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# Commercial Function as a Treat to the Monument - 25 Years of Experience in the Commercialization of Monuments in Gdansk, Poland

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**Abstract.** The principles of the market economy adopted in Poland in the nineties have significantly touched the resources of immovable monuments. As a result, monuments have become a product of culture subject to the rules of the free market; and state ownership, patronage and decision-making practice has now been replaced by private interest. Practical monument use has also changed with the shift in ownership of objects after privatization and further advances in technology and the economy. Accordingly, the subject of this research addresses the issue of ensuring protection as well as the profitability of monumental objects of heritage under private investment in association with municipal and state ownership. The nineties of the twentieth century in Poland marked a period of rapid revival in trade based on market principles and openness to contemporary global trends in the design of commercial facilities. Thus, commercial function as a new use has been used for the commercialization of the monument. After 25 years of experience, it turns out that this new use may pose a threat to the conditions of monument preservation. The spatial and location specifics of the monument are poorly matched to the organizational form of trade and product range, despite the huge variety of these forms; the result is bankruptcy of the commercial operation and the consequent loss of use for the monument. Unused objects will eventually be destroyed. Studies have shown that functions supporting the creation of culture, especially museums, are optimal for the use of monuments. The museum function provides sufficiently high prestige and spatial stability, and allows for the maximum preservation of authentic elements, thus performing an additional role as museum piece.

## 1. Introduction

Political and economic changes at the beginning of the nineties in Poland radically changed the conditions of existence for monuments. Before 1990, the state was the owner of historic buildings. Protection of their historical values was provided by national preservation services, including both conservation agencies and specialized design and manufacturing companies. Also, the state financed all the work carried out in the monuments. For the condition of the monument, full responsibility was also borne by the state. Monuments were not treated as subjects of commercial investment. They were preserved witnesses of the history and culture of a place.

The principles of the market economy adopted in Poland also related to the resources of immovable monuments. This resulted in the monument becoming a product of culture and subject to rules of the free market. Of the monuments with historic substance only 15% remained in the hands of the state, the others underwent a change in ownership. Some amount of them (about 21%) became municipal property. The Catholic Church became the owner of 24% of historic buildings, and as many as 30%



have been privatized. Many of the privatized objects not only lost the previous owner but also - as a result of technological and economic changes - their previous usage. Monuments in the hands of private as well as municipal and national ownership became products of culture and the subject of investigation regarding usage that would ensure not only the continued existence of the object, but also profitability of the investment. Statutory responsibility for monuments was taken over by the new owners, who through their commercial leasing policy were guided by short-term benefits and objectives. [1], [2], [3]. Monuments have become a part of the market game, the reality of which creates opportunity, but also a major threat to their existence. However, in many cases, commercialization of the monument is a necessity for its continued existence, because it is impossible for the state to take over the care. Therefore, the issue of the functioning of the monument as a product in the free market economic system is extremely important for preservation of the historic substance of a country [4]. Of importance is optimally choosing new functions tailored to historical values of the object, and at the same time guaranteeing its safe and long-term use, by limiting the frequency and scope of the transformation and modernization.

Consequently, these studies embrace particular usage through the introduction of commercial function to the monument. This is a continuation of research conducted in the years 1993 - 2001, the results of which were published in the monograph "The protection of monuments in the period of market economy based on the example of the modernization of the Great Mill in Gdansk" [5]. The study indicated a method for evaluating the commercial usefulness of a monument and the architectural principles of its commercialization from the point of view of an architect designer involved in modernization and adaptation processes for the new, commercial use of such buildings. There were lots of hypotheses for further relations between the historical value of the facility and market conditions of retail trade; thus continuation of the study is for their verification. The study included three objects from different historical periods. All were listed in the register of monuments in accordance with the specific terminology representing diverse historical value, which was established until 1990. Among the three is an object listed under the highest classification known: the so-called monument of class zero. It is the largest preserved medieval, brick, industrial building in Europe. Currently, discussion is in progress on the establishment of a new categorization of monuments in Poland [1]. This study included the Main Railway Station in Gdansk, Market Hall (Hala Targowa) at 1 Dominikanski Square, and Great Mill (Wielki Mlyn) at Wielkie Mlyny Street.

