Historical Buildings and the Issue of their Accessibility for the Disabled

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Abstract. This article addresses the problem of the accessibility of historical buildings, such as The Badeni Palace in Bejsce, Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship in Poland, for the disabled. The palace complex in Bejsce is under the statutory form of monument protection, since it has been placed in the Voivodship historical sites registry. The palace is situated in a palace park located in the centre of the village. The building was erected by Marcin Badeni, according to a design by Jakub Kubickia in 1802. It is worth mentioning that Jakub Kubicki was an eminent Polish architect at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, a representative of classicism and the creator such buildings as e.g. the Belweder in Warsaw. The selected example reflects the complexity of the discussed issue. On the one hand, historical buildings representing outstanding cultural values, such as the classicist Badeni Palace in Bejsce, should be under absolute conservation protection so that, in keeping with the idea of sustainable development, it could be preserved intact for future generations. On the other hand, a Social Welfare Home has been functioning in the palace for decades, due to which the building requires modernisation. The Social Welfare Home serves a socially necessary function, which requires ensuring suitable living conditions for its residents. It demands fulfilling the requirements concerning the building’s accessibility for the disabled, included in the ordinance of the Minister of Infrastructure. It should be added that the municipality does not have financial resources to build a new nursing home to which residents could be moved, so that the palace could serve a more formal function of e.g. a museum or an art gallery. The situation poses a conservation dilemma, whether adding a lift for the disabled for safety reasons should be allowed in the palace building or next to it. What is more important: the value of historical substance or the cultural landscape of the place? In the context of the currently relevant problem of the adaptability of historical buildings for the disabled, those and other questions will be discussed by the author of the article.

1. Introduction
The article discusses the problem of the remodelling and modernisation of a historical building. The author wrote a series of other articles on a similar subject, i.a. concerning the restoration of ruins of religious buildings [1], the extension of a historical town hall [2] or the adaptation of unused churches to new forms of use [3]. This article pertains to the complex problem that is the accessibility of a historical building for the disabled. This problem has been presented on the example of the Badeni Palace in Bejsce (in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, Poland) - a building of high cultural value and which, because of its function—that of a Social Welfare Home - must be modernised and meet all the...
current requirements concerning accessibility for the disabled featured in the Ordinance of the Minister of Infrastructure on the matter of technical conditions that must be met by buildings and their placement, as well as in the Construction Law Act.

The decision concerning the approval of the building's modernisation and adaptation to the needs of the disabled through the construction of a passenger lift is made by the Voivodship Conservator of Historical Monuments, who often supports their decision with advice in the form of conservation opinions - as was the case in this matter, particularly because the palatial and park complex built at the start of the nineteenth century and founded by Marcin Badeni possesses unique cultural value, which predestines it for unconditional conservation.

2. History of the Palace

The Badeni Palatial Complex in Bejsce has survived to this day in a practically unchanged form.

Since the Middle Ages Bejsce had been the centre of the lands that were the property of the Firlej family up the seventeenth century. The palace, as the family seat, already existed at that time, as did the park that surrounds it. In 1796 Bejsce became the property of the Badeni family of the coat of arms of Bończa. It was then that the history of the currently existing residential complex began. The family's representative - Marcin Badeni - decided to build a new palace, in accordance with the time's fashionable architectural trends. He commissioned the preparation of the design to Jakub Kubicki [4]. It should be noted that Jakub Kubicki was an outstanding architect of the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, a representative of classicism and the author of such buildings and complexes as, among others, the Belweder in Warsaw, the town hall in Płock, the Palace in Radziejowice, the Palace in Pławowice and others [5].

