

## THE JOURNEYS OF THE KRZESZOWICE GLADIATOR. A CASE STUDY

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### Abstract

The article analyses the process of revitalising selected areas of the urban space in Krzeszowice. This project, undertaken by the town authorities, aims to change the existing order and create a new one, using carefully selected motifs from the town's past. This project leads to a conflict between the authorities and the local community, presenting mutually exclusive viewpoints. The opinion of the majority is not always taken into account. The whole process is accompanied by a reinterpretation of social memory. The present article is an attempt to show the connection between aspects of revitalisation and the issue of memory, with Krzeszowice as an example.

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Przedmiotem artykułu jest analiza procesu odnowy wybranych fragmentów przestrzeni miejskiej Krzeszowic. Przedsięwzięcie to, podjęte przez władze miasta, zmierza do zmiany dotychczasowego porządku i stworzenia nowego, wykorzystującego starannie wybrane elementy z przeszłości Krzeszowic, tworząc nową kompozycję, składającą się z wartości godnych zachowania i podkreślenia. Towarzyszą temu spory prezentujące wykluczające się sposoby myślenia władz oraz społeczności lokalnej. Przy czym nie zawsze uwzględniana jest opinia większości. Tym procesom towarzyszy reinterpretacja pamięci społecznej. Na przykładzie rewitalizacji przestrzeni miejskiej Krzeszowic ukazują zależności zachodzące między problematyką rewitalizacji a zagadnieniem pamięci.

**Key words:** Krzeszowice, local community, social memory, revitalization of urban space.

Pius Weloński sculpted the first model of his *Gladiator* in 1880 in Rome. He depicted a warrior entering the arena to fight, raising his arm to pay homage to Caesar. The symbolism of the scene is emphasised by the inscription engraved on the pedestal: “*Ave Caesar! Morituri te salutant!*” An issue of “*Tygodnik Ilustrowany*” (1882, pp. 130–131) published two years after the sculpture was completed contains a favourable assessment of the work: “after Matejko’s great triumphs [...] we do not recall any work of art as striking as the sculpture entitled ‘Gladiator’ made by a young Pole, Mr. Weloński, a student of the Petersburg Academy of Arts”. Weloński’s *Gladiator* is a wrestler fighting with a weighted net which could be used to entangle the opponent (1882, p. 131).

The net is thrown across his left shoulder; his weapons include a greave on the left leg, a belt around his waist, a short double-edged sword hanging by the belt, a trident and a helmet lying by his feet. The sculpture won Weloński recognition as an artist and still belongs to his greatest works.

The catalogue notes of the National Museum in Cracow describe Weloński's sculpture as a figure of a warrior with a raised arm. The attributes suggest that the *Gladiator* is a *retiarius* (net-man), who fought with a trident or a harpoon made of tuna bones, a dagger and a net he could throw around the opponent's head. (Budzałek 2010, p. 118). The work managed to quickly win the acclaim of art critics, who admired the ideal proportions and the skill with which the artist depicted the movement and the tightness of muscles.

The statue of the gladiator was made to adorn palace interiors. Its copies are displayed e.g. in the Gallery of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Polish Art in Sukiennice (a branch of the National Museum in Cracow), in the hall of the Warsaw Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts "Zachęta", as well as in the Ujazdowski park in Warsaw. It could also be found in the palace and garden complex in Krzeszowice, which used to belong to the Potocki family. Initially the sculpture was placed in the park by the orangery, and remained there until the 1990s, when it suddenly disappeared in unknown circumstances. Owing to a programme of urban space revitalisation implemented by the Commune Office in 2012, a bronze copy of the sculpture was commissioned and placed in a new location – at the town square in Krzeszowice.

The revitalisation of the city was planned and conducted as a part of the operational programme of 2007–2013, financed by the European Union. In the relevant documents the programme is described as „revitalisation of the Krzeszowice city centre aiming at restoring its function as a tourist and cultural centre and a spa”. This enterprise was counted among the top priorities of the commune (*gmina*). The revitalisation was planned to pertain to the town centre and the market square. The aim of the organisers was to: “release the city-making potential by reactivating the traditional functions of Krzeszowice”.<sup>1</sup> The programme emphasised the relation between the reinvigoration and enhancement of the decaying areas within the city and the chance for preventing the disintegration of the community, depopulation and loss of the feeling of identity.<sup>2</sup> One of the major objectives was to reinstate Krzeszowice as an important urban centre with a number of functions: a health-resort, a centre of commerce and services and a residential area. The enterprise was to take a number of years and encompass a large area. The local residents were encouraged to participate in the plan and debate on the related issues during consultative meetings that gave the opportunity to voice their

<sup>1</sup> See: *Program Rewitalizacji Obszarów Miejskich Krzeszowic*, Krzeszowice, July 2008, p. 15; unless specified otherwise, all the English translations of the Polish-language sources were made solely for the purpose of the present article [translator's note].

