Contemporary hotel architecture in the mountain landscape of the Silesian Beskids

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Abstract. The subject of the article is contemporary the hotel architecture arising in the mountain areas of the Silesian Beskids. This area of southern Poland, located on the border with the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, has been for decades an attractive place for the weekend and holiday recreation for residents of large Polish cities, especially the inhabitants of the Upper Silesian region. In XX century, there was a rapid development of mass tourism. The most touristically developed and prepared to receive mass numbers of holidaymakers are villages located in the northern and central parts of the Silesian Beskids: Ustroń, Wisła, Brenna, Szczyrk. Numerous hotels and guesthouses have been created at the time and also in recent years to service holiday makers coming from big cities. The author presents the main trends in the architecture of the holiday homes built there. The first of these trends is a guest house and hotel architecture referring to the traditional local folk architecture. We come across various forms here: historicism, the neo-natural style, and less often the contemporary interpretation of old forms. The second trend is inter-war, modernist guesthouses. The third trend is large-scale holiday homes from the '70s and' 80s of the 20th century in the style of post-war socmodernism. In addition to these currents, in recent years, numerous facilities have been created in many tourist resorts that do not exhibit regional features, similar to suburban buildings in other regions. Some of them imitate local or foreign patterns. An example of that approach would be holiday houses in the "Alpine" or "Bavarian" style. As an example of searching for contemporary hotel architecture undertaking a dialogue with local construction and mountain landscape, the author presents his own project of the Three Nations Meeting House in the village of Istebna. The mission of the Meeting House was to allow and increase activities aimed at integrating the regions of Central Europe.

1. Introduction
The Silesian Beskids have been an attractive weekend and holiday area for large Polish cities for several decades and cover the area of the Upper Silesian region. The attractions here are, above all, mountains with trails for hiking and cycling, available from spring to autumn, and in winter – downhill skiing trails well equipped with lifts. This area, due to natural and cultural values, is protected as the Landscape Park of the Silesian Beskids [1]. The villages in the south, near the borders of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, are called Trójwieś (Trivillage) – Jaworzynka, Istebna, Koniaków.

Compared to those mentioned previously, they are characterized by a relatively lower degree of investment in holiday and hotel facilities and tourist facilities. Instead, there are more areas offering silence, providing good conditions for contact with nature and calmer relaxation than anywhere else.
The values of the commune also include the remains of traditional folk wooden architecture (Figure 1), local customs, costumes, language.

Figure 1. Historic cottage in the Silesian Beskids. An example of disappearing, folk regional architecture (fot. A. Grzybowski)

Figure 2. A residential house in Wisła from the 1930s (fot. A. Grzybowski)

2. The main trends in hotel architecture in the Silesian Beskids

The precursor of mountain trips and hunting expeditions in the Silesian Beskids can be considered the Austrian-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph. A wooden "hunting castle" near the Kubalonka Pass was built for that monarch. This building represented the popular trend at the end of the 19th century and in the early 20th in villa and guest house construction, imitating traditional, historic "folk" designs. In the Silesian Beskids and the nearby Żywiec Beskids, a reference to tradition was expressed in the years 1900–1939 in the construction of villas and guesthouses with architecture reminiscent of guesthouses in the Alpine resorts, but also interpretations influenced by the "Zakopane style" (Figure 2). In this earliest, first trend, we come across various forms: historicism, neo-natural style, and less often – a modern interpretation of old forms. [2] The current referring to the local tradition was recognized and applied in the architecture of mountain lands. After the Second World War, especially the Krakow school of architecture dealt with the transposition of the old form of construction into new holiday and tourist solutions, continuing the"Zakopane style" excellently expressed in the works of Witkiewicz. Representatives of this school were, among others, the professors of architecture: Witold Gruszczynski, Zbigniew Gądek, Wojciech Kosiński.

In the interwar period, spectacular buildings in the style of international modernism were also built in this area. They represent the second trend that stands out from traditional forms of local architecture. In 1931, in the place of the former Franz Joseph Castle, a modernist "Castle of the President of the Republic of Poland" was created [3]. After several years of use, it was rebuilt. Due to difficult climate conditions, its flat roof was replaced by a steep one. This building is still being used today as a resting place for the most important people in the country and their guests. Also, a modernist complex of tuberculosis sanatorium buildings for children and youth was built nearby. The new center of Wisła in the style of modernism was created, with "Dom Zdrojowy" (Figure 3). Modern guesthouses were built there as well as in other holiday resorts of the Silesian Beskids. An example would be the "Wierchy" guesthouse in Wisła [Figure 4] or "Willa Słoneczna" in Ustroń [4]. The direction of modern, modernist architecture in the mountain landscape was continued after 1945. Beginning in the 1960s, there was a rapid development of hotel construction in this area. Over about 30 years, new holiday home districts were created with great impetus by the authorities from the national holiday funds (Employee Holiday Fund – FWP) and from the funds of trade unions of miners,
metallurgists, metal workers, teachers and others.

