

Hotels' Architecture. Publicly Accessible Space as Part of a Contemporary City

Abstract: European cities are gradually becoming more multicultural, open, and diverse. This process can be observed especially on the example of contemporary hotels, which naturally constitute the first element of learning for travellers about the development of a given region, country. Hence, nowadays accommodation facilities have undergone a number of significant transformations related to their method of functioning, designing of their structure, as well as ways of shaping publicly accessible internal and external spaces. This process, extremely interesting, is a subject of presented considerations.

Keywords: architecture of contemporary hotels, hotel in the city, publicly accessible spaces, spaces for public use

Architektura hoteli. Przestrzeń ogólnodostępna jako część współczesnego miasta

Streszczenie: Europejskie miasta stają się stopniowo coraz bardziej wielokulturowe, otwarte i zróżnicowane. Proces ten w szczególny sposób można obserwować na przykładzie nowoczesnych hoteli, które w naturalny sposób stanowią dla przyjezdnych pierwszy element poznawania zabudowy danego regionu, kraju. Stąd nowoczesne placówki noclegowe przeszły szereg istotnych transformacji związanych z ich metodą funkcjonowania, projektowaniem ich struktury, a także sposobami kształtowania ogólnodostępnych

przestrzeni wewnętrznych i zewnętrznych. Proces ten, niezwykle ciekawy, stanowi przedmiot prezentowanych rozważań.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura współczesnych hoteli, przestrzeń użyteczności publicznej, hotel w mieście, strefy ogólnodostępne

Introduction

Considering the multicultural nature of contemporary European cities, it is necessary to take into account not only urban and architectural transformations. In this respect particular are contemporary hotels, which due to their function – hosting people from abroad – can be understood as: important landmarks, first elements of intercultural contact, business cards of a given region, but above all – as a shelter. The last function – safe housing, a “known space” in exploring new area – is often extended beyond hotel guests, onto everyday users of a given city, passers-by and local residents. Hence, providing rest and relaxation in usually busy and loud cities.

The place of this contact are publicly accessible spaces of the enterprise, i.e.: frontal squares, courtyards, parks, gardens, terraces, entrances and reception halls, cafes, bars and restaurants, shops, boutiques, craft shops, waiting areas with seats, florists, gardens, etc. As part of their offer, there are products and services that enable the provision of basic and extended needs of people and the architecture of internal and external zones is the most important element of this space, remembered and recognized by all users over a longer period of time. Due to these elements, a hotel can be considered a real shelter for a modern man traveling and pursuing to explore new regions and areas of Europe.

Aim, purpose and scope

In the light of the considerations mentioned in the introduction, the aim of this paper was to have a closer focus on solutions for public accessibility zones in contemporary hotels’ design approaches. Hence,

it is emphasized that hotels as commercial, public and collective buildings, offer a particularly universal field of research – connected both to commercial and residential architecture.

The scope of studies has been limited to contemporary operating hotels because they are strictly connected to the functioning of a modern city. Another limitation was assigned to the localization of objects. For case studies, selected were solutions in the city center (with historic areas) and downtowns in towns of Europe, due to the urban specificity and density of such zones.

Nowadays, public spaces should always be considered depending on the context of urban or natural surroundings. Therefore, for the purpose of this research two types of specific urban contexts have been listed, which determine the scope of this research:

- historic,
- contemporary.

It is stressed, that in each aspect also natural surroundings may be considered, in connection to the cities' flora, fauna and existing physical formation. However, this aspect has not been listed, for strictly and only natural contexts are not a part of following considerations.

There have been several recalls to American examples of case studies regarding the growth of hospitality business in the XIX and XX centuries in the USA, which was strictly connected to development of European both historic and contemporary solutions. Therefore, local accommodation architecture cannot be analyzed without a glimpse of foreign study.

The following research methods were used in the studies: literature review – concerning the theory of public areas' design, case studies – carried out in Europe on selected enterprises (with aforementioned recall to the United States), analysis including: graphic, critical and comparative, and finishing with synthesis – used for formulating conclusions and summary.