Observations regarding the relationship between the function of trade and the conditions of monument preservation were conducted in the years 2001 - 2016. The new study investigated the effect of changes in the organization and assortment of trade in relation to the scope of further transformation of the modernized monument. Then, reference was made to the earlier set of hypotheses summarizing the results of studies conducted in the years 2001-2016.

## **2. Specifics of commercial function**

Commercial function has had many spatial and organizational forms: beginning with the original form of trade, for which only the arrangement of a pretty place for sales was needed, and extending to the more developed spatial and organizational forms of twenty-first century retail. A characteristic feature of the commercial function is the continuous organizational and spatial development leading to the creation of new structures, while still maintaining the primitive almost immutable form of trade fair. It would seem that diversity of forms in trade allows for its optimal adaptation to the place and object. However, trade is subject to all economic fluctuations. While variety provides for stabilization of the commercial function and the quick adaptation to changing local conditions, the changing economic climate and rules of the market game may actually cause the collapse of the commercial structure on the site. This feature of commercial function can have a significant impact on the operation of the commercial facility in place. The basic principle of trade in any particular place is profitability, which ceases to exist when the level of trade no longer supports the legitimacy of existence. The process of securing profitability begins with the search for assortment, which is best adapted to the changing market segment. Dynamic and multiple changes in the lines of business and/or forms of trade organization in

the building are essential until the changes either become profitable or lead to the collapse of all trade in that place, i.e. the liquidation of commercial function. What remains is an abandoned architectural object. The fate of the object may vary depending on its spatial structure, conditions for maintenance and location. Historic objects of commercial function constitute a special case and can be divided into three basic groups.

The first group includes objects whose primary function has been commercial, and they have been subjected to modernization. The Market Hall at 1 Dominikanski Square provides an example for this research.

The second group are objects that have still retained their original use different from commercial function; yet trade has been introduced as an additional use intended to raise the profitability of the object. The Main Railway Station in Gdansk is such an example.

The third group consists of objects that have lost their previous use as a result of technological and economic development, and the political transformation in Poland. These are objects of considerable historic and architectural value that must be preserved. Adding commercial function to their use was believed to be the best way to assure their preservation. The Trading House in the Great Mill at Wielkie Mlyny Street is a case in point.

### **3. Preservation of original commercial function in the monument and its adaptation to the requirements of modern trade**

Modernization of the nineteenth century Market Hall, originally opened in 1896 in Gdansk, was conducted in the years 2002-2005. The process entailed reconstruction of the elevation, maintenance of the preserved building historic tissue, and adaptation of the interiors to the requirements of modern trade, while maintaining the maximum historic value. The Market Hall was a typical nineteenth-century hall built in accordance with the aesthetic, functional and technical requirements of that time. It represented qualities of architecture typical for this region of Europe: the peripheral brick curtain walls of historicizing neo-gothic garment detail, and a roof of modern frame construction consisting of iron elements of columns and girders forming a spatial structure covering the three-nave interior of the basilica layout. Roofing sheet folds with pinnacles and turrets, and the rich ornamentation of wrought iron bar doors completed the body of the hall. The double doors arranged symmetrically in all the perimeter walls led to the interior. Stairs inside leading to the basement were located at the entrances of the longer walls. The single, high space of the interior of the hall was filled with closed commercial stalls and open benches with their top finishing tailored to the type of goods offered for sale. Stalls with dimensions of approximately 2m x 2m, and a height not exceeding 3m, were placed in an openwork structure with iron profiles; filled nets were set along the perimeter walls and rows of zones located in side entrances of the building. Benches for selling occupied the central part of the hall. Large windows with mechanisms to govern their opening in the perimeter walls and roof provided daylight and air exchange in the hall. The cellar in the basement, which separated commercial stalls, technical rooms and warehouses for storage of products, corresponded to contemporary standards of sanitation and exploitation. Unfortunately, war and nearly a century of use of the hall led to the degradation of the object. The hall, which had been owned by the city since its construction in the nineteenth century, was commercialized in the nineties of the twentieth century. Dominican merchants, the former tenants, first received the hall under a perpetual lease. The modernization of the market hall fell at a time in Poland that was marked by a dynamic revival in trade based on market principles, and openness to contemporary trends in the design of commercial facilities in the world. Therefore, the adopted scope of modernization works envisaged in the restored interior initiated the implementation of a three-storey commercial building with a large area for retail; the proven spatial layout and functionality were typical of modern shopping malls. The underground level was adjusted to the requirements of normative trade by lowering the level of the floor. An additional floor was added - a mezzanine was constructed along the perimeter walls. Based on the model of modern shopping malls, a part of the ceiling in the middle of the hall was dismantled above the underground storey to create an open, interior patio with stairs and a panoramic lift. According to prevailing trends, the underground level was adapted to the trade of food products.

