

## URBAN WATERFRONTS AS A DESERTED HERITAGE. GUBIN-GUBEN CASE STUDY

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**Abstract.** The article discusses the process of changing the shape of urban waterfronts by the Lusatian Neisse River in Gubin and Guben, comparing the post-war urban solutions with the pre-war ones. Among others, the elements of urban composition, first introduced by K. Wejchert and K. Lynch, have been applied in the analysis. What has been discovered is that visual openings, compositional dominants, possible connections and other urban bonds were ruined, which resulted in spatial fragmentation. The urban factors are presented taking into account the holistic background of the complex social and political situation of the divided city.

**Keywords:** urban planning, waterfront, division, urban composition, river, border cities, perception, city.

### Introduction

Since most of the world population inhabits urban areas, as reported by the UN DESA (2014), the problems of cities and their residents ought to be the main concern of urban planners nowadays. What is more, the global population continues to grow which will predictably result in escalation of this process. Although every city is a unique and complex social, spatial and cultural phenomenon, there are some cities that deserve special attention – the ones which have undergone urban division. One of them is a twin city of Gubin and Guben (Fig. 1), created in 1945 from one riverside city of Guben. The town on the border between Poland and Germany, newly segmented into two parts, redefined the role of the Lusatian Neisse River, flowing between them. The division changed its role from a symbolic centre and the culmination point into a mere state border. The study mainly examines the spatial condition and transformation of the urban waterfronts.

However, at the very beginning of the paper, the definition of the term *urban waterfront* must be specified. According to Januchta-Szostak (2011): “(...) the term ‘urban waterfront’ concerns the area where the city meets the surface waters, including both the natural and anthropogenic environment; though its landscape aspect is mostly perceived, it is still predetermined by social, ecological and economic factors. City waterfront consists of diverse forms of wharves, greenery strips, riverside infrastructure and development along the shore, usually visible against the city’s



Fig. 1. The location of Gubin and Guben

panorama, owing to the water foreground. (...) Therefore, the definition of the waterfront is related to multilayer and historically changeable relationship in the areas where the water structures meet the urbanized ones as well as to their significance in the process of the sustainable development of the city”.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the changes in the riverside urban structures in Gubin and Guben and to compare the pre-war with the post-war urban factors, on the basis of the elements of urban composition first introduced by K. Lynch (1960) and K. Wejchert (1974). In order to present the holistic picture of the case, its socio-political

and historical background, going back to 1945, has been taken into account. Additionally, some elements of the environmental psychology have been mentioned so as to emphasize the influence of urban space on social behaviour.

## Methodology

For the purpose of this paper, the methods of urban analysis were applied in order to make it possible to view the city as a combination of visual marks. Thus, it can be presented as a set of synthetic components which influence the perception of space. What is more, presenting and analysing the complex phenomenon of a city in a simplified language might be useful in quantity research owing to its measurability potential. This article is based on methods applied by Kevin Lynch in his study *The image of the city* (1960) which compares the urban structures of Boston, New Jersey and Los Angeles, analysing synthetic components such as nodes, landmarks, paths, edges and districts that create a meaningful map of the city. Additionally, a similar system proposed by Kazimierz Wejchert in *Elementy kompozycji urbanistycznej* (1974), was included in the research. Wejchert mentions such elements as: leading and stopping surfaces, urban interiors<sup>1</sup>, visual openings, dominants, coupled interiors<sup>2</sup> and the measurement of central angle<sup>3</sup>. The methods listed above were applied to compare the changes by mapping the elements on the set of historical and present plans of the cities of Gubin and Guben throughout the time of political transformations, in order to reveal the progressive alteration of space. This allowed to create the possibility of comparison of urban structure integrity between the particular historical periods and socio-political realities.

## Perception of space in the cities divided by the river

The surroundings influence the people's behaviour due to the mechanisms of perception (Bell *et al.* 2001). They determine the roles for actors in the space, providing the "stage design" for events thanks to the subconscious canals of communication, based on cultural identity, level of socialization and many other factors. The river, dividing the city, constitutes a great spatial element which highlights the separation as it provides the proxemical distance and therefore an excuse for creating the distinction between "us" and

"them" – by valuation of space. It might be seen as a social distance indicator, becoming a physical barrier to geographically neighbouring groups (Szczepański, Jałowiecki 2006). On the other hand, the river was once a common good, the axis of life in a medieval city – functioning, among other things, as a source of water, a transport route and a defence line. Its role was redefined by an arbitral, political decision. The post-war conferences affected the cities by the Oder and Lusatian Neisse Rivers, including Guben. The compositional and functional change of the function of the river is almost complete. Previously, a uniting and joining element was now transformed into a rigid barrier of the impenetrable border which creates a compositional negative. The inhabitants of one side of the river might consider the ones from the other side as inferior ones and vice versa. In this way, the river – a newly created border – becomes a tool for unfair assessment. Despite the efforts to unite the societies, the river still deepens the separation due to its dividing, linear character. Constantly watched, due to its border function, the river makes the separation continually tangible and visible.

