THE COAL MARKET SQUARE (TARG WĘGLOWY) AS THE KEystone OF TWO RING ROAD COMPLEXES OF GdaŃSK CITY CENTER

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Abstract: The urban structure of Gdańsk city center is determined by two ring road complexes. The first of them, the Gdańsk Ring, was created as a result of the city defortification at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and was destroyed at the end of World War II with the rest of Gdańsk. The second, the Main Town Green Belt, was formed in place of the medieval fortification system of the city’s most important historical old town complex during its post-war reconstruction. The Main Town Green Belt and the Gdańsk Ring are separated by the year 1945 as they have never existed together. The purpose of this paper is to present the value of The Coal Market Square (Targ Węglowy) as a point of connection, the keystone, for both Gdańsk ring road complexes whose urban rehabilitation is very important for the structure of the entire city center.

1. Introduction

The urban structure of Gdańsk city center is determined by two ring road complexes which have already been comprehensively described in my latest work (Bugalski, 2015). The first of them, the Gdańsk Ring, was designed by Hermann Josef Stübben after the western and northern sections of the modern fortifications leveled at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Omilanowska, 2010). A modern premier zone of Gdańsk was thus created in the western part of the city center. 50 years after the so called Great Redevelopment, at the end of World War II, the entire city center together with the Gdańsk Ring was destroyed by the approaching Red Army. The post-war redrafting of Central and Eastern European borders brought the ruined Gdańsk back to Poland after more than 150 years. Due to the post-war political climate the idea of reconstruction of the Gdańsk Ring was abandoned because it was associated with German Neo-Renaissance, the national style of the German Empire. Gdańsk’s second ring road complex was created in the form of a green belt surrounding the Main Town (Główne Miasto), its most important historical old town complex, during the process

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of the post-war city rebuilding.

The origin of the Main Town Green Belt was related to sections of the medieval fortification system uncovered during the demolitions, in accordance with the principles of The Polish School of Conservation formulated in 1945 by Jan Zachwatowicz. The historical city center of Gdańsk has never been fully reconstructed from the destruction brought about by World War II. The ring road complex of green public spaces, newly created after the war, is a kind of a band of pedestrian pathways up to several dozen meters in width.

Gdańsk city center is a unique example of a juxtaposition of two ring road complexes which never co-existed in its urban structure but still determine its character. However, a city center adequate for the metropolis of Gdańsk, with over one million inhabitants, is still unable to emerge in the area of the historical city center. Nowadays a transformation of the Gdańsk transport system has been underway thanks to EU funds. The to-date linear system intersecting the entire metropolis is being replaced by a ring system created for the city of Gdańsk. As a result the degraded space of the Gdańsk Ring which functions as a part of this linear system has so far been occupied by overgrown transport solutions which can slowly be redesigned by the city. The current situation offers an opportunity to create a new urban structure of Gdańsk’s two ring road complexes, with a point of connection, its keystone, one of the most important city square, The Coal Market Square.

The purpose of this paper is to present the value of The Coal Market Square as a point of connection, the keystone, of both Gdańsk ring road complexes whose urban rehabilitation is very important for the urban structure of the entire city center. Over the past century, Gdańsk’s tradition and heritage have shaped a unique *genius loci*, which has a visible impact on the modern image of the city. The right interpretation and understanding of the local character of the place requires analyzing various overlapping influences. Therefore it seems to be very important to present the historical development of a number of city squares such as: The Coal Market Square, The Wood Market Square (Targ Drzewny), The Hay Market Square (Targ Sienny) and The Crawfish Market Square (Targ Rakowy) which evolved from the medieval square in 1342 called *anger amme sente Gertruden kirchhof* or fallow land next to the Saint Gertrude cemetery. The present relationship between them is the relationship between two ring road complexes of Gdańsk, the Main Town Green Belt and the Gdańsk Ring.

2. The two ring road complexes

The ring road complexes are the layouts created at the edge of the inner city in place of the leveled fortification systems. Two main types of ring road complexes can be distinguished according to their origin. The first type emerged after modern fortification systems were leveled. The mass process of cities defortification in German-speaking Central Europe started at the end of the 17th century and proceeded to the beginning of the 20th century. Areas freed from their defense function were often changed into metropolitan boulevards and became spaces of premier zone status. The greatest examples of this type of ring road complexes are highly-esteemed layouts in Vienna or Cologne. The origin of the second type of ring road complexes is leveling a medieval fortification system and replacing it with a new urban layout often smaller than the
first type and dominated by a system of green spaces. The best-known example of this type of space is Planty Garden in Kraków. Usually the ring road complexes are a very important rounded component of the city transport system. Sometimes both these types of ring road complexes could function in the urban structure of one city.

Gdańsk city center is a unique example of a juxtaposition of both types of ring road complexes in one urban structure because of their point of connection. There is a great value of the two ring road complexes of Gdańsk city center which are determining its urban structure. However the Main Town Green Belt and the Gdańsk Ring are separated by the tragic year 1945 as they have never existed together. Additionally, the two ring road complexes do not overlap in space, and they could rather complement each other in the urban structure of Gdańsk city center (Lorens, 1998a). The Gdańsk Ring (Bugalski, 2013) as well as the interaction between both ring road complexes of Gdańsk city center have already been described in one of latest papers of mine (Bugalski, 2015).