<sup>2</sup> *op. cit.* p. 16

opinion on the elements of the programme. The spatial constraints of the article make it impossible to delineate the project in its entirety and the results it had so far; I shall only focus on one aspect that provoked much discussion and aroused the emotions of the Krzeszowice community. It was related to the statue of the gladiator or, more precisely, the place where it should be located.

It should be noted that the document outlining the entire enterprise quoted above mentions the aim of “revitalising social and economic processes in the area where these processes have ceased to exist” (Kłoskowski 2004, p. 2). Revitalisation processes are currently taking place in many cities in Poland. There is a noticeable trend towards readapting urban spaces to their original functions and alluding to their historical character, which in many cases had all but disappeared. The implementation of such projects is facilitated by the possibility of acquiring the necessary funds from the budget of the European Union (Smolarkiewicz 2012, p. 69). Such enterprises are intended to improve the quality of life in the local community, to contribute to re-establishing social links or to rebuild them. (*ibidem*, p. 70). This process progresses in many small stages; it should involve members of various groups related to each given place – most importantly the local authorities, whose role is to coordinate the plan of action and to implement it; the plan executors and also the members of the community in question. This last group is the one with the most direct and closest connection to the area that is being changed – they are its inhabitants and everyday users. Thus, revitalisation promotes creating and maintaining the identity of the city on the basis of reference to a given space, evaluating it in a certain way characteristic for the community that inhabits it. This is a mutual relation, since the city – through its structure – locationally delineates the functions that the inhabitants may take advantage of, while the people create the mood and the symbolism of the place (Wallis 1977, p. 79). This agrees with the thesis that a real or imagined space<sup>3</sup> that has been appropriately formed and valued constitutes a key element in the process of everybody’s self-assessment. In this way people identify themselves with a given territory and with the group that recognises that territory as their own. In his article *W stronę permanentnej rewitalizacji* („Towards permanent revitalisation”), Krzysztof Kwiatkowski emphasises one feature of such actions he considers fundamental – namely the conformity and cohesion between the needs of the community and its territory or between its social and physical aspect (Kwiatkowski 2012, p. 59). Revitalisation means more than just interfering in urban space in order to improve its aesthetics. It is an action that refers to and touches on social memory and history.

The project outlined by the Community Office draws on the historical urban plans made for Krzeszowice, taking into account the city’s role as a health resort

<sup>3</sup> This term is applied in Benedict Anderson’s understanding. In his analyses, Anderson refers primarily to national communities (1997, pp. 19–21), yet this category may also be used with regard to imagined spaces, as realities functioning in the realm of imagination, referring to the subjective feelings that accompany the thoughts on these spaces (cf. Wolicka 1999, pp. 5–15).

which emerged in the 18th century.<sup>4</sup> Upon inheriting the Tęczyński estates, Izabela Czartoryska began to enlarge and develop the city. The inspiration for this project came from her numerous visits to European health resorts that served as models for the spa in Krzeszowice.<sup>5</sup>

Following the 18th-century trend for going to spa towns to “take the waters”, Czartoryska planned to popularise the local mineral spring. The first medical observation of the beneficial nature of the water was made by Jan Gotfryd Leonhardi. As a result, in 1778 the decision was made to enclose the springs of the sulphate water which used to flow freely. At the same time the construction of the baths was completed (Holewiński 1982, p. 138). The first visitors were registered most probably in 1779 – from then on Krzeszowice began to function as a health resort.