Another element of the "stage design" is architecture that can be used to reveal the national identity of the place. It is therefore crucial to raise a question whether this perceptual impact influenced the social attitude towards the existing architecture in Gubin and if yes then to what extent. It would also be of great importance to examine the motives that stood behind the character of post-war urban development of this city. Especially because of the fact that the war left substantial damage, the urban "tabula rasa", along with its considerable spatial potential. Finally, it would be profitable to find the distinction between the post-war architecture in Gubin that represents only the current style, and the architecture whose role is to implement identity – if such one exists. The issues mentioned above present attractive research problems for further interdisciplinary studies, however, they exceed the purpose of this paper.

## Socio-political background of the cities of Gubin and Guben

In the year 1945, the cities by the Oder and Lusatian Neisse Rivers went through arbitrary and uncompromising division. The region had been German for centuries, and it was the decision made for political reasons by the Allies that changed that reality. The outcome of the post-war treaties tore the territory apart and assigned it to the two reformed countries – German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic. The newly drawn border ignored the historical and social context of the region. It determined completely new reality: new post-war or-

<sup>1</sup> Including urban walls, urban floor and ceiling.

<sup>2</sup> Urban interiors, which are structurally connected or related.

<sup>3</sup> The angle measured in the section, between the ground and the line that connects the top of urban walls with the midpoint of urban floor.

der in Soviet-dominated Central-East Europe. Together with reshaping the borders, came the huge program of government-led resettlements. A great number of people was forced to leave their homes and move west to so called Regained Territories. Polish city of Gubin, newly separated from eastern part of German city of Guben, was one of the destinations for many of the re-settlers who came from different parts of the pre-war Polish territory (Kaczmarek 2011).

Beyond such a profound administrative and social change, there was instability of a newly drawn border. For many of German inhabitants the separation was incomprehensible, possibly due to the fact that the changes were so deep and unprecedented (Kaczmarek 2011). The scale of post-war transformations was additionally intensified by the division of a few cities between Poland and Germany. In the case of Guben, it resulted in a typical displacement phenomenon when many original German inhabitants of the eastern part of Guben treated their relocation to its western part as a temporary situation. As a result, they were waiting for a possibility to return to their homes on the other side of the Lusatian Neisse River. However, such an opportunity never occurred. It was much later that first German families and individuals crossed the river once again to meet the current owners and residents of their former houses. The outcome of the encounters ranged from dramatic and unpleasant experiences to warm and emotional ones (Kaczmarek 2011).

Another issue, concerning the social context after the city division, was the fact of settling the two parts of the city with two national groups which had barely met before, each one by the opposite river bank. Originally, those two groups were considerably physically and politically distant from each other. The only "occasion" for them to interact was during the World War II, when the troops crossed the area twice (Strykiewicz, Tölle 2009). Such a traumatic experience could hardly constitute a proper start to a bilateral relation. Moreover, the Polish group was not homogeneous at all, as it consisted of different groups originated from a variety of regions, which caused internal tensions. Also, it was typical for the period between 1945 and 1989 that the political authorities were hindering the cross-border contacts between the people in order to control the newly drawn border and its tightness, which was the main aim of the administration (Kaczmarek 2011).

The area that was joined to Poland was given the Slavonic identity. This message was amplified by state propaganda which coincided with social aversion towards Germans, resulting from traumatic war experience.

It also affected the architecture of German origin that was being spontaneously destroyed and cleared from signs of its visual identity by its new users (Kaczmarek 2011). For some time the social attitude concurred with the official program, expressed for instance in Polish heritage protection policy. It was much later that the reluctance gradually faded and slowly started to oppose the national policy. Gradually, the social awareness of the objects' value rose and led to the phenomenon of intentional creation of Polish or Slavonic roots of the post-German architectural objects in order to preserve them or even to obtain the funding for their restoration (Mazur 2000).

