

The role of hotel architecture in shaping the city's image

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Abstract

The elements of the environment are characterized by variability. The structure of the city is also a subject to constant structural, social and material transformations.

Objects in the city can play significant role for urban landscape. In recent years, it can be observed that the architecture of hotels in cities is becoming more and more unique. After years of building similar hotel facilities, architects began to create more and more original forms that attract the attention of passers-by and are remembered. The importance of individual places in the hierarchy of these space is also changing. Hotels are elements that build the image of cities, often becoming their visual dominant. This applies to creating a sculpture in a space that catch attention with its form and play of colors.

The aim of the article is to show, on the example of selected projects, how hotel buildings can shape urban images. The research method is based on the analysis of selected objects and showing their role in shaping the image of the city. The concept of the hotel influences the building of identity. The form of the hotel, the functionality, the materials, and their combination, create the semantic experience for observer. The hotel becomes a 'story' narrative that gives visitors or pedestrians a personal feeling of reading architecture.

According to Kevin Lynch (1960:8), the external image we perceive can be analyzed

by combining three factors: identity, structure and meaning. Identity is identifying an object, distinguishing it from others, making it exclusive. Thus, fragments of space of greater importance are created in the city, which are shaped in terms of public utility. These areas, having greater value, are also of greater prestige for the city. They add as well the aesthetic energy to the city.

Key words: hotel architecture, image of the city, aesthetic value

Resumen

El papel de la arquitectura hotelera en la configuración de la imagen de la ciudad

Los elementos del medio ambiente se caracterizan por la variabilidad. La estructura de la ciudad también está sujeta a constantes transformaciones estructurales, sociales y materiales.

Los objetos de la ciudad pueden desempeñar un papel importante en el paisaje urbano. En los últimos años se puede observar que la arquitectura de los hoteles en las ciudades es cada vez más singular. Después de años de construir instalaciones hoteleras similares, los arquitectos comenzaron a crear formas cada vez más originales que atraen la atención de los transeúntes y son recordados. La importancia de los lugares individuales en la jerarquía de estos espacios también está cambiando. Los hoteles son elementos que construyen la imagen de las ciudades, convirtiéndose a menudo en su dominante visual. Esto se aplica a la creación de una escultura en un espacio que llama la atención por su forma y juego de colores.

El objetivo del artículo es mostrar, en el ejemplo de proyectos seleccionados, cómo los edificios hoteleros pueden dar forma a imágenes urbanas. El método de investigación se basa en el análisis de objetos seleccionados y muestra su papel en la configuración de la imagen de la ciudad. El concepto de hotel influye en la construcción de identidad. La forma del hotel, la funcionalidad, los materiales y su combinación crean la experiencia semántica para el observador. El hotel se convierte en una "historia" narrativa que brinda a los visitantes o peatones una sensación personal de lectura de la arquitectura.

Según Kevin Lynch (1960: 8), la imagen externa que percibimos se puede analizar combinando tres factores: identidad, estructura y significado. La identidad es identificar un objeto, distinguirlo de otros, hacerlo exclusivo. Así, se crean fragmentos de espacio de mayor importancia en la ciudad, que se configuran en términos de utilidad pública. Estas zonas, de mayor valor, son también de mayor prestigio para la ciudad. Añaden también la energía estética a la ciudad.

Palabras clave: arquitectura hotelera, imagen de la ciudad, valor estético.

Resum

El paper de l'arquitectura hotelera en la configuració de la imatge de la ciutat

Els elements de l'entorn es caracteritzen per la variabilitat. L'estructura de la ciutat també està sotmesa a constants transformacions estructurals, socials i materials.

Els objectes de la ciutat poden jugar un paper important per al paisatge urbà. En els darrers anys, es pot observar que l'arquitectura dels hotels de les ciutats és cada vegada més singular. Després d'anys construint instal·lacions hoteleres similars, els arquitectes van començar a crear formes cada vegada més originals que atrauen l'atenció dels transeünts i es recorden. La importància dels llocs individuals en la jerarquia d'aquest espai també està canviant. Els

hotels són elements que construeixen la imatge de les ciutats, convertint-se sovint en el seu dominant visual. Això s'aplica a la creació d'una escultura en un espai que cridi l'atenció amb la seva forma i joc de colors.