**Figure 3.** “Dom Zdrojowy” in Wisła. An example of modernist architecture from the years between the wars. (fot. A. Grzybowski)

**Figure 4.** Modernist "Wierchy" guesthouse in Wisła, 1930s. (design by arch. Tadeusz Michejda, photo based on the monthly Architecture and Construction no. 5/1932). [4]

Numerous buildings of valuable architectural quality were built at the level of the best global solutions, but in terms of construction technique and quality of finish, they were inferior to global hotel standards. Such districts were established in Ustroń, Wisła, and Szczyrk. The largest ones of them are holiday home complexes for 2500 people in Ustroń-Jaszowiec (Figure 5), [5] and Ustroń-Zawodzie [6]. The second one is a complex of 17 holiday homes (out of 28 planned), implemented in the 1960s to mid-1990s (Figure 6). In Szczyrk, a slightly smaller holiday complex called "Eagle's Nest“ was created at that time for 450 people. After the political changes of 1989, most of these facilities were privatized. The holiday homes built at that time belong to the architecture of post-war modernism, also known as "socmodernism“. Some of them propose building forms that fit into the mountain landscape through broken building lines adapted to the slopes of the terrain, the use of sloping roofs or elevations based on triangular forms. An example of such stylization are holiday buildings in Ustroń, later called "pyramids“ because of their characteristic form [7]. This is the third current in hotel architecture in this region. During this period, historicizing forms or imitations of folk architecture are not used.

On the wave of postmodernism in the 1980s and 1990s, the neo-traditional trend of architecture returned [8]. In the following years, numerous new guesthouses and hotels, often of a high standard, are created. They are built in different styles under the influence of current architectural fashion. Some of them belong to postmodern architecture, using solids covered with steep, hip roofs. They operate from quotations of forms from the past (porches, columns, dormer windows, etc.). Some have the character of style without buildings imitating fashionable villas from suburban neighborhoods in large cities (Figure 7). This is the fourth current trend in hotel architecture.
An example of a large-scale hotel, the largest one in this region, intended for mass leisure, is the "Gołębiewski Hotel" in Wisła (Figure 8). It was built several years ago as one of the company's hotel chains located in various holiday resorts in Poland. This large-scale facility is located at the entrance to the city, on the southern slope of Bukowa Mountain. Its shape dominates the city, overwhelming the neighboring buildings of medium height. The example of the “Gołębiewski Hotel” provokes reflection: should such large buildings be erected in holiday resorts? What should the architectural form of new hotel buildings, including smaller guesthouses, be? As in other areas intensively exploited for recreation and leisure purposes, two fundamental ideas of architecture clash here: the traditional trend in various varieties and the trend of international modernism.

Observation of hotels emerging in recent years indicates that currently the shape of buildings, their architectural style, is determined by commercial factors, the investor's preferences and their belief in not-very-sophisticated expectations of future customers. "Lightly historicizing" designs, not shunning architectural kitsch, dominate. An example would be a "Bavarian-style" guesthouse in Wisła (Figure 9). A postmodern "Mountain Hotel" was built in Szczycyrk with features of an "Old Slavonic castle" also using motifs of the interwar architecture of the Beskids (Figure 10). The facility
inspired by the folk architecture of Podhale was built on the Salmopolska Pass – White Cross (Figure 11). These implementations show that, unlike earlier periods of creating architecture for recreation in this region, there is currently no homogeneous, definable style of implementation of new hotel buildings.

Figure 9. Hotel in the "Bavarian" style in Wisła. (fot. A. Grzybowski)

Figure 10. "Mountain Hotel" in Szczyrk. An example of contemporary imitating architecture historical designs. (fot. A. Grzybowski)

Figure 11. Hotel with an inn on the Salmopolska Pass. Contemporary architecture modeled on folk architecture from the Podhale region. (fot. A. Grzybowski)

3. The presented Project of the Three Nations Meeting House (TNMH) in Istebna as an example of forming contemporary hotel architecture inspired by a regional tradition in the mountain landscape

The project provides an attempt to search for large-scale hotel architecture in the mountainous landscape of the Silesian Beskids. The idea of building the Three Nations Meeting House (TNMH) as a home for international meetings was born in 2002, during a period of great social and political change in Central Europe. The fall of the "Berlin Wall" in 1989 allowed the countries of this part of
the continent which had been under the influence of the Soviet Union, to regain independence. Soon, they joined the enlarged European Union. The governments of three countries – Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, formed the Visegrad Triangle as a platform for contacts and exchange of views between the three countries. These events inspired the then self-government authorities of the Silesian Voivodship to propose the construction of a conference and hotel center in the Silesian Beskids on the border between Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, serving the meetings of communities of the neighboring countries [9]. As stated in the Study: "The mission of the proposed TNMH should be activities aimed at integrating Central European regions". The mission should be implemented by organizing international conferences, meetings of youth, local government officials, artists, scientists, social organizations and governmental institutions. Three Nations Meeting House (TNMH) location search.