After 1989, gradual blurring of the division was observed which was inspired by both political decisions and social initiatives. First joint projects were performed not only in Gubin and Guben but also in other cities by the Oder and Lusatian Neisse River. As their results are diverse, more than one city must be taken into consideration in order to show the trend. On the one hand, a great deal of effort to join the separated parts has been made since the political transformation of the German Democratic Republic and the Polish People's Republic. Among many events which were held, the workshops – including architectural ones – were meant to propose spatial solutions for some parts of the city, in some cases taking into account its both sides. For instance, in 2003 a common action resulted in creating the project of "European Garden 2003" on the island nearby the German side of the Oder River in Frankfurt, which aimed at "bringing the two cities back to the river front and constructing a common city space" (Strykiewicz, Tölle 2009). The Theatre Island between Gubin and Guben is another interesting example in the process of reuniting the space that was previously tore apart. After a few decades of desolation, caused by the prohibition of entry and the lack of a bridge, the connection with the Polish side was re-established. The fragment of the façade of former City Theatre was restored in a form of a monument along with the rearrangement of its surroundings. The implication of this is significant for the urban composition of the former city as a whole, mainly because the island is located in the very centre and it is visible from the main bridge on Lusatian Neisse as well as from both riverbanks. On the other hand, one has to point out some failures of joint projects that fulfil the picture of river-side societies and their attitude towards the spatial reunification. A representative case, which presents striving for particular benefits rather than the public interest, concerns the plan for opening the cross-border public communication in Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice. The

idea collapsed in the atmosphere of suspiciousness about the funding and strong opposition of some inhabitants (Stryjakiewicz, Tölle 2009)<sup>4</sup>.

There are types of common projects aiming to reunite the region and its inhabitants that exceed the spatial aspect. Sometimes culture and happenings are used as a “first aid” bond, promoting joint actions for mutual benefits. Art becomes, therefore, a participant in the discourse about the border and the promoter of a positive attitude towards the reunification. For instance, regional instead of national identity has been proposed, by projects such as Słubfurt<sup>5</sup> and Nowa Amerika<sup>6</sup>, promoting trans-border cooperation. The idea of Nowa Amerika consists in creation of a “theoretical” country with undefined borders, spreading from the Baltic Sea to the Sudetes, along the Oder and Lusatian Neisse Rivers.

In some way similar, but initiated by the authorities, are the Euroregions, which exemplify how the former axis of division between the struggling political blocks can be transformed into the axis of trans-border cooperation (Angiel 2011). Additionally, the politicians’ common will for partnership resulted in finding the joint governing body. Moreover, in the field of education, the European University Viadrina located in Frankfurt (Oder) is also worth mentioning. Since its foundation in 1991 it has always had one third of students of Polish origin, and it cooperates with Collegium Polonicum in Słubice, a branch of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Stryjakiewicz, Tölle 2009). The final tone in connecting the opposite sides of the border was set by the entry of Poland into the Schengen Area in 2007 which opened the borders.

### **The history of urban changes**

It is said that circa 90% of the city structure was demolished during the war (Pantkowski 1998). Some of it happened at the time of the eastern front movements in 1945, especially at the time of heavy fights for local hills overlooking the city<sup>7</sup>, which were approached by the Soviet Red Army. However, some of the damages were made by German Wehrmacht itself in accordance with the defence plans

including, among others, blowing up the Bismarckturm<sup>8</sup> with its strategic position as well as the bridges. In 1939 there were twelve of them in total, the Neisse Brücke over the Lusatian Neisse River being the oldest one. Other examples are Nordbrücke, built in 1925 (previously wooden), and Achenbachbrücke, dating back to 1884. The eastern side of the city was connected with the Theatre Island by the Schützenhausbrücke, two cross-border railway bridges, and some other local bridges on Lubst<sup>9</sup> River and Egelneisse (smaller tributaries). After the warfare in 1945 and establishing the border on the river, only the oldest bridge was re-opened, forming the national border crossing. Simultaneously, and independently from one another, the railway and the local bridges were restored. In general, the statement that the bridges were broken is justified both in literal and symbolical meaning. Regardless of the scale of war damages some of significant architectural objects in Guben survived in comparatively good condition. It was after the war that they faced their demise as, for instance, the City Theatre which burned in September 1945, in unclear circumstances.