L'objectiu de l'article és mostrar, en l'exemple de projectes seleccionats, com els edificis d'hotels poden donar forma a les imatges urbanes. El mètode d'investigació es basa en l'anàlisi d'objectes seleccionats i mostra el seu paper en la configuració de la imatge de la ciutat. El concepte d'hotel influeix en la construcció de la identitat. La forma de l'hotel, la funcionalitat, els materials i la seva combinació, creen l'experiència semàntica per a l'observador. L'hotel es converteix en una narració de 'història' que dona als visitants o als vianants una sensació personal de lectura de l'arquitectura.

Segons Kevin Lynch (1960: 8), la imatge externa que percebem es pot analitzar combinant tres factors: identitat, estructura i significat. La identitat és identificar un objecte, distingir-lo dels altres, fer-lo exclusiu. Així, es creen fragments d'espai de major importància a la ciutat, que es configuren en termes d'utilitat pública. Aquestes zones, amb més valor, són també de major prestigi per a la ciutat. A més, aporten energia estètica a la ciutat.

Paraules clau: arquitectura hotelera, imatge de la ciutat, valor estètic

Resumo

O papel da arquitetura dos hotéis na formação da imagem da cidade

Os elementos do ambiente são caracterizados pela variabilidade. A estrutura da cidade também está sujeita a constantes transformações estruturais, sociais e materiais.

Os objetos na cidade podem desempenhar um papel significativo para a paisagem urbana. Nos últimos anos, pode-se observar que a arquitetura dos hotéis nas cidades está se tornando cada vez mais exclusiva. Depois de anos construindo instalações hoteleiras semelhantes, os arquitetos começaram a criar cada vez mais formas originais que atraem a atenção dos transeuntes e são lembradas. A importância de lugares individuais na hierarquia desses espaços também está mudando. Os hotéis são elementos que constroem a imagem das cidades, tornando-se muitas vezes o seu domínio visual. É o caso de criar uma escultura em um espaço que chama a atenção pela sua forma e jogo de cores.

O objetivo do artigo é mostrar, a partir do exemplo de projetos selecionados, como os edifícios de hotéis podem moldar imagens urbanas. O método de pesquisa baseia-se na análise de objetos selecionados e na demonstração de seu papel na formação da imagem da cidade. O conceito de hotel influencia a construção da identidade. A forma do hotel, a funcionalidade, os materiais e sua combinação criam a experiência semântica para o observador. O hotel torna-se uma narrativa de 'história' que dá aos visitantes ou pedestres uma sensação pessoal de leitura da arquitetura.

De acordo com Kevin Lynch (1960: 8), a imagem externa que percebemos pode ser analisada combinando três fatores: identidade, estrutura e significado. Identidade é identificar um objeto, distinguindo-o dos demais, tornando-o exclusivo. Assim, criam-se na cidade fragmentos de espaço de maior importância, que se configuram em termos de utilidade pública. Estas áreas, tendo maior valor, são também de maior prestígio para a cidade. Eles também adicionam energia estética à cidade.

Palavras-chave: arquitetura hoteleira, imagem da cidade, valor estético

Résumé

Le rôle de l'architecture hôtelière dans le façonnage de l'image de la ville

Les éléments de l'environnement sont caractérisés par la variabilité. La structure de la ville est également sujette à de constantes transformations structurelles, sociales et matérielles.

Les objets dans la ville peuvent jouer un rôle important pour le paysage urbain. Ces dernières années, on peut observer que l'architecture des hôtels dans les villes devient de plus en plus unique. Après des années à construire des installations hôtelières similaires, les architectes ont commencé à créer des formes de plus en plus originales qui attirent l'attention des passants et restent dans les mémoires. L'importance des places individuelles dans la hiérarchie de ces espaces est également en train de changer. Les hôtels sont des éléments qui construisent l'image des villes, devenant souvent leur dominante visuelle. Cela s'applique à la création d'une sculpture dans un espace qui attire l'attention par sa forme et son jeu de couleurs.

L'objectif de l'article est de montrer, sur l'exemple de projets sélectionnés, comment les bâtiments hôteliers peuvent façonner des images urbaines. La méthode de recherche est basée sur l'analyse d'objets sélectionnés et montrant leur rôle dans la formation de l'image de la ville. Le concept de l'hôtel influence la construction de l'identité. La forme de l'hôtel, la fonctionnalité, les matériaux et leur combinaison créent l'expérience sémantique pour l'observateur. L'hôtel devient un récit « d'histoire » qui donne aux visiteurs ou aux piétons un sentiment personnel de lecture de l'architecture.