The development of the town as a spa resort involved introducing more and more facilities to the baths and enlarging the residential infrastructure for the patients. The resort is still operational. One of the buildings constructed at that early period was the Vauxhall spa house, which doubled as a place of entertainment for the visitors.<sup>6</sup> The duchess requested the building of promenades lined with trees. Drawing from her observations made in foreign resorts, Izabela Czartoryska transformed Krzeszowice into the first Polish health resort dedicated not only to therapy, but also to entertainment

<sup>4</sup> The settlement was first mentioned in a document dated to 1286. According to *Słownik Historyczno-geograficzny Ziemi Polskich w Średniowieczu*, it was the period when Paweł z Przemankowa, the Bishop of Cracow, granted Fryczek, the voyt of Bytom, the privilege of locating a village (*solectwo*) on the basis of Magdeburg Law in the already existing settlement named Cressouicy (Jurek 2010–2012, p. 224). Then in 1364 Piotr, the vice-curator of the cathedral church in Cracow, purchased 87 grzywna worth of land from the lords of Krzeszowice – Marcin and Jan. In the 15th century a part of Krzeszowice came to the hands of the Tęczyński family (Kurtyka 1997, pp. 429–430) or, to be more specific, was bought by Andrzej z Tęczyna. The area came with additional assets: “two *Lahms* (Polish: *tan*) of land, an inn and a mill” (Kurtyka 1999, p. 125). The new owner transformed the village into a *Vorwerk* (Polish: *folwark*). In 1555 the voivod of Cracow, Stanisław z Tęczyna, took over the entire settlement. In the 17th century, after the death of the last of the Tęczyńskis, the ownership of the *Vorwerk* – as dowry – was transferred to the Opaliński family (Skalny 2004, p. 13). The land taken over by the descendants of this line came to the ownership of Elżbieta Lubomirska and was later inherited by Zofia Czartoryska (Kurtyka 1999, p. 159).

<sup>5</sup> The town of Krzeszowice is located at the point where the Dulowa Syncline narrows and becomes a depressed block of land known as the Krzeszowice Graben (Urbańczyk 1969, p. 11), which makes it very attractive in terms of landscape. The town lies in a valley surrounded by the hills of Miękińska Góra and Bartłowa Góra, and the massif of Marmurowe Wzgórze. To the south the Tenczyn Horst can be seen (Zinkow 1988, p. 10). Four rivers converge in this region: Dulówka, Filipówka, Krzeszówka and the Tęczyński brook. Apart from groundwater, the region has mineral springs with sulfur and calcium compounds (Dynowski 1969, p. 33).

<sup>6</sup> The Vauxhall Palace, also known as ‘Foxal’ or ‘Salon’, was built in 1783–1786 following the design of the court architect, Szczepan Humbert. It was commissioned by the mistress of all the Lubomirski estates. The classicist building played the role of a resort house, containing e.g. casinos and playrooms for the patients of the newly established spa resort. After the end of the war the building was given to the Agriculture Academy; since the end of the 1960s it housed the local Primary School no. 1.

(Baraniewski 1981, p. 25; Zinkow 1988, p. 13). Descriptions of the place are included in *Opisanie skutków i używania ciepłych siarczanych i zimnych żelaznych kąpiel w Krzeszowicach*, the work of a local doctor, Leopold de Lafontaine. The author delineated the plan of the resort, which at that point comprised five hydrotherapy houses, two baths, a hospital and residential flats. According to Lafontaine, the patients' favourite part of the resort was the spa park with a gazebo, located to the south of the town (Lafontaine 1789, p. 18).

The connection between Krzeszowice and the families of Tęczyńscy, Lubomirscy, Czartoryscy and Potoccy had a profound influence on the character of the town. The creation of a health resort shaped Krzeszowice's urban plan, traces of which remain to this day. Apart from the mentioned Vauxhall palace and resort houses, Krzeszowice also boast a palace complex, consisting of two buildings surrounded by a park. The so-called 'Old Palace' was built in 1820–1822 and is a classicist edifice (Baraniewski 1981, p. 37).

The second palace, built in 1850–1857 (Zinkow 1988, p. 25), stands on a hilltop, the tallest vantage point in the area. The projects were commissioned by Izabela Lubomirska when the town was being converted to a health resort. Unfortunately, the implementation of these plans exceeded the financial means of the Potocki family at the time. Ultimately, the concept presented by Franciszek Maria Lanci was chosen (Zinkow 1988, p. 25). Lanci drew from the previous, rejected designs – especially the one by the Prussian architect Karl Schinckel – to create a residence in the style of Italian Renaissance (Zinkow 1988, p. 25; Baraniewski 1981, p. 31). The Potocki family moved to the new mansion in 1862. Artur Potocki adapted it to be his main abode. He resided there every time he visited Krzeszowice.

Their primary city palace was located in Cracow, yet the family was always known as the Potoccy from Krzeszowice (Baraniewski 1981, p. 110).<sup>7</sup> The presence of the palace buildings and their surroundings add to the resort-like character of the town and grant a certain tone to the planning and architectural style of the town.