After the construction of the palace and the park, an extensive farming estate was established around it over the course of the nineteenth century, with around a dozen masonry and timber farm buildings and a Gothic Revival distillery that has not survived. In the 1870's, when Bejsce was the property of the Byszewski family, Augustine Denizot, a famous French gardener, was commissioned to redesign the grounds around the palace so that they would become a landscape park, which were fashionable at the time [6]. In 1944 the Badeni family estate became the property of the state. Initially, the Palace building housed an agricultural school, followed by a seniors' home managed by the nuns of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus from Krakow. Since 1952 an Adults' Social Welfare Home has been operating in the Palace (current name: Social Welfare Home in Bejsce, Dom Pomocy Społecznej w Bejsce in Polish) [7].

Modernisation work has been constantly performed on the palace complex in order to improve the living conditions of its residents and adapt the building to current standards and regulations. It should also be noted that the cultural value of the building was constantly tended to, by performing numerous rounds of conservation work, i.a. on the interior decoration and its facades.

3. The Palace as a heritage site

The Badeni Palace complex is located in the eastern part of the village of Bejsce, on plot no. 342/2 in the municipality of Bejsce, in the Kazimierza District, on the territory of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship (Poland).

The complex is listed in the immovable monuments registry of the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship under no. A.174/1-3. The complex is composed of: the palace building (registry no. 20 from 20.02.1947 and 233 from 11.02.1967), a park (reg. no. 20 from 20.02.1947, 558 from 09.12.1957 and 233 from 11.02.1967) as well as a garden (reg. no.: 20 from 20.02.1947) [8].

The palace itself is located on an exposed hill, thanks to which it constitutes a beautiful landscape landmark. It is surrounded by an already somewhat transformed park that features a system of ponds. The palace is a masonry building made of stone and brick. It was designed in the classicist style. It should be noted that it has survived to our time in its original form. It is a two-storey building with the second storey in the form of a mezzanino. It stands on a tall stone cellar plinth. The main body of the
palace is covered with a tall hipped roof. The main façade - which faces towards the north, has a massive four-column portico extended in front of its surface, designed in the colossal order, whose Doric columns support a triangular fronton. On the axis of the garden-side facade there is a three-sided enclosed avant-corps, which hides an extended fragment of a circular ballroom, which is also topped with a triangular fronton. Underneath the avant-corps terrace one can see an irregular wall of an artificial grotto made out of field stones, whose form is a reference to the Romantic style. All of the facades are topped with an entablature with a considerably protruding profiled cornice and cobble-shaped frieze, which also decorates the triangular frontons of the facade of the garden-side avant-corps. The alternating rhythm of straight and semi-circularly vaulted window openings, combined with the rustication of the wall surfaces, complement the image of the palace's stylish massing.

The building's additional value is a well-preserved and culturally highly valuable interior decoration, particularly that of the former ballroom, which is a two-storeys-tall space with a circular plan, decorated with molding and painterly decorations in the French style, with images of muses and plant motifs.

**Figure 1.** Satellite image of the locality of Bejsce with an outline of the location of the Badeni palace and park complex. Google Earth, 14.02.2019.

**Figure 2.** View of the Badeni Palace in Bejsce from the south-west. Original photograph, 02.2019.

**Figure 3.** View of the Badeni Palace in Dejsce from the north-east. Original photograph, 02.2019.
4. Accessibility of the building for the disabled

As it has been demonstrated above, the palace and park complex features outstanding cultural value. On the other hand, its contemporary function forces the adaptation of the Social Welfare Home to the needs of the disabled, who often make up a part of its residents.

Similar problems and dilemmas are very often encountered by Voivodship Monument Conservators, who, in order to issue the most appropriate possible decision, often support themselves with conservator opinions, whose authors are tasked with analysing the problem in an in-depth manner and presenting their own view on the given subject. The matter was the same in the case of the Palace in Bejsce, as the persons who were meant to issue the opinion - experts of the Minister of Culture and National Heritage - were meant to voice their opinion on the matter of its value and the possibility of making it accessible for the disabled by introducing a passenger lift.