Historic outline

A hospitable, open and public space of the hotel allowing people from different regions, classes and social groups to meet, has been arranged in hotels since the earliest times. As it was proved¹, since ancient times even in private Roman houses, guests were offered expanded residential program with several rooms, access to the garden and common living parts, i.e. internal courtyard. Such solutions enabled meetings and information exchange between newcomers and permanent residents of the area. Also publicly accessed Roman terms were consistent of guest rooms and large leisure and medical-treatment areas for all users². Later, during the medieval period and Christian religion dominance in Europe, travellers were hosted in monasteries, cloisters, hospices, where relaxation and meetings could be held in yards and herbal gardens. In a parallel manner secular inns and taverns were developed, in which public spaces also held both external and internal zones with seating and dining areas (Fig. 1).

All aforementioned edifices contained spaces for horses – stables, sheds and areas for minor wagons repairs and service³. Other than basic functions (sleeping, dining, means of transport service) started to form in connection with first hotel connected legislation in the XIV century in Europe, i.e. necessity of registration of each new coming guest in France or accommodation standards in England. As an outcome, reception and administration area was needed. The full development of public areas is dated back to the XVII and XVIII centuries, where contemporary understanding of a hotel and its official name was established – from French language *l'hote* and further *l'hotel*⁴.

¹ J. Jabłońska, *Architektura ogólnodostępnych przestrzeni współczesnych hoteli*, Wrocław 2018.

² T. Broniewski, *Historia Architektury dla Wszystkich*, Wrocław 1990.

³ Z. Błądek, T. Tulibacki, *Dzieje krajowego hotelarstwa. Od zajazdu do współczesności*, Poznań-Warszawa 2003; T. Broniewski, *Historia Architektury dla Wszystkich*, Wrocław 1990.

⁴ Z. Błądek, T. Tulibacki, *Dzieje krajowego hotelarstwa. Od zajazdu do współczesności*, Poznań-Warszawa 2003; Official website of Art Hotel, available at: <http://www.arthotel.pl>, accessed 05.11.2011; A.W. Rutes, H.R. Penner, A. Lawrence, *Hotel design planning and development*, New York-London 2001.

From that time “elegant” functions like: tea rooms, restaurants, coffee shops, clubs, art expositions and game rooms became a signature mark of the hospitality industry.



Fig. 1. The representational and hospitality transition zone between exterior and interior in the historic castle in Lesko, Poland (building started in the XVI century), which served both as residence and accommodation zone for guests

The full growth of public spaces in hotel enterprises as we know nowadays was established in the XIX and XX centuries in America. Then, a phenomenon of multi-functionalism and close city relation was formed. At many occasions accommodation zone was in fact of a minor surface towards other functional zones like: exchange and trade floors, ballrooms, lounges, conference or theatre halls, dining areas or offices. Also an atrium, as an important public element of a hotel was developed, offering guests a lot of daylight, unforgettable architectural and interior solutions, yet quiet relaxation space, distinguished in the busy city and everyday life. Usually complemented with interestingly arranged greenery (even tropical plants), an atrium can be understood as an internal-external element of spatial and functional program of hospitality venue. What is more, around the '50s and '60s of the XX century in America, a healthy life style fashion was popularized, thus hotels started to be equipped with SPA and wellness

centers, which served guests not only for leisure venues, but also were complemented with specific medical programs. Areas of such type were especially popular in chain-branded hotels, which were built all around the world. Hence, in public spaces areas with more privacy and intimacy were hosted and promoted. Large-scale and open surfaces required proper fitting, thus a lot of artwork have been introduced into hotels and this as other aforementioned solutions are being continued until today⁵.

Context connection

There are several ways in which building can be connected to the context. The most direct are proper and functional solutions of elements such as drop off zone – which consists of a drive and walkway, roofing over them and main entrance. This can be supplemented with an entrance square, gardens, terraces, lighting and elements of minor architecture, which may harmoniously and seamlessly fit to the surroundings. Needless to stress, the characteristic roofing over the drop off zone is probably the most recognizable manifestation of the hotel function and presence in the urban fiber. Starting from modest and general solutions of simple roofs, supplemented with lighting and hotel sign (usually including name of the enterprise), the extinction of a drop off zone may shift towards extreme cases (Fig. 2).

For large resort hotels, i.e. containing wellness centers, conference areas or casinos, the roofing may cover several roads and bus, taxi and individual driveways. A very special example are Las Vegas implementations, where brightly lighted roofs, columns and banners are not just a manifestation of services and function, but they are used to create the city's context, climate and character.

