

City in progress

Warsaw is a city with a dynamic structure. The city centre has changed location several times as a result of various, often dramatic, events. An intensive process of urbanization is taking place here now, meant to fill in the empty spaces across the city and define its shape. Many of the new implementations reflect current global trends, however, original visions are also apparent.

WARSAW (PL) — TEXT: MACIEJ CZARNECKI, ILLUSTRATION: HARMEN VAN DER HORST

During the last twenty years, Warsaw has completely changed its appearance. New architecture is becoming more evident. The vast, empty space next to the main railway station, a former parade ground, will probably soon be covered by new development. Yet it took years to determine the forms that will appear. In the western part of downtown, skyscrapers are piling up as a continuation of the idea of the 'Western Wall' (or the 'West Side' of the centre), which began in the 1980s with two twin towers (Marriott and Intraco II). The idea is that the construction of skyscrapers in this district would be appropriate and beneficial to its urban shape and structure.

The modern changes are rooted in the city's historical context and cultural shifts. In fact, the city is still filling the craters left by World War II. Much of Warsaw was obliterated in the conflict, and its downtown simply no longer existed in 1945. Many houses still show traces of the destruction today. After the war, the local community and new authorities began an unprecedented and symbolic

project of reconstruction. Together they rebuilt many buildings using historical forms: the Old Town, the Royal Castle, churches, museums, heritage buildings, banks, palaces, public institutions, and many other examples. The heart of the city came alive again. The near-total reconstruction of the historic form and urban layout of the Old Town even earned recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

At the same time, however, a comprehensive modernization of the city was enacted based on the ideology of CIAM. Broad avenues, the regular urban texture and numerous buildings in Warsaw are a clear result of this. The city centre moved from the Old Town to the south-west, around the railway station. In this way, the new centre avoids interfering with the historical part of the city.

Nowadays, the city continues to move. But due to economic reasons, it is a more natural process. The modern structures of the new centre, initially concentrated in a limited area, have gradually started to spread as a result of changes following the fall of communism in 1989.

The development of modern buildings – new offices and housing developments – west of downtown, towards the closed industrial district, is clearly visible.

We begin the tour with the contemporary city, rising in the vicinity of Warsaw Central railway station. A large shopping mall, **Złote Tarasy (1)** by **Jerde Partnership**, was built a few years ago right by the station. The project was initially heavily criticized for its proposal to locate such a sizable shopping centre in the middle of the city, but in retrospect this was crucial to the area's recovery. The shopping centre is connected to the station and brings together a number of useful features.

Over the past two decades, the new city centre has gradually gained a dominant height with a group of almost 200-metre-tall skyscrapers. Most interesting among them is **Rondo 1 (2)**, a design by **Skidmore, Owings & Merrill**. Elegance, dynamism and a good location are the main characteristics of the development. The building is also LEED Gold certified – the first in Warsaw. In the vicinity are two other prestigious towers. The first, **Złota 44 (3)** by **Daniel Libeskind**, was from the outset supported by citizens as an extraordinary concept by the world-famous architect, who was born in the nearby city of Łódź. The building has an expressive form, similar to a sail or wing. Nearby stands the second tower, **Cosmopolitan (4)**, a project by **Helmut Jahn**. In comparison with Libeskind's design, it has a simple and unpretentious architectural form. The two skyscrapers, which will contain luxury apartments, are currently at the final stage of construction.

Between these are two additional towers. **Warsaw Financial Centre (5)**, designed by **Kohn Pedersen Fox** studio in 1997, was the first tall building in the area after 1989, and greatly influenced the subsequent development of Warsaw. Next door is the **Intercontinental Hotel (6)**, designed by **Tadeusz Spychała**. High ground clearance in the lower part of the building was necessary to ensure that sunlight reaches residential buildings situated behind the tower. Neaby is a small pavilion of the former **Emilia furniture department store (7)**, which was developed in the late '60s and designed by **Marian Kuźniar** and **Czesław Wegner**. It is one of the best preserved examples of post-war Polish modernist architecture and is currently an appropriate, temporary location for the Museum of Modern Art. →

A comprehensive modernization of the city was enacted following the obliteration of its downtown in the war.