Commercial stalls with clothing were placed on the ground floor, and small dining outlets were created on the mezzanine. Winning the prize of “Construction of the Year 2005” and the prize of Conservator’s Associations, the newly created object had met with the approval of both customers and community experts. It can be assumed that requirements of the monument and modern trade were combined in a satisfactory manner. However, a developing network of supermarkets and new shopping centres, which had similar product ranges addressed to the same customer segment in the vicinity, began to compete with the market hall. The competition, namely large commercial organizations that benefit from both the advantage of the lower unit costs of purchasing goods and the location in objects with lower operating costs, began to form a serious threat to the functioning of the trade fair in the Market Hall. The first symptoms of a crisis appeared. There was a phenomenon of accelerated rotation in the assortment of individual stands and an increasing number of empty retail outlets waiting for tenants. The least of this phenomenon affected the underground level, which provided a trading place for food products, while the greatest effect appeared on the mezzanine. Assessing the condition of trade in the Market Hall 12 years after modernization, it becomes clear that the chief asset of historic objects does not provide a decisive advantage relative to its use for increasing market competitiveness. In contrast, the cost of maintaining the historical structure may be a factor in lowering the competitiveness of the object. The question is whether the assumptions that led to the modernization of the commercial function were correct. And why did the uniqueness of the Market Hall for retail trade fail to be an asset to competition after undergoing universal standardization processes for commercial objects? Was the construction of a modern shopping mall in the interior of the historical hall the best solution? Should the original form of the trade fair with the pre-existing characteristics of a nineteenth-century hall have also been reconstructed? Or perhaps, if the market hall had offered a unique assortment of food and a large variety of fresh, high quality, naturally healthy products, would it have guaranteed the functioning of trade in this place? [6]. Of course, doubt remains, while many voices have agreed it is a shame the trade fair atmosphere went astray there. The observed phenomenon points to the need for methods of management in adaptation processes that are relative to the selection of assortment and market segment, and the existing and ever-changing conditions of competition. Market analysis should be performed to choose the best strategy for developing trade function in the hall using the historic value of the object as a characteristic for raising competitiveness.