Selon Kevin Lynch (1960 :8), l'image extérieure que nous percevons peut être analysée en combinant trois facteurs : l'identité, la structure et le sens. L'identité, c'est identifier un objet, le distinguer des autres, le rendre exclusif. Ainsi, des fragments d'espace de plus grande importance sont créés dans la ville, qui sont façonnés en termes d'utilité publique. Ces zones, de plus grande valeur, sont aussi d'un plus grand prestige pour la ville. Ils ajoutent également de l'énergie esthétique à la ville.

Mots clés : architecture hôtelière, image de la ville, valeur esthétique

Riassunto

Il ruolo dell'architettura alberghiera nel plasmare l'immagine della città

Gli elementi dell'ambiente sono caratterizzati dalla variabilità. Anche la struttura della città è soggetta a continue trasformazioni strutturali, sociali e materiali.

Gli oggetti in città possono svolgere un ruolo importante per il paesaggio urbano. Negli ultimi anni, si può osservare che l'architettura degli hotel nelle città sta diventando sempre più unica. Dopo anni di costruzione di strutture alberghiere simili, gli architetti hanno iniziato a creare forme sempre più originali che catturano l'attenzione dei passanti e vengono ricordate. Anche l'importanza dei singoli luoghi nella gerarchia di questi spazi sta cambiando. Gli hotel sono elementi che costruiscono l'immagine delle città, diventando spesso la loro dominante visiva. Questo vale per creare una scultura in uno spazio che attiri l'attenzione con la sua forma e il gioco di colori.

L'obiettivo dell'articolo è mostrare, sull'esempio di progetti selezionati, come gli edifici alberghieri possono plasmare le immagini urbane. Il metodo di ricerca si basa sull'analisi di oggetti selezionati e mostra il loro ruolo nel plasmare l'immagine della città. Il concetto di hotel influenza la costruzione dell'identità. La forma dell'hotel, la funzionalità, i materiali e la loro combinazione creano l'esperienza semantica per l'osservatore. L'hotel diventa un racconto «storico» che offre ai visitatori o ai pedoni un personale senso di lettura dell'architettura.

Secondo Kevin Lynch (1960: 8), l'immagine esterna che percepiamo può essere analizzata combinando tre fattori: identità, struttura e significato. Identità è identificare un oggetto, distinguerlo dagli altri, renderlo esclusivo. Si creano così nella città frammenti di spazio di maggiore importanza, che si plasmano in termini di pubblica utilità. Queste aree di maggior pregio sono anche di maggior prestigio per la città. Inoltre aggiungono energia estetica alla città.

Parole chiave: architettura alberghiera, immagine della città, valore estetico

Introduction

Contemporary architecture is a collection of various forms in public space. Moving around the city, we participate in space, we examine and observe it. When designing public spaces, architects become the creators of images. Each image has its own reception space, which is related to the individuality of perception. Therefore, the interpretations of the space modeled by architecture may be different (Strumillo 2008). In addition, the existing rules change, or new ones appear over time. Modern building strategies are based on technological advances. Contemporary designers compete in creating more and more sophisticated and individualized forms, which can also be seen in how hotels are designed.

Designing architecture is not only about creating new constructions with specific functions. It is also about taking care to respect the context of the place and to fit the new object into the existing surroundings, landscape – both natural and built.

According to French architect Jean Nouvel, winner of the 2008 Pritzker Prize, context does not mean copying existing assumptions or designing identical buildings. “When I say context, people think you want to copy buildings around, but often the context is contrast, and the surroundings should have the advantage, it is dialogue” (Nouvel s/f). For Nouvel, there is no a priori style in architecture. Rather, there is context that is interpreted in the broadest sense, including culture, place, program, client, that provokes the architect to develop completely new strategies for future projects. Context allows to introduce order even among seemingly disordered structures. On the other hand, the aesthetic impressions of a given work of art or, more generally speaking, cities depend on the feelings of individual observers. Immanuel Kant (1790) believes that only human feelings and their aesthetic sensitivity can perceive beauty, and he sees the phenomenon of beauty as a representation of the concept of freedom. Beauty delights, and originality delights and amazes, so people cannot stay indifferent to these aspects. Maria Gołaszewska (1997:226) believes that aesthetic values are the model for values in general. Their bipolarity, i.e., positivity and negativity, is evident in how works of art are perceived.