They concluded that, in order to facilitate the appropriate functioning of the Social Welfare Home, as well as due to concerns for the safety and health of its residents and to adapt the building to current regulations [9], the construction of a passenger lift inside it should be approved. The problem, however, concerned its placement, as the Badeni Palace, in which the Social Welfare Home is located, is undoubtedly an outstanding work of architecture and an extraordinarily precious monument of national culture. Therefore, the construction of the passenger lift in question was to be performed in such a manner as to minimise its negative impact and influence on the cultural values of this historical building. To this end, and rightfully so, two conceptual proposals were formulated (two alternatives), which demonstrated the potential locations of the passenger lift. The first alternative presented the possibility of constructing the passenger lift inside the building. The author of the conceptual proposal performed analyses of the Palace's interiors to this end, so that the construction of the passenger lift would not be associated with damaging spaces with particularly valuable molding and painting decoration, pointing to the optimal placement of the passenger lift in the eastern section of the palace, where its toilets are. The second alternative showed the placement of the passenger lift outside of the building, near its north-western facade, which was associated with constructing a glazed structure for its shaft and a corridor link with the Palace building [4].

After analysing the alternative proposals presented by the Designer, the Experts concluded that, in their opinion, the only acceptable alternative from the point of view of conservation was the first proposal, in which the passenger lift was placed inside the Palace building. According to the experts, the second alternative associated with extending the Palace to include an external passenger lift shaft and circulation corridor, despite the use of the most possibly neutral material – glass - unacceptably interfered with the massing of the building, lowering its value as a heritage site. The project also interfered with the cultural landscape of the entire complex, which, according to the experts, was unacceptable in the case of a heritage site so valuable as the Badeni palace and park complex.
should be noted that the Palace, which is located on a hill, constitutes an important landmark in the cultural landscape of the entire nearby area. It is a positive and extraordinarily valuable landmark. The extension of the Palace, even by adding a glass passenger lift shaft, would have had a clearly negative impact not only on its silhouette, but also on the surrounding space, in which, as it has already been mentioned, it plays a very important role, which can be clearly seen even in a radius of over 2 kilometres away from it.

Of course, the completion of the first alternative would also not have remained without influence on the historical substance of the Palace. However, according to the experts, it was far less harmful to the chief historical value of the building, which includes, without a doubt, its "meticulous" form, designed by Jakub Kubicki, as well as its proportions and facade ornamentation. It should also be noted that this function, which has already been present in the building for many years, in a sense forces certain modernisation efforts and will probably do so in the future as well. They are and will be associated with the safety of the residents of the Social Welfare Home and providing them with good living conditions, which are, all in all, dictated by current regulations [10].

![Figure 6. View of the Badeni Palace in Bejsce from the south-west, from a distance of around 2 km. Original photograph, 02.2019.](image)

5. Conclusions
As a conclusion to this article, it should be stated that the problem of making a historical building accessible for the disabled, which is typically associated with its remodelling, is a difficult one and should always be considered on a case by case basis. The case of the Badeni palace and park complex in Bejsce that has been discussed above, which has a high cultural value, but also a function that has an essential social aspect, is proof of this. This aspect caused the experts preparing the conservation opinion concerning the possibility of constructing a passenger lift for the disabled in/near the Badeni Palace in Bejsce to conclude that, from a conservation standpoint, it is possible to build a passenger lift for the disabled in the Badeni Palace in Bejsce, which has fulfilled the function of a Social Welfare Home since the 1950's, under the condition that the passenger lift be built inside the building.
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[9] Ordinance of the minister of infrastructure of the 12th of April 2002 on the matter of technical conditions that are to be met by buildings and their placement (Dz. U. 2015. 1422 and Dz.U. 2017 pos. 2285) § 54. 1. A public or commercial building, a multi-family residential building, a collective housing building, with the exception of collective housing buildings in restricted areas, as well as any other building whose uppermost storey is meant for the occupancy of more than 50 people, in which the difference in floor surface elevation between the first ad uppermost above-ground storey that does not constitute a second level in a two-level apartment, exceeds 9.5 m, as well as any healthcare facility building or social welfare building with two or more above-ground storeys, should be equipped with a passenger lift.

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