For the originators of the construction of the TNMH meeting house, it was clear that such a house should be built near the borders of three countries – Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. This place, known among the inhabitants of the Silesian Beskids as "Trójstyk" (“the three-border”) is located in the Silesian Beskids Landscape Park. They are distinguished by granite obelisks located at the junction of three borders, which can be reached from three sides by tourist routes. This place is located among picturesque mountains and forests, close to landscape parks created in the neighboring countries. Three possible locations of the TNMH building in the commune of Istebna, near Jaworzynka, Istebna or Koniaków, were taken into account (Figure 12). The location in Istebna – Zaolzie was chosen due to the convenient location by local road, the right size of the plot and the commune as the landowner favorable for the planned investment.

3.1. Functional program and spatial concept of the building.
In accordance with the idea of TNMH, the designed facility should enable the organization of international and national conferences for which auditoriums, training rooms, exhibition and seminar...
rooms are planned. The facility will also be used outside of its congressional activity as a publicly accessible hotel with approximately 50 rooms, including a restaurant and a café. There is also a zone for recreation and sports with an indoor swimming pool. It was designed as a three-block building of various heights. Referring to the mountain landscape and harsh climatic conditions, it is covered with steep hip roofs with clearly marked eaves. The rhythmically shaped façades of the hotel part of the building create full terrace balustrades and tilt windows with roofs. The roofs of rooms in the basement are flat, covered with greenery, which connects with the existing greenery of the surroundings (Figure 13). In the central, highest part, there is the main entrance leading to the reception hall with elevators and the main staircase (Figure 14). There, on the top floors, there is situated a conference room and a café with a viewing terrace. In the lateral wings of the building, on four floors, there are hotel rooms with terraces with southern and south-western exposure. A restaurant with facilities, a smaller conference room, recreation and sports rooms with a swimming pool and exercise rooms were designed in the basement (Figure 15). This project is an example of seeking large scale hotel architecture in the mountain landscape of the Silesian Beskids. It can be a contribution to the ongoing discussion on ways of forming contemporary architecture in a valuable and protected landscape, in the region that for years has been subjected to building pressure for the needs of mass recreation and tourism. Due to political changes in Poland and the resulting associated changes in recent years, the TNMH project in Istebna presented above has not been implemented.

Figure 14. “Three Nations Meeting House” – (TNMH) in Istebna. Perspective drawing of the main entrance [9] (design and drawing A. Grzybowski)
Figure 15. Ground floor plan of the TNMH in Istebna [9] (design A. Grzybowski)

Table 1. Main trends in forming hotel buildings in the Silesian Beskids in the 20th century and today

| Architecture trend | Periods – years of implementation | Places where they occur |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Historicism, references to folk architecture of mountainous lands (regionalism, traditionalism, influences of the architecture of Austrian spas). | 1900 – 1920 | Brenna, Bystra, Jaworze, Szczyrk, Wisła, Węgierska Góra. |
| 2. Inter-war modernism | 1920 – 1939 | Wisła – Center, Wisła – Kubalonka, Ustroń. |
| 3. Post-war modernism (socmodernism – large-scale hotels and holiday home complexes). | 1960 – 1980 | Ustroń – Jaszowiec, Ustroń – Zawodzie, Wisła, Szczyrk. |
| 4. Postmodernism (new historicism, Podhale influences). | since 1990 | Przełęcz Salmopolska – Biały Krzyż, Szczyrk. |
| 5. Imitation of urban and suburban buildings ("Alpine", "Bavarian", "sterility" constructions). | since 1990 | Wisła, Ustroń, Szczyrk, Brenna. |

4. Conclusions
Hotels, holiday houses and guest houses built in the last 120 years in the Silesian Beskids have been influenced by various trends of the architecture of the 20th and 21st century. The table below presents them with the periods of their implementation and the places in which they are located.

Like in many other tourist regions, hotels created in recent decades are part of the leisure industry serving mass-market customers. Their form often changes the existing mountain landscape in a way
that degrades its original values. This leads to the loss of landscape value of tourist destinations, which are one of the reasons for coming to this region. The excessive density of buildings, difficulties in getting to many places, and finally the spatial chaos visible in many of them contribute to the deterioration of the resting conditions. In the interest of those who come here, as well as the residents who make a living providing tourist and hotel services, it is necessary to improve the spatial development of towns in the Silesian Beskids. One of the factors conditioning such improvement is the high quality of the architecture of the hotels and guesthouses under construction.

According to the author, in order to preserve the value of the mountain landscape threatened by chaotically-built, low-quality hotels, one should stop bringing foreign designs and try to interpret the architecture referring to the local tradition in contemporary style. With the benefit of the quality of the space of holiday resorts in this region, it is also possible to continue the trend of modernist architecture having numerous high-quality examples here.

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