In the new reality, formerly one city of Guben underwent the spatial alteration of specific character, which caused communicational and functional changes. As most of the city centre on the eastern side of Lusatian Neisse River and the bridges on it were destroyed, the possibility of contact between the two sides of the river was considerably impeded. In spite of that, incidental interactions did take place, especially just after the end of the World War II, when the newly created border was still relatively easy to cross (Kaczmarek 2011). It is clear and understandable that since the state border was located in the former centre of one city, it had to automatically rearrange its functioning. The two newly created, or rather separated from each other, cities were supposed to concentrate towards their inside rather than to urban structures on the other side of the river. They tried to forget or to ignore their “other halves”. What formerly constituted one city has been devoted to the frontier. The changes in the structures of the cities rearranged the communicational, functional and transportation connections that were the base of the unity. In those circumstances it was predictable and reasonable for the centres of the two cities to move away from the riverbanks (Kwiatkowski 1997). Since crossing the river started to mean crossing the state border, which was impossible or difficult, it was no longer sensible to maintain the previous riverside locations. The central position became the marginal one, as the visits

<sup>4</sup> Especially local Polish taxi drivers, who feared the competition on profitable route between the border and local market, customarily visited by Germans.

<sup>5</sup> The name consists of Polish Słubice and German Frankfurt (Oder). The conceptual city of Słubfurt was even registered on the European Cities list.

<sup>6</sup> The New America.

<sup>7</sup> Commonly known as “The hill of death”.

<sup>8</sup> Tower of Bismarck.

<sup>9</sup> In Polish: Lubsza or Lubica.

from the other side of the river were extremely rare. In that case the net of possible connections inside the city – now two cities – had to change dramatically.

This alteration in spatial references towards the other side, although based on different reasons, can be observed in urban scale and analysed with urban measures. Before the division, the two sides had many spatial solutions demonstrating the relation to the other part (Fig. 2).

Among them, one could enumerate the available connections across the river which created trans-city routes, joining the important places located on both banks of the river. Strengthening the connection with a set of visual frames along the routes, created the townscape which was an idea first proposed by Gordon Cullen (1961). After the division many of the connections were lost or deserted. Nevertheless, the signs of the past are still there for those