What can distinguish hotel architecture – examples of good practices

For many years, the same hotel chains had a similar style. In recent years, it can be observed that the architecture of hotels in cities is becoming more and more unique. After years of building similar hotel facilities, architects began to create more and more original forms that attract the attention of passers-by and are remembered.

Hotels can be the characteristic buildings of the city. Leon Kier (2009:161) emphasizes that public buildings must occupy the best locations in cities and landscapes, the main frontage of city squares, become the dominants of perspectives and panoramas, in other words – take all the most exposed locations. These aspects play an important role in conveying the content and have a significant impact on the reception of these works, building the atmosphere and image of a given place. This can be seen based on a few selected examples.

The Inntel Hotel in Zaandam, nearby Amsterdam (figures 1, 2, 3) has an interesting formal solution. Without a doubt, this already is the main eye-stopper in the revamped Amsterdam city center. The city center and station area of Zaandam, hub of the Zaanstad municipality in the province of North Holland, was being radically restructured. The plan reinstates the historical street layout, reopens a canal, and restores an atmosphere of congeniality to the Zaandam's heart. The new hotel is an important building block in the city, the first structure to be completed within the Inverdan plan. Modern-day Zaandam blends the old with the new and finds innovative ways to showcase its character. The Inntel Hotel Zaandam is a stack of almost 70 individual Zaan houses.

Wilfried van Winden (WAM Architecten, Delft), based the design of this hotel on the green wooden houses characteristic to the Zaan region. As a result, an 11-story construction consisting of many examples of these traditional houses in four shades of green, stacked on each other, was built. The Blue House, on the other hand, was inspired by one of Claude Monet's works painted during his stay in Zaandam in 1871. The architecture of this hotel offers the possibility of new expression. The hotel opened in 2010 and has become the new landmark of Zaanstad. The form of the hotel, the functionality, the materials, and their combination, all create a semantic experience for the observers.



Fig 1.- Location of the Intel Hotel in Zaandam, Neetherlands. Source: Google Earth



Fig 2.- 3D view of the Intel Hotel among surrounding buildings Source: Google Earth



Figure 3. Original facades of the Intel Hotel in Zaandam Source: Author's archive

Another interesting example is the Cube Houses Hostel (figures 4, 5) in Rotterdam, Netherlands. It is worth mentioning that Rotterdam is a city that is a mixture of old and modern architecture. The Cube Houses, which have become a well-known element of the city's landscape, were built in 1984 according to the design of architect Piet Blom, and based on the concept of "living as an urban roof", i.e., high density housing with sufficient space on the ground level. The idea for each building was to represent a tree, and for all the buildings together, to represent a forest. The complex of cubic houses is part of a larger residential and service complex around Oude Haven – the oldest part of the Rotterdam port. The houses are located on the Overblaak Street, right above the Blaak metro station (figure 6).



Figure 4. Location of the Cube Houses in Rotterdam Source: Google Earth



Figure 5. 3D view of the Cube Houses Hostel among surrounding buildings Source: Google Earth



Figure 6-7. Cube Houses above the existing passage. Cubic forms on top of the Cube Houses. Source : POLIS Research Centre

Part of the Cube Houses complex in 2009 has been converted into a hostel designed by Personal Architecture and SEVV / Edward van Villet. The building is distinguished by original architecture both inside and outside. The form of the object is topped with cubes tilted by 45 degrees (figure 7). The hostel offers 49 rooms, a restaurant, and a conference room for 250 people.



Figure 9. View of the Nhow Hotel in Rotterdam Source: Google Earth; and panorama of Rotterdam with its towering landmarks. Source: Bic (Wikimedia Commons)

Yet another remarkable example of modern hotel architecture in Rotterdam is the Nhow Hotel that opened in 2013. This hotel is one of the largest buildings in the Netherlands, as well as the 4th tallest (151 m high) in Rotterdam. The hotel has an unbeatable location at the Wilhelmina Pier waterfront and is one of the skyscrapers created as part of the wider development plan of the Meuse river banks (figure 8). Designed by the renowned architect Rem Koolhaas (OMA), Nhow Rotterdam has become one of the city's iconic skyscrapers and an undisputable urban cultural hub. It offers 278 rooms with breathtaking views of the river and the city. Nhow Hotel is one of the towering landmarks of Rotterdam, determining the city's panorama (figure 9).