#### **4. Introduction of commercial function to the monument in order to improve its profitability**

The Main Railway Station in Gdansk, which was built in the style of Dutch Mannerism, opened in 1900. It was a building with a functional layout and application characteristic for this type of urban railway facility. The object includes a clock tower and massive, high reception hall for travellers and ticketing. The side wings had accompanying rooms. In the southern wing were located left luggage, lost and found, a police station, porters and lounge rooms for the prince. In the northern wing, there were waiting rooms for passengers, a lounge for ladies, a bar, washrooms and toilets, and rooms for railwaymen and telegraphers. Later, a telegraph room and restaurant were built there. The building itself was not destroyed by the war; only in 1945, as a result of arson by Soviet troops, fire destroyed the roof structure. After the war, the roofs were rebuilt. However, the nearly century-old operation under differentiated political conditions and the occasional repair work led to the degradation of the building. In 1992, the Main Railway Station underwent complete refurbishment of the interior and connections to platforms were rebuilt. An additional mezzanine with a commercial area of 550 m<sup>2</sup> was built in the reception hall for travellers and in the neighbouring halls. This remodelling coincided with a period of rapid trade revival in Poland that was based on market principles and openness to the contemporary trend of locating trade places in large population centres such as airport terminals or transit hubs. Therefore, it was considered a good option for the object to increase the surface area of the station for additional retail space, given the optimum location ensured by the traffic of an adequate number of consumers (the travellers). The increased retail space would require commercial ownership and tenants. However, the lack of experience in the design and implementation of such commercial facilities resulted in the creation of space that was unattractive to targeted customers – the travellers. The unclear layout of tiny shops

built in too close proximity to other shops of similar range, the bad transport connections between the mezzanine and the ground floor of the station, and generally, the poorly managed functional and spatial conditions, resulted in a significant reduction in the number of potential customers. Soon the first symptoms of crisis appeared. What emerged were the phenomena of accelerated assortment rotation in individual stands and an increasing number of empty retail outlets waiting for new tenants. In 2012, the last merchants left the mezzanine, which was dismantled in the first months of 2013. Finally in 2016, a project came into being that would undertake the full reconstruction of the spatial and functional interior of the building of the Main Railway Station in Gdansk.

### **5. Introduction of new commercial function to the monument that had permanently lost its original use: transformation of the monument into a shopping centre**

Commercialization through the introduction of trade is another attempt to maintain the function or further existence of a monument when the object has permanently lost its previous use. The Great Mill in Gdansk, built by the Teutonic Knights in approx. 1350, had worked continuously as a water mill until March of 1945. The Great Mill had historically been an object unprecedented in size and versatility of production. During World War II, the wooden structure of the roof and the seven-storey interior were completely destroyed, and damage to the western peak wall and mill wheels on both sides of the building was considerable. Only the sidewalls, the eastern gable and part of the west wall were preserved. After the damage of war in 1945, the building was rebuilt in 1962 as a single-space hall with a steel roof structure. Neither the multi-storey interior nor the mill wheels were recreated. From then until 1993, it was variously used as a place for art exhibitions, fairs, theatre performances, automated games, storage space and a temporary Pewex shop. All these functions were ad hoc functions aimed at maintaining the usefulness of the restored mill. In the early nineties of the twentieth century, as previous uses ceased to function and due to political and economic transformations, the city as owner announced the tender for a new user and new use. The concept for the creation of a shopping centre in the Great Mill won. It was a period of dynamic development in trade based on the principles of market economy.

There was an attempt to adopt modern trends of spatial and functional design that were being implemented in the world's commercial buildings. Modernization of the Great Mill in Gdansk was carried out in 1993-1994. It involved maintenance of the preserved historical tissues of the building, reconstruction of the mill wheels, and adjustment to the inside of the object based on requirements of modern trade, but also allowed for the maximum preservation and exhibition of historic value. In accordance with modern shopping mall design, a three-storey commercial complex with an open patio, panoramic lift and staircase prominently placed, was arranged inside the Great Mill. Technical rooms were placed on the fourth, unattractive trade floor. The new commercial facility, Trading House, was established with a favourable trade location in compliance with all the design principles of modern shopping malls. All the conditions were met for the proper functioning of trade on this property. The community recognized Trading House in the Great Mill as the best commercial space of the nineties established in Poland. However, the changing market situation as a result of dynamic, economic development led to the creation of new shopping centres managed by international networks. The ineffectual management of the Great Mill facility by Polish merchants further compounded the situation and resulted in the first symptoms of crisis. The phenomena of accelerating assortment rotation in individual stands and the resurfacing of selling space were adversely affecting the functional layout and spacious interior and destroying the preserved historic tissue of the building. Despite these changes, the number of empty retail outlets waiting for tenants increased. Initially, empty shops appeared on the top floor and later on the lower and ground floors. Gradual degradation of the functional and aesthetic interior and the depreciation of the restored monument followed. The walls and woodwork, which had not been maintained after reconstruction, needed refurbishment. In 2016, Trading House in the Great Mill ceased to function. The merchants returned the object to the city.