⁵ Z. Błądek (ed.), *Nowoczesne hotelarstwo. Od projektowania do wyposażenia*, Warszawa 2010; Official website of Palmer Hilton House Hotel, available at: <https://www.palmerhousehiltonhotel.com/>, accessed 14.06.2019; A.W. Rutes, H.R Penner, A. Lawrence, *Hotel design planning and development*, New York-London 2001; H. Weidinger, Hotels im Wandel der Zeit, In: *Detail* 3/2007, 154-158.



Fig. 2. Roofing over the main entrance – two extreme solutions. First: gentle decorative, glassed element in NJV Athens Plaza in Athens (Greece). Second: large-scale light and commercial element of Circus Circus in Las Vegas (Nevada, USA)

An extreme example of such solution is the Fremont Street Experience in Las Vegas, which houses several world-famous hotels: Fremont Hotel and Casino, Golden Nugget Las Vegas Hotel and Casino, Golden Gate Casino Hotel. Public space in front of the venues is connected together with an extraordinary in scale digital screen suspended above the street. This strictly commercial element is used to display animations supplemented with loud music, which attracts a lot of viewers, mostly tourists seeking for more entertainment. Interestingly enough, screen connected with open shops, casinos and gastronomy services, creates one of the kind public space that provides to adjacent hotels a unique character (Fig. 3).

Similar architectural and urban treatment of public space can be found in the same city along the so-called “Strip” – Las Vegas Boulevard, where hotels like: Bellagio, Wynn, The Venetian, Caesars Palace, Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino, Luxor, New York – New York, MGM Grand Hotel and Casino, Excalibur Hotel & Casino, Paris, The Mirage Hotel & Casino, Circus Circus Hotel & Casino Las Vegas or Stratosphere Hotel, Casino and Tower, have been situated⁶ (Fig. 2). Due to the significant competition between the enterprises and maximizing the entertainment character of the city, the public spaces here

⁶ Ranking of enterprises according to Tripadvisor.com website, available at: https://pl.tripadvisor.com/Hotels-g45963-Las_Vegas_Nevada-Hotels.html, accessed 17.07.2017.

occupy considerable usable areas on several floors which are at all times accessible to all visitors and users of the city. Within the discussed zones there can be listed functions like: casinos, gastronomy of various character, day and night entertainment venues (for concerts, theatres and conferences), sport and recreation facilities, amusement parks, SPA and wellness zones, all types of shopping venues and many more. In order to shape these zones in an attractive way many urban and architectural elements are used, such as: streets, passages, squares, frontages, free-standing objects, elements of small architecture, towers, obelisks, sculptures, fountains, fences, bridges, gardens, walls and seats. To maximize the effect a variety of geometric plans, materials, textures, finishes and styles were used for all these solutions⁷ (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. A public space with roofing over the Fremont Street – with the facade of Golden Gate hotel, “The Strip” with Mirage hotel and extended public spaces, here a fountain on Las Vegas Boulevard, both examples in Las Vegas (Nevada, USA)

Although on a smaller scale, similar solutions can be found in Poland. First would be the square in front of the Central Station in Wrocław – the representational and easily accessible public space with all aforementioned urban elements like: wide passages for pedestrians, city-like organized greenery, seating (in summer hammocks and sunbeds are added), lighting, exits from parking lots, properly solved

⁷ R. Venturi, D.S. Brown, S. Izenour, *Uczyć się od Las Vegas*, Karakter 2013.

advertisement poles, diversified commercial spaces (fulfilling basic and extended users' needs), varied gastronomy areas (with external terraces and outside accessibility), varied means of communication (public and individual, local and regional), harmonious and proper urban-scale of building's fronts and facades. What is significant is a number of hotels, which frontal walls create a frame for these public spaces, yet continuing overall design – i.e. a square with greenery in front of the Silver Tower hosting Ibis Styles, or services – gastronomy points, shops, services in the ground floors, e.g. Piast or Sofia (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4. Square in front of the Main Train Station in Wrocław (Poland) with hotels, from left: Piast, Sofia, Ibis Styles in Silver Tower – accessible public space

Also, in a smaller urban organism, like the town of Jelenia Góra, similar developments were found. Just to give an example of a public passage between the hotels Europa and Jelonek, where the broadened street becomes a public square. An elegant pavement was fitted with small elements of architecture: benches, lanterns, green elements (trees and green areas), a sculpture of a deer – the symbol of the city, information boards, commercials, gardens of gastronomy areas.