Krzeszowice's past is frequently mentioned both by the authorities and the members of the local community. It is used to create a sense of identity, both with regard to urban space and to the immaterial legacy, as evidenced by the subjects regularly discussed in the local press. Such publications started to appear in 1992.<sup>8</sup> The first articles pertained to the history of the town; they originated from a cycle entitled *Zabytki Krzeszowic* (the historical relics of Krzeszowice). Another important phenomenon is the local community's deep involvement in the annual celebration that for five years has been a permanent feature in the town's social calendar, replacing the feast entitled

<sup>7</sup> During the German occupation the building became the residence of the governor general Hans Frank, who had it rebuilt.

<sup>8</sup> The first issue of "Dwutygodnik Gminny" was published on 29<sup>th</sup> June 1991. In the following issue the name of periodical was changed to "Dwutygodnik Rady Miejskiej w Krzeszowicach". It is currently issued under the title "Magazyn Krzeszowicki".

*Dni Krzeszowic* (Krzeszowice Days). The new celebration, the so-called *Majówka u Hrabiny* (The May Day at the Countess') is organised by the Commune Office in association with the local Centre for Culture and Sports. This is an event that ought to be regarded as a performance. According to Ewa Domańska, this phenomenon is a central aspect and a constitutive element of the community building processes; the *locum* of the social transgression (Domańska 2007, p. 50).

The 'May Day' is a reference to the nameday of Zofia Potocka, which used to be celebrated every May with great pomp. Each year a party was thrown for the members of the household, the local gentry, the patients at the spa resort, servants and all employees working in the Potocki estates. The aim of *Majówka u Hrabiny* is to recreate this nameday celebration. The local inhabitants dressed in period clothing stroll around in the Adam Bogacki Park, turning the clock back on the ambiance of the place. The entire performance is a voluntary initiative of the locals, whose presence has two aspects to it. They become spectators, the audience that may join in the activities, or active participators, the actors of the show. It may be argued that this is a performative form of memory, materialising chosen elements of the past. Re-enacting tradition through performances organised by the members of a given group constitutes a part of social experience. Such a situation introduces and emphasises historical points of reference which are not present in the current discourse, but influence the shape of the local community identity. The inhabitants of Krzeszowice are willing participants of this celebration commemorating people who used to have a deep connection to the town.

Memory and identity are closely related categories. Identity, memory, territorialism and the perception of space as the surviving part of the past become the motivational basis for various forms of revitalisation (Luczys 2012, p. 96).

In his essay on identity and space, Aleksander Posern-Zieliński (Posern-Zieliński 2005) emphasises that group identification is a very complex category and appears in social life only as a multi-aspect phenomenon. For an individual, identification is based on the feeling of belonging to a given social group or the area, phenomenon or text of culture that this group cherishes. A social group identifies with a given area due to subjective factors, such as elements of heritage, cultural or historical values. This thesis is in accord with Antonina Kłoskowska's conclusion regarding national identity. She assumes that "the notion of both collective and individual identity is built on the premise of the subject's continuous existence. In contrast to the individual perception, this collective feeling of continuity does not have to be inherent to all the members of a national community. It must refer to some historical knowledge [...]" (1992, p. 136). The memory and culture that may be referred to in the process of identification with urban space is rarely universal in character and may not be the same for all members of the community (Smolarkiewicz 2012, p. 72). The places may function as common, but may also include specific objects and play the role of private, personal space. They are a network of spots, each with their own symbols, meanings and stories that may

only be interpreted by a given group of people. Such associations stem from both individual and collective experience. This conclusion is in accord with Pierre Nora's thesis stating that memory in its nature is created by the collective body, but it is at the same time individualised. It is rooted in space, in products of the mind, in gestures and objects (Nora 1989, pp. 8–9).

Pierre Nora coined the term 'realm of memory', defining it as a remnant, the embodiment of the monuments of the past awareness that exist in time and are invoked by us from within our memory. They are created when making spontaneous memories is impossible, yet there is need to commemorate. Such items, points made of memories, resemble moments torn out of the flow of time. This category functions as a symbol in reconstructing the past. It is close to the notion of symbolic memory in E. Cassirer's understanding of the term. He states that recollecting involves more than simply repeating past events, but their rebirth, and, as such, is a creative and constructive process. "Symbolic memory is the process by which man not only repeats his past experience, but also reconstructs this experience" (Cassirer 1971, p. 51).