1 ZŁOTE TARASY SHOPPING MALL (2007)
Architects: Jerde Partnership International
Address: Złota, 59
Contributed by: ReWritable_pl



2 RONDO 1 (2006)
Architects: SOM Larry Oltmanns + AZO Krzysztof Ozimek
Address: Rondo ONZ, 1



3 ZŁOTA 44 (2013)
Architect: Daniel Libeskind
Address: Złota, 44
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



4 COSMOPOLITAN (2013)
Architect: Helmut Jahn
Address: Twarda 2/4



5 WARSAW FINANCIAL CENTRE (1998)
Architects: Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates
Address: Emilii Plater, 53
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



6 INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL (2004)
Architects: Tadeusz Spychała, Wojciech Popławski + Willibald Fürst
Address: Emilii Plater, 49
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



7 FORMER EMILIA FURNITURE DEPARTMENT STORE (1969)
Architects: Marian Kuźniar + Czesław Wegner
Address: Emilii Plater, 51



8 PALACE OF CULTURE AND SCIENCE (1955)
Architect: Lev Rudnev
Address: Plac Defilad 1



9 NATIONAL STADIUM (2012)
Architect: JSK Architekti
Address: Aleja Księcia Józefa Poniatowskiego, 1
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



10 WARSZAWA STADION, OCHOTA, AND POWIŚLE SUBWAY STATIONS (1964)
Architects: Arseniusz Romanowicz + Piotr Szymaniak
Address: Along a main east-west metro line



11 PROSTA TOWER (2011)
Architect: APA Kuryłowicz & Associates
Address: Prosta, 32
Contributed by: jaras9



12 WARSAW UPRISING MUSEUM (2004)
Architect: Wojciech Obtułowicz
Address: Grzybowska, 79
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



13 WARSAW TRADE TOWER (1999)
Architects: G. Di Vanna, M. Loeffler, R. Manfredi, R. Peloquin + Majewski, Wyszyński, Hermanowicz
Address: Chłodna, 51
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



14 MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF POLISH JEWS (2013)
Architect: Rainer Mahlamäki
Address: Anielewicz, 6
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



15 COPERNICUS SCIENCE CENTRE (2011)
Architect: RAR-2 (Jan Kubec)
Address: Wybrzeże Kościuszkowskie, 20
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



16 WARSAW UNIVERSITY LIBRARY (1999)
Architects: Marek Budzyński + Zbigniew Badowski
Address: Dobra, 56/66
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



17 ARKADY KUBICKIEGO, RECEPTION AND ENTRANCE TO THE ROYAL CASTLE (2009)
Architect: Stanisław Fiszer
Address: Plac Zamkowy, 4



18 HERBERT HOOVER SQUARE (2008)
Architect: JEMS Architekti
Address: Skwer Hoovera, Krakowskie Przedmieście, 60A
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



19 METROPOLITAN (2003)
Architects: Norman Foster + Grupa5 Architekti
Address: Plac Piłsudskiego, 1
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



20 KRÓLEWSKA CENTRE (2002)
Architect: APA Kuryłowicz & Associates
Address: Marszałkowska, 142
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski



21 FRYDERYK CHOPIN CENTRE (2010)
Architect: Bolesław Stelmach i Partnerzy
Address: Tamka, 44
Contributed by: piotr_krajewski

The modern structures of the new centre have gradually started to spread following the fall of communism.

(City in progress)

At the centre of the inner city's main square is a proven eclectic building, the **Palace of Culture and Science (8)**, the most controversial and prominent feature of the capital's skyline. Designed by Soviet architect **Lev Rudnev** and completed in 1955, it is also the most visible remainder of communism in Warsaw today, not to mention the tallest building in Poland. Although it arouses passionate emotions, this multicultural facility houses cinemas, theatres, galleries, clubs, library, swimming pool, technical museum, a large congress hall and the highest open-air terrace in Warsaw, from which the entire city can be viewed from a height of about 180 metres.

On the second day, begin with the **National Stadium (9)**, a project by **JSK Architects**. Originally the site of the 10th-Anniversary Stadium, built in the mid-1950s to hold 100,000 spectators, the new football stadium now stands in its place, and was inaugurated prior to the Euro 2012 football championship. Under the grandstands are offices, commercial spaces and conference and parking facilities. To the south of the stadium is *Saska Kępa*, the modernist residential area built in the 1930s.

Also near the stadium is a redeveloped, modern subway station, **Warszawa Stadion (10)**. Here we take the fast train towards the centre, stopping at **Powisłe** and **Ochota** stations. These small railway pavilions were created in the early '60s by **Arseniusz Romanowicz** and **Piotr Szymaniak**, and are the original thin-shell concrete structures modeled on designs by Félix Candela, Eduardo Torroja and Eduardo Catalano. The pavilions are based on mathematical structures – hyperbolic paraboloid, conoid and sphere – and were recently renovated by a group of young architects in collaboration with the Polish State Railways.

From Ochota station, the tram travels north on Towarowa street to Daszyńskiego Roundabout, nearby which three important buildings are located. The recently completed **Prosta Tower (11)** by **APA Kuryłowicz**, the most well-known Polish architectural studio, confirms the migration of the business district. Its founder, Stefan Kuryłowicz, who passed away in 2011, is responsible for many important realizations in Warsaw over the last 25 years. The studio, now managed by architect Ewa Kuryłowicz, continues his work. Prosta Tower is an original and impressive building with a glass facade accented in front with a wavy, reinforced concrete grid structure.