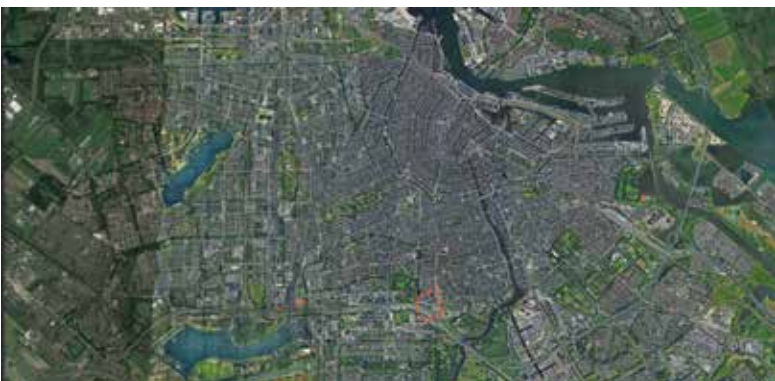


Figure 10. Location of Nhow Hotel in Amsterdam. Source: Google Earth



Figure 11. Nhow Hotel in Amsterdam. Source: Nhow Hotels



Figure 12. Location of Nhow Hotel in Berlin. Source: Google Earth

Cities seek fame through interesting projects, especially public buildings. Nhow Hotel (2020) in Amsterdam, designed by OMA / Reinier de Graaf, is made up of three overlapping triangular forms pointing in different directions, symbolizing the multicultural backdrop that characterizes the past, present and future of the city of Amsterdam (figure 11). The hotel is far away from the city center but is well connected with it (figure 10).

Another property from the Nhow Hotels chain in Berlin (figure 12) is another instance of a hotel facility that has become the city's landmark. The Nhow Hotel Berlin, designed by architect Sergei Tchoban, is located right on the banks of the river Spree, on the border of the districts Friedrichshain and Kreuzberg (figure 13), a few minutes' walk from the center of Berlin. The building is a combination of the industrial style of local architecture with the contemporary nature of unconventional architectural solutions. As soon as it opened, it became the symbol of Osthafen (a former industrial era). The most characteristic element of the building is a cuboid



Figure 13. The Nhow Hotel in Berlin. Source: POLIS research centre

protruding beyond the outline of the building, resembling a port crane. Thanks to this, guests can feel there as if they were standing on a 21-meter-high platform above the Spree river. As a contrast to the cubic shape, the interiors are dominated by spherical contours, bright colors and pop elements.

It should be emphasized that water plays an important role in city landscapes. It attracts residents and tourists. When located by the water, important building become interesting places, eagerly visited by people.



Figure 14. Location of the Shard Hotel in London Source: Google Earth



Figure 15. The Shard Hotel in London and the surrounding architecture. Source: Google Earth

London boasts many hotels, but the Shangri-La Hotel (figure 14), also known as the Shard in London, designed by Renzo Piano in 2012, deserves special attention. The Shard is the tallest building in the United Kingdom. Hotel occupies the 34th to 52nd floors of a glass-clad pyramidal tower that comprises 72 habitable floors in total (the construction is 309.6 meters high). Renzo Piano designed the Shard as a spire-like sculpture emerging from the River Thames. The hotel's floor-to-ceiling glass rooms provide excellent private vantage points over London's bustling city center. The building is located close to the city center at St. Thomas Street, in Southwark, on the south bank of the River Thames, near the London Bridge Station (figure 15). The building is visible from a long distance and serves as a landmark for passers-by.



The Shard Hotel in London © Marc Cluet

High buildings often become city landmarks and architectural dominants, which proves the value and impact of new socio-economic trends and available technologies. Many of today's buildings are the result of marketing factors. Such buildings can form the basis of the visual code identifying the city on a multi-spatial scale (Cichy-Pazder 1998). The architectural dominants accentuate and crystallize the space of the city structure, generating the directions of compositional axes. Height dominants and formal dominants significantly affect the quality of urban space, shaping the appropriate conditions for humans to read them and undergo their emotional and aesthetic impact.