Within this framework, the sculpture by Pius Weloński was to play the role of an object that refers to historical events, connecting the town with the palace of the Potocki family. It was supposed to be a 'quotation', made to reconstruct the past. Was it a good choice? Does the council members' vision of how a given space should look like and what elements of the past it should evoke threaten the creative process, deforming known meanings and stripping the place of the significance the local community wished for it to have? Using random associations, referring to those parts of Krzeszowice's heritage that emphasise its status as a private city of the Potocki family and introducing related historical objects into current urban space did not meet with the local community's ready acceptance.

Discrepancies in referring to certain values result from "different dimensions of identity, the continuity of which guarantees the possibility to allude to the past to both the community and the authorities" (Smolarkiewicz 2012, p. 73). The project of revitalisation proposed by the Community Council in Krzeszowice, especially the plans for reintroducing the statue of the gladiator to the town, aroused controversy, a wave of opposition and much discussion. The lack of social acceptance for this idea may also be due to the maladroit attempt at social dialogue made by the authorities. Initially the local community members were invited to discuss matters related to the project, yet when the majority proved to be strongly against the enterprise, their opinion was disregarded. Or perhaps the process of creating social memory did not fulfil the expectations, did not agree with the image of the space where the alien element in space – the element that might be described as an 'implant' – was supposed to appear.

Another thing that needs to be taken into account in any analysis of the *Gladiator's* journey from the palace surroundings to urban space is the fact that the object in question is a work of art. Items of everyday use are transmitters conveying a very

specific message (Dant 1999, p. 166). J. Barański states that objects may sometimes have a surprisingly deep meaning – “a seemingly ordinary stone may be the embodiment of magical powers, a container holding arousing memories (by contagious magic) or a desirable possession” (2007, p. 22). “By dealing with objects, we give them meaning. This ‘sense-giving’ role of objects is as important as social relations, values, norms or tradition” (Barański 2007, p. 24). However, the true difference between ordinary objects and a work of art lies in its context. A work of art is “exhibited, displayed, framed, protected, catalogued, titled and signed that it becomes a singular object that mediates a certain type of message in the visual channel” (Dant 1999, p. 156). The sculpture under consideration indubitably is a work of art, one that won international acclaim and carries strong associations. Despite its aesthetic value, it was not welcomed warmly in Krzeszowice. The lack of acceptance for its artistic message was voiced both during the relevant debates and in local press: “many locals find it hard to imagine that in the centre of the Krzeszowice market square they would have a pompous statue associated with an obscure episode from the history of the Potocki residence and with antiquity, an epoch that has hardly anything to do with Krzeszowice!” The city revitalisation programme from 2008 contains the following passage: “the market square is the symbol defining the identity of the place”. Does the market square, by the sheer fact of belonging to public space, truly determine the identity of a given place; the *genius loci*? The opponents of placing the sculpture in the square discussed its aesthetics, emphasised the lack of authenticity (the *Gladiator* is just a copy) and the fact that this work of art has no symbolic connection to the history of the city. By voicing such opinions, local inhabitants revised collective memory, which in this respect seems to have served the needs of the authorities, but not of the community.

The abovementioned situation is an example of space-related actions connected to nurturing collective memory. Andrzej Szpociński refers to such actions as “historicising space” (2008, p. 17). The process of constructing social memory<sup>9</sup> (with architecture – or, in this case – sculpture as one of the media) makes it possible for the work to lose its intrinsic artistic value. In case of the *Gladiator* from Krzeszowice, this danger is very real. On the other hand, depriving members of the local community of any real chance to make decisions about their space and to symbolically govern it hinders the process of accepting a place as their own, preventing people from identifying with a given space (Smolarkiewicz 2012, p. 76). The mentioned aspect of the process of revitalisation of Krzeszowice urban space, the conflict between the inhabitants and the local authorities, as well as random jugglery with meaning (cf. Kubera 2012, p. 195), raise questions as to the significance will the given space acquire after the

<sup>9</sup> source: [www.krzeszowicki.glos24.pl](http://www.krzeszowicki.glos24.pl); no. 2., February 2012, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> In Maurice Halbwachs’ understanding of the term, later employed by Pierre Nora and Paul Ricoeur, already cited in the present article.



completion of the project. It is also uncertain whether a revitalisation programme conducted in such a way will in fact serve its purpose and strengthen the local community's feeling of identity with their town.

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