On the opposite side of Towarowa street, in the former tram power station, is the **Warsaw Uprising Museum (12)** by **Wojciech Obtułowicz**. Its exhibition presents the dramatic story of the Polish Resistance and its heroic struggle to free the city in the uprising of 1944. Going further north, we pass the second-tallest building in the city, the **Warsaw Trade Tower (13)**, which reflects the past aesthetics of postmodernism. Its importance in overcoming barriers to developing the downtown, however, proved to be significant. The route ends at the just opened **Museum of the History of Polish Jews (14)** by Finnish architect **Rainer Mahlamäki** (see p. 28). The museum is located in the middle

of the former Jewish Ghetto, which was almost entirely destroyed in 1943. Today the district is a modern housing area. In this complex urban environment, the museum's neutral, semi-transparent form is certainly the best option. The museum is evidence of the Jewish population that existed within the city for hundreds of years before being suddenly wiped out in an instant, leaving behind an impossible void.

The third part of the Warsaw tour starts at Powisłe station. From there it is easy to reach the waterfront, where the **Copernicus Science Centre (15)**, designed by **Jan Kubec**, has recently been realized. This new institution is one of the city's main attractions, and its rich educational programme attracts both tourists and school trips. The building is the first to be located close to the Vistula River, allowing the city to reconnect to its riverfront. New riverside boulevards are soon expected in this area. A short distance away is the new **Warsaw University Library (16)** by **Marek Budzyński** and **Zbigniew Badowski**. An interesting example of green architecture, the building is covered with vegetation and decorated with a roof garden. Inside the library are public bookstores, cafés and billiards and bowling.

Head north from here using the convenient public bike system. On the way we pass *Mariensztat*, a post-war recreation of a baroque-style urban quarter. Right next to it, find a low building with massive arches, **Arkady Kubickiego (17)**, which **Stanisław Fiszer** remodeled three years ago as the reception area and main entrance to the Royal Castle. In addition to utilizing the empty arcade spaces, this solution makes accommodating large groups of tourists easier. Visiting the Castle and strolling through the Old Town is mandatory, of course. Both were completely reconstructed following the total destruction of the area in 1944 by the retreating German army.

At the upper Castle Square we turn back south, passing through **Hoover Square (18)**, designed by **JEMS**, a new pavilion for exhibitions and entertainment. This modern building is a very successful addition to the Royal Route. Heading west from the square you will find the **Metropolitan (19)** office building by **Norman Foster**. Behind it is the Saxon Garden and the symbolic Tomb of an Unknown Soldier. Walking towards *Marszałkowska* street, we arrive at the **Królewska Centre (20)** by **APA Kuryłowicz**, which clearly emphasizes the corner of *Marszałkowska* at the junction with the Saxon Garden. In the middle of *Tamka* street, on a slope adjoining the 17th-century Ostrogski Castle, is the new **Fryderyk Chopin Centre (21)**. A competition-winning project by **Bolesław Stelmach**, it clearly links the new architecture to the context of the street. The building contains a multi-purpose hall, library, restaurant and café. It also links with the neighboring Chopin Museum at Ostrogski Castle. You can spend the rest of the day listening to classical music, return to the centre, or attend one of the public events held during the summer on the banks of the Vistula. ←

The MI Tour Guides are published in A10 magazine and available online at MIMOA (www.mimoa.eu). A10 readers and members of the MIMOA community may directly contribute to the guides. Your participation is welcome! Please suggest projects for upcoming MI Tour Guides by uploading your choices to the MIMOA website. **Lisbon is the focus in the upcoming issue (A10 #53 Sept / Oct 2013).**

In the next issue:

MI Tour Guide

Lisbon

Close, Closer is the title of this year's Lisbon Architecture Triennale, opening in mid-September. The Portuguese capital will be the decor for exhibitions, lecture series, conferences and events examining critical themes of architectural practice. A10 correspondent Carlos M. Guimarães guides readers through the temporary projects of the Triennale, plus notable recent architecture in Lisbon as well.

Ready

Museum, Berlin

Located on the site of a former brewery, the Museum for Architectural Drawing by Russian architects Sergei Tchoban and Sergey Kuznetsov comprises a stack of overlapping concrete volumes etched with sketches and motifs.



Eurovision

Ireland

Ireland's success at the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale, crowned with a Silver Lion awarded to Dublin-based Grafton Architects, has put the spotlight on this island at the western edge of Europe, and especially on its young and innovative architectural culture. The upcoming issue will profile Ireland's leading and emerging practices, and explore how this 'island architecture' contributes to design in Europe and abroad.



↑ 'Pulp Press', a concrete pavilion at the Kistefos Museum, one of Scandinavia's largest sculpture parks, by John Gerrard and A2 Architects

...and much more.

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