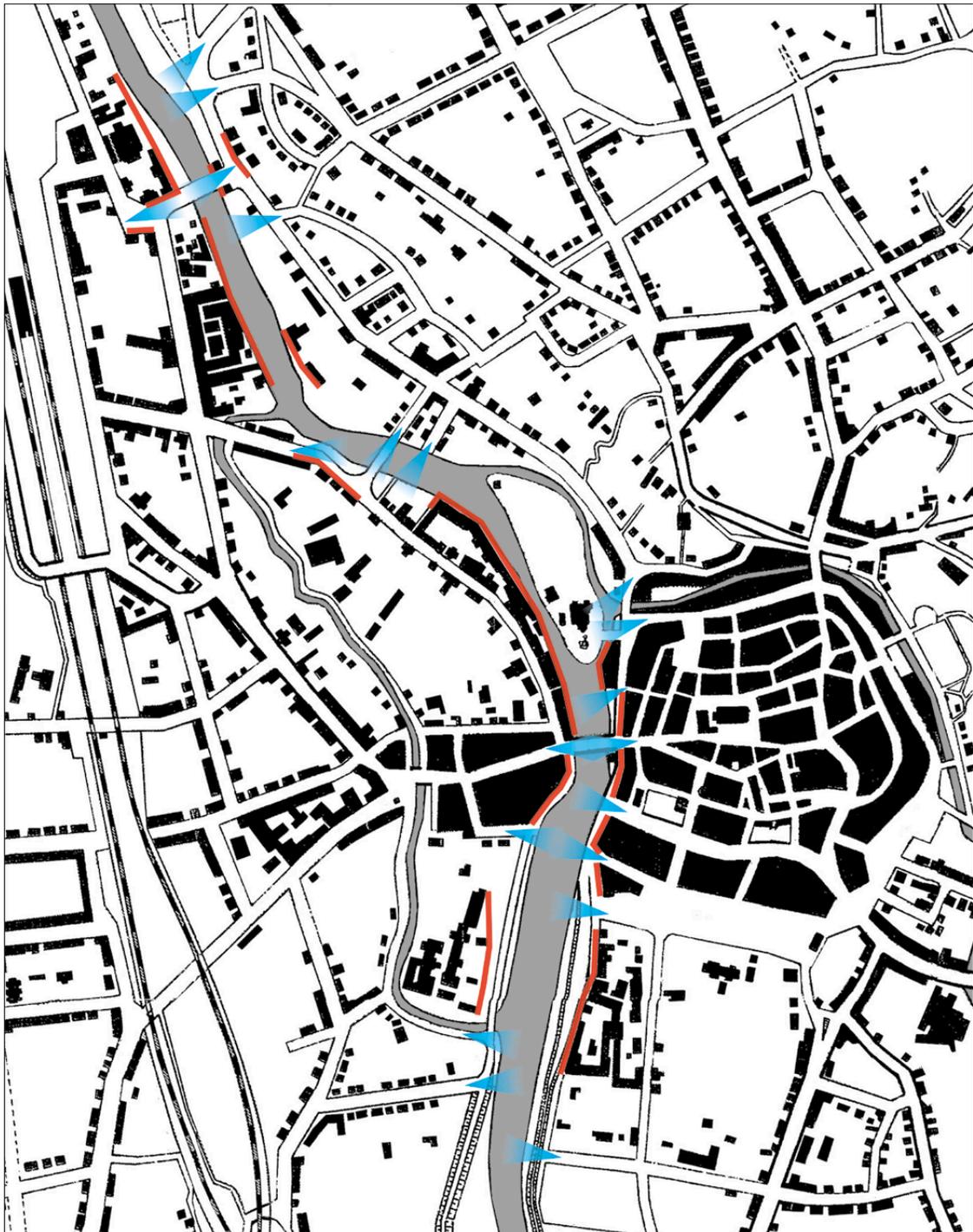


Fig. 2. The city of Guben in 1939. Visual openings were marked with blue triangles, urban walls of waterside composition with red lines

who care to look. Some of them are literally hidden in the bushes, like for instance ruins of Nordbrücke bases. Unfortunately, others seem to be unavoidably lost due to the rearrangement of space that was not coordinated. The location of the former bridges might exemplify how the surrounding transformed space barely shows any signs of their previous function. Another example may be the modern post-war and post-transformation housing, sometimes located in a way which might be seen as ignoring the former compositional urban context of the city including its relations to the other side as well as historical urban grid. The same concerns the loss of possible pedestrian walkways leading to the river.

After the political transformation of 1989, the ideas to join together in order to work on future plans for Gubin and Guben appeared, which was based on a common will to cooperate and political possibility to do so. The common administrative body, consisting of both Polish and German members was created and given relevant responsibilities. Since then some plans have been prepared for the further development and heritage protection of the twin city. In order to create a frame for that, certain records concerning town planning appeared in the legal regulations. For instance, Gubin urban development act includes the concept of Eurocity Gubin-Guben based on the analysis concerning both sides of the Lusatian Neisse. It also contains records suggesting that the space of those two cities should be co-ordinately shaped and administered on many levels, e.g. historical old town restoration, common environment protection system etc. The act was prepared by the authorities of the city of Gubin in cooperation with a private German company from Cottbus (a main city of Lower Lusatia region). Additionally, a considerable number of architectural competitions and workshops were organized to improve the space of Gubin and Guben, engaging specialists from both Poland and Germany, as well as from other countries. Some of the events were selective as they concerned only parts of one of the cities, but there were also those ones that covered the urban organism as a whole. What is more, some of the competition ideas are being realized, such as the proposition for the ruined Gubin Parish Church, located in the old town by the Polish bank of the river, which was prepared in 2013 and is said to be finished by 2020.

Although still small, yet some progress has been actually made since the transformation of both political systems and social attitudes. One of the signs of this process was the opening of the cross-border bridge for pedestrians and cyclists, precisely on the day when Poland became the party to the Schengen Agreement. It is located nearby the

Theatre Island and connects it with the German side. The newly created structure established the route connecting the two banks of the Lusatian Neisse, enabling the remains of City Theatre to become a landmark which can be passed every day during the inhabitants' routine journeys around the town<sup>10</sup>. The place became revitalised thanks to its easier accessibility for regular commuters – the non-intentional visitors. The Theatre Island's role of place in space (Tuan 1977) was extended from the Gubin only to the whole twin city. That was performed not entirely without problems due to the differences in Polish and German law regulations. Apparently, the German-led investment, partially built on Polish ground, was illegal under the Polish law and so became threatened with demolition. Fortunately, despite the problems, the beneficial structure still exists and functions, playing its role in the reunification of the cities. It is crucial that any interferences into waterfront areas should follow coordinated planning of waterside structures, as they ought not to be treated as separate elements but rather as integral parts of the whole picture (Januchta-Szostak 2011).

### **The elements of urban composition in Gubin and Guben**

The complex situation of Gubin and Guben can be best analysed with the use of the elements of urban composition, first introduced by Kevin Lynch and Kazimierz Wejchert. It is mainly because they might be indicators of success in the common attempt to unite those cities. If spatial integrity is considered as a result, it is crucial to use those methods, as they constitute measurable factor in spatial comparison. They are of great assistance in revealing the changes of space in time, along with its compositional completeness. Transforming the alteration of urban structure into the quantity research, literally into numbers, allows to create statistically visible comparison. The interpretation process of the obtained data is based on the assumption that the number of elements of urban composition (some of which are recognized as urban bonds) is proportional to the spatial integrity of the urban structure formerly constituting one city.