The dominant feature can also be the identifier of changes and city development. It can play a spatial role as an element of readability – activation and accentuation of urban and social space – as a distinctive element of social activity and communication. It is worth emphasizing the role of the dominant as a special sign – a sign of cultural and spatial orientation. Visual dominants can be built (by shape, height, colors) as they are located mostly in the important places of the city and often feature great views from the rooms.





Figure 17.- The Seeko'o Hotel and the surrounding architecture of Bordeaux, France. Source: Google Earth



The Seeko'o Hotel © Ardfern creative commons

In turn, a completely different form of an object located near the water but away from the very center of the city is the Seeko'o Hotel in the former, totally renovated maritime district of Bordeaux, France (figures 16, 17). The hotel is one of the key constructions in the entire city. The facility was erected in a compact residential and service complex, complementing the frontage buildings. It occupies a pivotal place on the corner plot. The building of Hotel Seeko'o Bordeaux stands out but is recognized as an integral part of the Bordeaux architecture. This way, it has become the evidence of the city's opening towards the modern. Jane Jacobs, an American publicist and urban activist, writes that the relationship between density and diversity (of services) is rarely considered when it comes to residential neighborhoods (Jacobs 1961:169). It must be admitted that European cities offer more diversified functions of such districts.



Figure 18. Location of Hotel Puerta America in Madrid. Source: Google Earth



Figure 19. Hotel Puerta America in Madrid and the surrounding architecture. Source: Google Earth

Another significant object in the typology of hotel architecture is the Hotel Puerta America (2003-2005, designed by Grupo Urvasco) in Madrid, Spain (figure 18). This is a luxury hotel located close to the Madrid city center, in the Prosperidad district, by the expressway (figure 19).

It is an interesting place that can take people to the dream zone, which is especially true for the building interiors. This architectural project brought together nineteen of the best architect and designer studios in the world and boasts the work of four Pritzker Prize holders: Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid, Arata Isozaki, and Jean Nouvel. Each of its



Hotel Puerta América (Madrid) © Luis Garcia creative commons

12 floors plays with different materials, colors, and shapes to create astonishing spaces for the senses, guaranteeing an unparalleled sensory experience. In essence, this is a museum built to enjoy and bring rest. This makes Hotel Puerta America one of the most ambitious design hotels in the world, where freedom is the ethos, as it is estimated that it took approximately 75 million Euro to finance this project. Each architect was given a free rein over one floor or feature of the hotel. As a result, each of the 12 floors is magnificently different.

Zaha Hadid, the first woman to win the Pritzker Prize, has designed the first floor full of sinuous lines and flowing spaces. Another Pritzker Prize winner, Oscar Niemeyer has created a sculpture for the car park. It is worth mentioning that Donald McNeill note that many early modern hotels were famed for their striking exterior architecture, it could be argued that the focusing of aesthetic detail on the interior rather than the exterior of buildings is part of a universal retraction from the nature of hotels as civic landmarks (McNeil 2008:383-398) but in this case as landmark.