**Table 1.** Assessment of the accuracy of previous conclusions from 1992 – 2001 in light of the research continued in 2001-2016

Item 1	<b>Conclusions of the research in 1992-2001: Conditions Required to Ensure Profitability</b>	Market Hall	Main Railway Station	Great Mill
1a	The monument provides a good location and spatial conditions required for the development of trade	Yes - the tradition of commercial location and space	Yes - location No - interior space	Yes - location Yes - interior space
1b	Prestige of the planned trade corresponds to the rank of the monument	No	No	No
1c	Market research should be conducted prior to the commercial investment	Reliance on experience to date	No	No
1d	Sole management of the object	No	No	No
1e	Invariable organizational form of trade	Yes	No	No
1f	The monument receives constant and active conservator supervision	Yes	No	No
2	<b>Conclusions of the Research in 2001: Threats to the Monument</b>			
2a	Any form of adaptation will cause damage to the authentic tissue of the monument	Yes	Yes	Yes
2b	Dynamics of trade forces innovation	Yes	Yes	Yes
2c	The monument having existed with an original commercial function is also subject to trade innovation	Yes		
2d	Trading market realities force the conservator to compromise	Yes	Yes	Yes
2e	Modernization will not eliminate the need for cyclical adaptation - for adjustment to changing requirements of trade	Yes	Yes	Yes
2f	Restoration of the monument will only be to the extent required for the functioning of trade	No	Yes	Yes
2g	Safety of the monument depends on the conditions of trade	Yes	Yes	Yes
2h	The monument can be treated as a standard retail object without regard to its historical value	No	Yes	Yes
3	<b>Conclusions of the Research in 2016: Status of Trade in the Monument - Following the Adaptation for a New Use</b>	First signs of crisis appear relative to commercial function; the need to adjust trade assortment to fit the specific location of the Hall; the proposal of revaluation of food trade	Bankruptcy of the retail complex; the modernization of the interior of the reception room for passengers; demolition of the trade mezzanine; restoration of the historic interior	Bankruptcy of the shopping centre; proposal of the new use - the Amber Museum

Again, the issue of choosing a new user and a new use for the Great Mill arose. There is now a new concept to create the Amber Museum in the Great Mill. The project involves renovation; replacement of roofing, windows and doors; maintenance of external and internal walls; and the replacement of all media. It preserves the spatial distribution of the interior, the archaeological exhibition and the highest historical value inside of the east wall. Inside the created exhibition spaces there will be places for the educational and commercial associations of amber jewellers, and areas of research for the museum staff. The interior will be adapted to the specific display exhibits for amber.

## 6. Conclusion

The conclusions of the study regarding the relationship between the function of trade and monuments conducted in the years 1992 - 2001 have been divided into two groups in Table 1 below. Listed under Item 1, the first group identifies the conditions for the monument and commercial function that should be met to ensure the profitability of trading in a particular place. Listed as Item 2, the second group identifies threats to the monument due to the nature of the commercial function. Finally, Item 3 shows the results of research conducted in the period 2001- 2016. The results provide an evaluation of the validity of previous conclusions in the research that relate to the three types of relationship existing between the function of the trade and the monument itself.

Studies have shown that the optimum use of monuments may be achieved by introducing a function that creates culture. This is especially true in the case of museum function because it provides sufficiently high prestige, spatial stability, and it allows for the maximum preservation of authentic elements in the monument, as well as performance in the additional role it plays as museum object.

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