While comparing the pre-war urban structure with the one that emerged after the war it became clear that the number of compositional urban bonds has decreased, reflecting the deep alteration of space which formerly belonged to one city (Fig. 3). Among others, the visual openings in Gubin and Guben, overlooking the opposite side of the river, were reduced during that period. It might be just a natural con-

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<sup>10</sup> Additionally, there is another pedestrian bridge connecting northern side of Theatre Island, with the city of Gubin, as a part of riverside walkway.

sequence that the places became desolated and neglected as it was no longer necessary to maintain no man's land. The process was naturally connected with the decline in the number of possible routes connecting the fragments of the city located on the opposite sides of Lusatian Neisse. The former proximity between them, filled with the development built for communication needs, was therefore lost. People living close to each other were now forced to choose

a much longer route, if that was possible at all, ceasing to be neighbours. Urban compositional dominants that had created the space were degraded – like for instance the City Theatre. Some of the other local dominants also faded when the substantial war damage and subsequent changes rearranged their surroundings, often necessary in overall composition. As the gaps in urban quarters appeared, the background of the exposition was devastated. Similar pro-

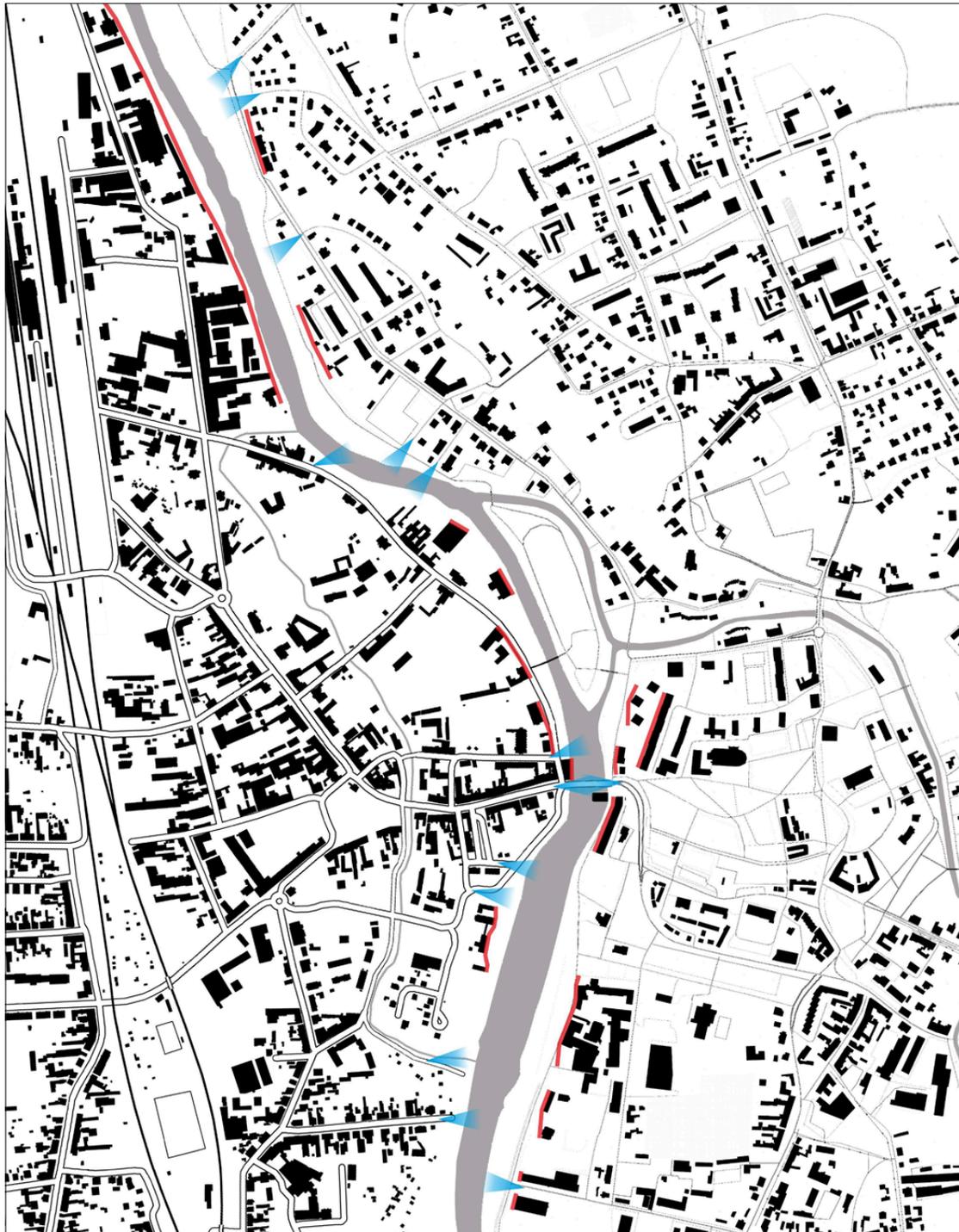


Fig. 3. Cities of Gubin and Guben in 2015. Visual openings were marked with blue triangles, urban walls of waterside composition with red lines