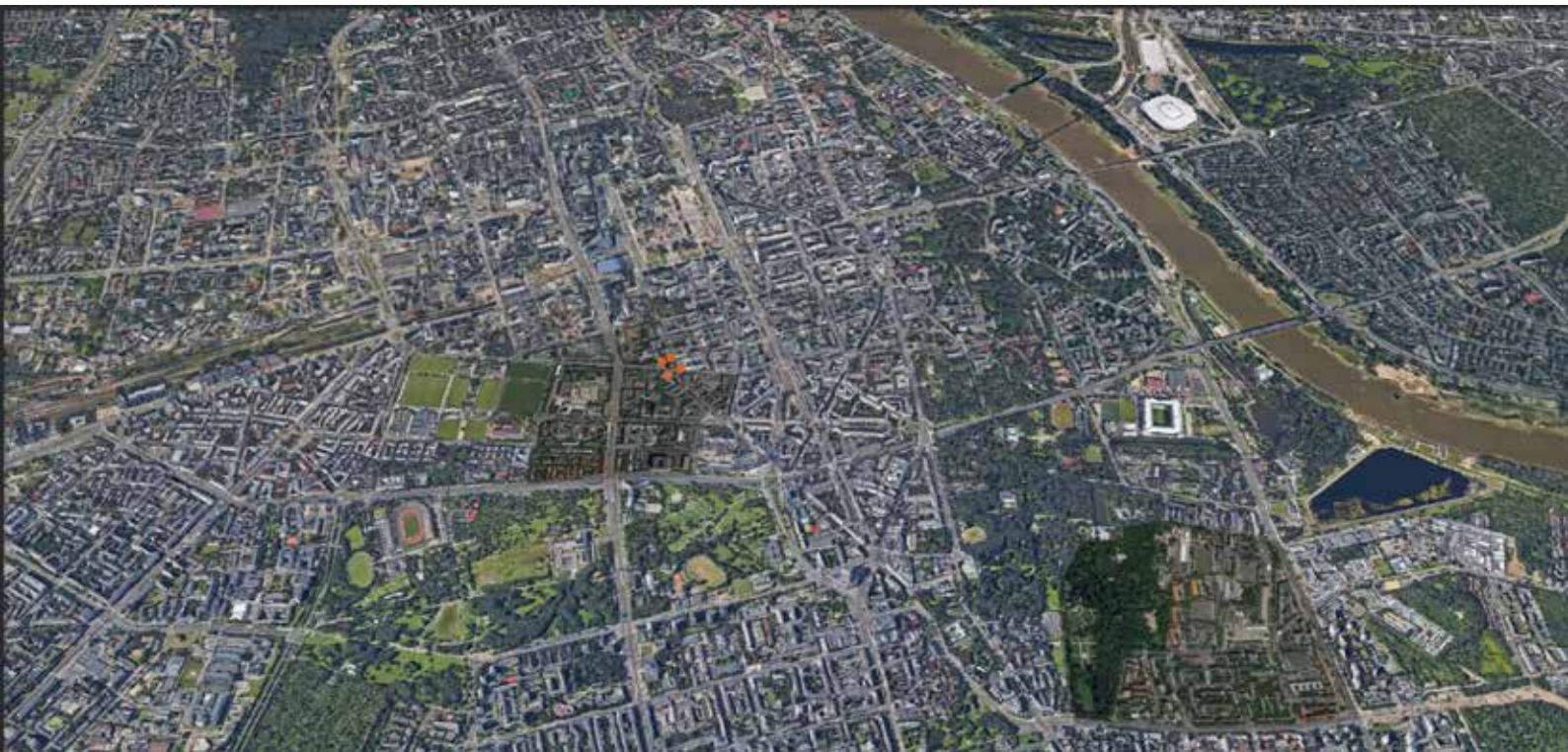


Figure 20. Location of the Nobu Hotel in Warsaw. Source: Google Earth



Figure 20-23. The Nobu Hotel in Warsaw at the corner of Wilcza and Koszykowa Street. Source: Photo by K. Strumiłło



In Poland, an interesting example of hotel architecture is the Nobu Hotel (figure 21) at the Wilcza Street in Warsaw. It was designed by architects Przemko Łukasik and Łukasz Zagała and constructed in 2020. The shape of the plot affects the form of this building (figures 20, 22, 23). This is also an unusual combination of two unique architectural styles. The historic wing of the hotel is reminiscent of the unique Art Deco style. The modern part impresses with its modern forms of glass, stone, and plants decorating external terraces, which made it possible for the building to perfectly integrate into the greenery of the city.

When analyzing the above-mentioned projects and their immediate surroundings, it should be stated that such interesting and original architectural forms break the monotony of surrounding buildings. Hotels often become characteristic landmarks of cities and thus constitute the architecture of sign (the Inntel Hotel in Zaandam, the Cube Houses in Rotterdam, the Nhow Hotels in Amsterdam and Berlin, the Nobu Hotel in Warsaw). The expression of the architecture of sign consists of the following criteria:

- accuracy of content expression – spatial form of the construction, expressions of the essence of content – a timeless idea,
- perception of impressions – appropriate strength of expression proving its distinctiveness,
- attractiveness of form – power of fascination, ability to inspire,
- current form – expressing its time of creation,
- authenticity and originality of form – if it has its own face, is not stereotypical, is a new solution (does not imitate or counterfeit existing solutions),
- cultural identity – features of the form indicating belonging to a specific cultural area.

