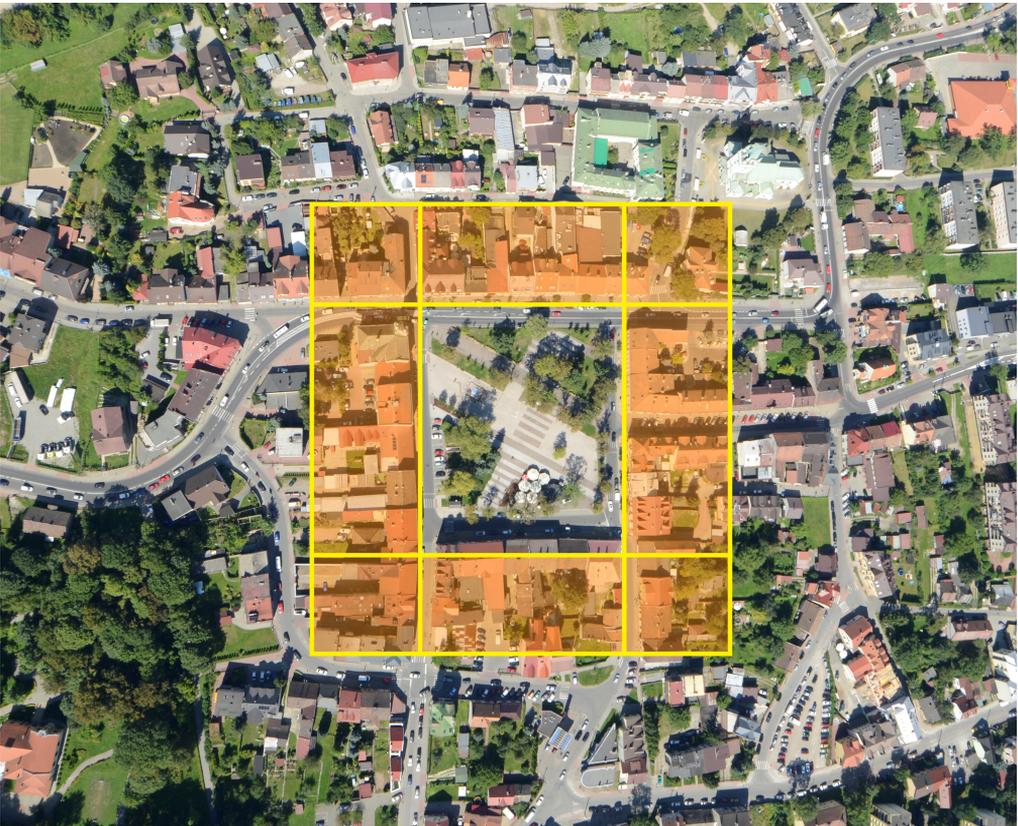


Fig. 2. A recent orthophotomap of Skawina. The yellow colour indicates the urban model upon which the town was founded. Photo: W. Gorgolewski, 2017; prep. by the authors

To sum up the analysis of the origins and the state of preservation of the town of Skawina, it should be noted that its urban layout has been very well preserved, and its 9-square model is still recognisable. The urban layout should certainly be entered into the voivodeship monument register; even more so since Skawina does not have a current approved Commune Monument Protection Programme that would direct the current conservation policy and support the realisation of promotional and educational tasks in this field. At the moment, the LSDP is the only form of conservation protection of the analysed urban layout.

5. Conclusion

To conclude the presented research, it should be stated that the protection of historic, medieval urban layouts in Lesser Poland requires revision. Efforts should be made to register towns in the monument register which still represent significant cultural values, and remain well-preserved considering their original urban structure.

It should also be noted, that the analysed towns which are listed in the monument register, were entered in it a long time ago, namely in the 1970s and 1980s, which supports the above assumption about the necessity to update the voivodeship monument register by adding historic, well-preserved town layouts.

The Authors believe that failure to take the aforementioned steps might result in an increasing degradation of those layouts, and consequently also the degradation of culturally valuable historic towns that constitute our shared cultural heritage which ought to be protected and restored, to be enjoyed by future generations.

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