cess affected some of the visually coupled urban interiors, which as a result have lost their coherence. The formerly clearly legible space, defined by compositional elements like urban walls, having right proportions and proper exposition were dissolved as they lost structural elements, vital for their previous reception. They become discontinuous and therefore blurred. The fragments of urban fabric that survived lost their original context and stood in the middle of compositional “nowhere”. An exemplification of the phenomenon mentioned above might be the Parish Church of Guben that despite being heavily damaged during the war, has partially survived. The scale and overall form of the building are still possible to be recognized, but as the urban context has been mostly destroyed, it has lost its spatial role and significance.

Among the urban structures that experienced the most severe degradation were the ones located precisely by the riverbank, forming the waterfronts. Despite the “regular” factors, caused by the warfare, among others, they lost one crucial element of their identity – the expository foreground, previously formed by the river. It was due to the negligence of the riverbank and progressive reduction in quality of this unwanted space that urban opening towards the river no longer had a desirable value. Consequently, the potential prospect views were decreasing and now the two cities were turning their back towards each other. In addition, as the communicational and functional routes over the Lusatian Neisse River were cut off, the places were deprived of people and became remote and desolated dead ends. Before the division, the urban interiors by the Lusatian Neisse were additionally compositionally connected with other urban elements, more distant from the riverbanks. The impression was achieved by sequences of visual frames created thanks to the structural composition of the surroundings which together defined the townscape. It was also the role of elements of urban composition to provide a “stage design” that could lead pedestrians towards the river, using perceptual influence on human behaviour and suggesting the spatial choices. By the adaptation of urban compositional elements, the several parts of formerly one coherent city were combined in individual urban rhythm of Guben.

The whole set of compositional interiors, connected into one organism was significantly deprived of its structural, urban fabric which had constituted the base for the spatial “sculpture” that it evolved from. It was no longer possible for the structure to provide such influential background for citizens to live in. Formerly one complete city, even in spite of the political division, was fragmented and partially turned into spatial chaos. Looking at the post-war urban development of this twin city, it is difficult to dis-

tinguish the intentional action (inspired by the authorities) from the natural process of fading and negligence. It is unclear whether, and to what extent, those means were purposeful, and if it was desired for the space adjacent to the river to become repulsive.

### **Other examples of divided cities**

The twin cities of Gubin and Guben are not the only ones to suffer specific problems resulting from arbitrary political division that shattered the structural unity having been shaped and developed for centuries. Among the closest – both in terms of geographical distance and similarity – are the other riverside cities on the Oder-Lusatian Neisse line (the border between Poland and Germany). Those include Frankfurt (Oder) with its counterpart Słubice on the eastern side, as well as Görlitz and Polish Zgorzelec. All of them were affected by the decisions and outcomes of the Potsdam Conference in 1945. They were divided between the two countries and became subjects of massive resettlements. Moreover, they struggle with many similar problems nowadays, such as high unemployment rate, decrease in number of inhabitants, not to mention the division itself with its all consequences. On the other hand, there are some differences, among which one has to point out significant disproportion in structural damages caused by the warfare<sup>11</sup>.

The phenomenon of divided cities is obviously far more complex and should not be limited only to the border cities. And certainly not only to those, which have the national border located on the inner river. There is a considerable number of divided cities found in different cultures and geographical regions, in varied scale and historical periods. Almost every example is unique which results from its individual conditions. Many of them are living memorials of historical and socio-political turbulences. It is therefore justified to say that some of them exemplify the urbanism of conflict. On the other hand, some evolved in this direction naturally and fluently. There are examples showing the ultimate integration, which results in inability to identify the former blurred demarcation line. In every case, the character of this complex phenomenon requires interdisciplinary studies that will combine the art of urban planning with social sciences necessary for its completeness.