Exterior and interior linking

Context can also serve inner solutions of the hotel. A great example of connections build in this way would be HP Park Plaza Hotel, Wrocław (Poland) with a casino, a contemporary building settled in the historic part of urban fiber across the Odra River bank. All residential façade of the building (consisting of 5 floors) is glazed. The view from the rooms shows the panorama of the city: islands, bridges, Ostrów Tumski and the historic University building. This way, guests can have direct connection to most important urban elements and natural advantages of the landscape without even living the premises. Moreover, on the ground floor there are public service spaces (occupying 2 floors) and a restaurant with the open-air river-view terrace, while on the upper floor there is a wellness area. Due to such solution hotel closes view axis of this part of the city, in a highly elegant way⁸ (Fig. 5).

Similar solution was established in the Portus Cale Hotel, Porto (Portugal), where the main entry and reception hall was designed as a “natural” extension of the street. The area, complemented with a lounge followed by a publicly accessed bar, in a fully glazed form transparent to the eye space, is settled as the resting area hosting all passers-by. What is more, not only the functions are creating the connection, but also textures, forms and colors used in the interior, bringing to mind harmonious and toned elevations and street paving of Porto. Clear rhythms, stone-like forms of seating and mirrors, gray-brownish pallet provide true shelter and relaxation to all guests of this public zone⁹.

⁸ A.W. Rutes, H.R Penner, A. Lawrence, *Hotel design planning and development*, New York-London 2001.

⁹ Official website of Portus Cale Hotel, available at: <http://www.portuscalehotel.com/EN/hotel.html>, accessed 06.06.2019.



Fig. 5. Urban settlement of HP Park Plaza Wrocław (Poland)

Conclusions

The positive phenomenon is considered when hotels located in the city center and downtown enter a very close and special relationship with the cultural context and genius loci. Fusion of buildings with the surroundings, including the urban floor and elements of small architecture in the immediate surroundings of the hotel, these are particularly sensitive parts that require careful elaboration. Most of the cases analyzed in this study have found a search for facility owners to build relationships, not only with visitors but residents of the city or other tourists. Thus, the everyday user can visit public spaces, as well as fragments of urban tissue, often without even understanding the boundaries between individual buildings or exterior. Among especially welcomed elements allowing creation of urban-architecture hotels' relations, are:

- flags,
- arranged and maintained greenery,
- gardens supplemented with gastronomy functions,
- lighting,
- seating,
- connection to culture and art,
- information and learning opportunities – exhibitions, information boards,

- shopping stands (serving basic and extended needs, e.g. art, craft),
- minor architectural elements (i.e. fountains),
- glazed walls of ground floors.

As a result of using the aforementioned elements, the public space of a hotel can become a sort of “lounge” of the city, a space for:

- meeting,
- talk,
- observation of local life,
- exchange of cultural and international experience.

At the same time, it can serve fulfilling basic and extended human needs, like following:

- shopping,
- recreation,
- learning,
- rest.

Distinguished by representational minor and major architectural elements with functions aiming at stressing international, world-widely character of particular enterprises, it can be stated that contemporary hotels’ public space is an important, center-forming element of the urban fiber. Connections with a city between the exterior and the interior can be understood in two different ways:

- direct – where parts of the building are formed in the semi-closed fashion or can be opened or closed, i.e. dependent on the weather (e.g., already mentioned hotels’ solutions in Las Vegas and Jelenia Góra – showing a minor scale of such developments),
- indirect – where links are created with the use of “soft” architectural values, like views, lights, elements of small architecture (e.g., HP Park Plaza Hotel in Wrocław, Portus Cale Hotel in Porto).

Summing up, it is worth noting that the public space associated with a hotel in many cases smoothly penetrates the urban zone, building new qualities and values in its local social perception. Also, properly solved hotel's city connection zone may stimulate economic and urban growth of a particular part of the city, which is evaluated as a highly positive and desired phenomenon.

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