Examples of the architecture of sign prove that architecture can convey unique content. They can be landmarks, reference points, subjects of external observation. They become more expressive if they contrast with the surroundings and their location is exposed. The aforementioned American town planner Lynch (Lynch 1960), writing about the advantages of forms, mentions that special forms make architecture unusual, noticeable, expressive, and recognizable.

The role of hotel architecture for cities

City is a living organism and architecture is its physical language (Shokouki et al. 2012:263). Hence, this language should be understandable.

With the help of good architecture, i.e., architecture adapted to the context of the place, drawing on its identity and caring for the needs of users, the quality of urban space can be significantly improved. It is architecture that creates the urban environment, being the main element of its shape and, at the same time, a witness of history.

Hotels are buildings important not only for the image of the city, but also for people, residents, and tourists planning to visit a given city and stay in a facility of their choice. People from all over the world travel more often and more willingly, and hotels become their home. Some of these hotels, due to their architecture, location, and interior design, have become travel destination themselves. This way hotels build the identity of places and cities.

City (place) identities are defined by physical signs. These signs must be identified and analyzed according to the following criteria: specificity, individuality, distinctiveness, and uniqueness, all of which make it possible to distinguish one city from another.

Kevin Lynch (1960) drew attention to the image-shaping role of the city forum. He distinguished two features of the urban landscape: readability and imagery. According to Lynch, readability is the ease with which individual parts of the city are recognizable and organized into a coherent whole. A readable city is one where individual places, districts and characteristic buildings are quickly identified and composed into a general arrangement. The city's physiognomy and the form of buildings influence the way the place is identified. City spaces, which contain informational and aesthetic values (e.g., characteristic buildings), are of priority importance to the creation of orientation and culture-forming attitudes.

In cities that have retained their old buildings, we can observe a hierarchy of importance of architectural structures, which is particularly visible in the city centers. The contemporary structure of the city is different, as it is subject to greater changes compared to the previous periods of urban development. When analyzing space, Boleslaw Szmidski (1981:35) mentions the possibility of making the space noble. Thanks to the architecture of the sign or symbol, the space is revived as an active and not passive component of architectural works. In turn, the height dominants determine the appearance of the city panorama. Height dominants, as well as the formal ones, significantly affect the quality of urban spaces, shaping the appropriate conditions for humans to read and consume them.

We can observe the relationship of hotels to urban space, either as landmarks within cities, or as components of urban renewal strategies. Sometimes the design of hotel space is expressive of consumption choices, reflecting contemporary trends in consumer marketing, distinction and branding. Inntel Hotel in Zaandam is an example that hotel building can also fit into the local identity.

The hotel architecture often contributes to the improvement of the city's image and attractiveness. The concept of city attractiveness is often defined from various perspectives and considers the addressees and recipients of this phenomenon. Nonetheless, the attractiveness of the city is not an end in itself, as – by improving the value of attractiveness – local authorities strive to build the prosperity and satisfaction of residents. This, in turn, leads to attracting new investors, tourists, and residents, which contributes to the city's development (Van den Berg et al 1999:25). Investments aimed at improving the attractiveness of cities usually aim to achieve more than one goal. For most residents, the attractiveness of a city means the accumulation of many different factors, which are assessed differently by everyone: the quality of the environment, architecture, recreational facilities, etc. Hotels can increase the city's potential, complement the city's fabric, and promote the city.

Finally, it should be admitted that the contemporary hotel mirrors also many of the contradictions and inequalities of modern consumer societies (McNeill 2008:383-398).

Conclusions

Hotels are elements that can build the image of cities, often becoming their visual dominants. They can be visually attractive and create a kind of sculpture in space, which attracts attention with its form and play of colors. As such, they can become characteristic buildings and tourism products – thus building the city brand. They can also contribute to the formation of a unique, individual quality, i.e., the genius loci of a place they are located in. These areas, having greater value, are also of greater prestige for the city. They also add the aesthetic energy to the city, and thanks to their unique spirit, act as landmarks.

This way, hotel facilities also contribute to the process of building the city's identity. The form of the hotel building, its functionalities, materials used, and the way these elements are combined, all create a semantic experience for the observers. Hotels become stories with which visitors or passers-by can personally feel and read architecture.

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