However different, those cities that are still spatially segmented might be useful in comparative studies. Similarly informative are those which had been divided in the past and later united, like for instance Berlin (Tölle 2010). It is possible to reveal analogies in the midst of the

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<sup>11</sup> Frankfurt (Oder) and Görlitz were barely affected, unlike Guben.

many existing and influential aspects that belong to this holistic phenomenon. Moreover, the specific reference can be done even between the cities that vary in majority of features. The conclusion of what has been said is that the comparative studies should not be limited only to those cities that share an obvious resemblance.

## Conclusions

The underlying assumption of the study is that the compositional urban unity of the divided cities, among which is the twin city of Gubin and Guben, is a value. The conception is based on studies of examples of cities that have undergone the division – in the past or present. Therefore, every intent leading to reunite the separated cities of Gubin and Guben has been evaluated positively, in contrast with those leading to disconnection. The results of the studies demonstrate that there is a significant difference in the number and quality of structural urban bonds between the ones predating 1945 and the ones which were applied after the division.

Spatial reference towards the former axis, defining Guben as the city on water has drastically changed. It is observed especially clearly with the use of methods of urban composition analysis, proposed by Kevin Lynch and Kazimierz Wejchert. Despite the multilayer changes that took place after 1989, including the political integrity on both national and European levels, artistic and social bottom-up initiatives aiming at cooperation as well as architectural conceptions for common space, there is still much work ahead. One of the possible options would be the development of a joint legal basis that could constitute a starting point for common architectural and urban initiatives. The importance of that has been shown in the example of the pedestrian bridge over the Lusatian Neisse. The legal problems concerning that specific situation could have been avoided. Another important factor would be institutional pressure on the restoration of the urban quarters neighbouring the river. The lack of urban structures there entails scarcity of inhabitants which is the main obstacle in the integration of the cities. Everyday presence of the city residents, along with their routine habits in space by the river, could bring the life back to the area. However, the suggestions mentioned above are still only plans for the future that may, or may not, come.

According to Czyński (2006), socio-political systems usually evolve much faster than their architectural and urban frames. Hence, it is understandable that the urban structural transformation in Gubin and Guben – including its waterfronts – follows the integration promoting changes with some delay. It leads to the current situation in which the perceptual message given by the shape of the

space contradicts the social and political efforts towards unity and cooperation. The condition of urban waterfronts in Gubin and Guben still reminds of the division and deepens it. The potentially representative spaces constantly lack their compositional references and other urban bonds towards the other side of the river. They are the living monument of the past, constituting the deserted heritage of the urban division. It seems, therefore, that without the structural urban rearrangement the full integration of the divided cities of Gubin and Guben is unlikely to occur and last.

It is definitely worth trying to restore those neglected spaces even though the undertaking can be hardly described as an easy one, which was pointed out by Breen and Rigby (1996): “Revitalising the urban waterfronts is a long-lasting, complex process including a variety of aspects (economic, social, environmental and cultural)”. Their role and influence were concluded by Januchta-Szostak (2011): “Considering the exposure and recreational value of the river valley in the city, the waterfront public spaces have strategic significance for the image of the city and the creation of social integration spaces”. In the time of European integrity, as well as development of cooperation between the two countries, regions and cities in a wide range of disciplines, it is reasonable to strengthen the structural urban unity of Gubin and Guben which would consolidate and potentially symbolize the common efforts. Moreover, such an undertaking could erase the compositional border, which still perceptually reminds about the division in the eyes of the public. Furthermore, as both cities share similar demographical and social problems, it may be of significant importance to join together in common responsibility for the space. Perhaps it should be concluded that it is the city itself – as a complete and sophisticated urban organism – that ought to constitute an essential goal and therefore it must not be divided and defragmented, whatever the cause.

## Disclosure statement

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## **APLEISTAS MIESTO KRANTINIŲ PAVELDAS. GUBINO IR GUBENO PAVYZDYS**

**O. Amiri**

Santrauka

Aptariami Lusatian Neisse upės krantinių formų kaitos procesai Gubino ir Gubeno miestuose, lyginant pokarinius urbanistinius sprendimus su prieškariniais. Analizuojama nagrinėjant urbanistinės kompozicijos elementus, kuriuos pirmieji pristatė K. Wejchertas ir K. Lynchas. Nustatyta, kad atveriamų reginių, kompozicinių elementų galimos jungtys ir kiti urbanistiniai saitai buvo suardyti, o tai nulėmė erdvių fragmentaciją. Urbanistiniai veiksniai nagrinėjami atsižvelgiant į praicityje buvusią sudėtingą padalyto miesto socialinę ir politinę situaciją.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** miestų planavimas, krantinės, urbanistinė kompozicija, upė, pasienio miestai, suvokimas, miestas.