2.1. The Gdańsk Ring

The first of the ring road complexes of Gdańsk city center, the Gdańsk Ring, was created at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries during the process of the so-called Great Redevelopment which started with partial defortification of the city. In subsequent years the untouched structure of the medieval city, with its densely built-up area surrounded by a tight ring of modern fortifications, transformed from a pre-modern closed city into a modern open city (Omilanowska, 2010). In consequence a new premier zone of Gdańsk was designed in 1893 by Hermann Josef Stübben, a highly esteemed and popular urban planner of that time, in the leveled western and northern sections of the modern fortifications (Omilanowska, 2010). However, most of the regained northern areas were to remain under the control of the military, so the new modern area of Gdańsk was created just in the western part of the city center (Lorens, 1998b). The first works in this area, freed from its defense function, started in 1895. The site was to be filled with metropolitan residential, commercial and public buildings, the demand for which had clearly grown in the city at that time (Lorens, 1998a).

Despite its limited scale related to sizeable costs which the city had to incur to buy out the military-owned fortification areas, the so-called Stübben design was an example of high urban planning culture of the late 19th century (Omilanowska, 2010). The employed solutions reconciled economic realities with transport needs and satisfied the requirements for new city green spaces. At that time, a metropolitan ring road complex was created which did not overlap the historical old town but complemented it as a subsequent development stage, as a new heart of the city center and as its high-class area (Lorens, 1998b). Unfortunately, just before the end of World War II, 50 years after the Great Redevelopment started, the metropolitan Gdańsk Ring was destroyed together with the entire city center by the Red Army. The post-war redrafting of Central and Eastern European borders brought the ruined Gdańsk back to Poland after more than 150 years. Due to the political climate, de-Germanization was carried out in the Regained Territories, which prevented the reconstruction of the Gdańsk Ring, associated with the influences of German Neo-Renaissance, the national style of the German Empire.
2.2. The Main Town Green Belt

The destruction of Gdańsk’s historical city center and its metropolitan ring came at the end of World War II. Brutally treated by the Red Army, they were left in ruins, mostly burnt out. During the first post-war years, huge efforts were made to rebuild the devastated cities. In 1945 Jan Zachwatowicz formulated a conservation program as a reaction to the overwhelming scale of destruction in the aftermath of World War II (Zachwatowicz, 1946). The program, known as The Polish School of Conservation was based on the conviction that the primary need was to recreate the cultural heritage that was of paramount importance for the existence of a nation.

The second ring road complex of Gdańsk was created during the reconstruction of the Main Town (the city’s most important historical old town complex) in accordance with the principles of The Polish School of Conservation. Soon after the destructive war was over, a decision was made to demolish the completely burned, 19th century tenement buildings that very often offered low standard. The demolition of the residential buildings constructed along the line of the former Main Town medieval fortification system made it possible to recover entire sections of curtain walls that had been absorbed by the buildings. The fortification system surrounding the old town complex of the Main Town lost its fundamental defense function already in the 17th century, when modern fortifications took over the defense functions. In subsequent years, old medieval walls were subject to „adaptations and reconstructions for non-defence needs. [...] These activities resulted in almost complete enclosure of the curtain walls over a few centuries in most of their length,” as they were mainly absorbed by lower-standard residential and commercial buildings, and also largely devastated in the course of it (Hirsch, 2010).

The Main Town Green Belt was a system of pedestrian pathways in the form of a band of up to several dozen meters in width, largely dependent on newer, frequently intact districts adjacent to the historical city. According to The Polish School of Conservation great importance was attached to preserving the features of the historical shape and panorama of the old towns. This surrounding band free of buildings, overlapping the bailey and moat areas, most often included circular transport routes placed parallel to them. The aim was to minimize traffic within the borders of the historical urban complex of the Main Town, with total exclusion of transit traffic. An important principle in green belt road complexes created this way was putting the earlier-mentioned remains, largely reconstructed, against a band of greenery that surrounded them (Małachowicz, 1988; Rymaszewski, 1984).

The remains of the city fortifications still largely dominate the Main Town Green Belt area. However, nowadays the overgrown greenery obscures both the remains of the medieval fortifications and the shape of the historical old town. Spatial transformations in the area of The Wood Market Square, which are a clear illustration of the principle adopted by the planners, are particularly worth noticing. Urban green spaces were established on sites of demolished building compounds. The square’s medieval wedge-shaped look was restored. Sections of curtain walls exposed this way were then partially reconstructed and clearly exposed to view, so that the pre-war character of The Wood Market Square was completely altered. Today, the overgrown greenery obscures both the remains of the medieval fortifications and the shape of the historical old town.
3. The keystone

In masonry a keystone is the most important stone piece, often larger than the other voussoirs or decorated with a boss, which is situated on top of an arch or vault, and locks all the stones into position, allowing the construction to bear weight. Without the keystone neither the arch nor the vault could stand. The same applies to the urban structure of Gdańsk where one of the most important city squares, The Coal Market Square is a keystone of two ring road complexes of the city center, and from this perspective seems to be the key element in the re-integration of the historical city center of Gdańsk destroyed in World War II. As has been said, the Main Town Green Belt and the Gdańsk Ring are separated by the year 1945 but they do not overlap in space but rather complement each other in the urban structure of Gdańsk city center. The Coal Market Square as a part of the western section of the Main Town Green Belt which – as a city square threaded onto Gdańsk’s most important historical and symbolic axis, Royal Route (Trakt Królewski), and by linking the historical old town with the potential center of the whole metropolis – aspires to serve as the heart of the city.

3.1. The origin of the urban structure

The base of the present urban structure of Gdańsk historical city center is related to another tragic year in its history. In 1308 Teutonic Knights deceitfully captured the city, destroyed it, and killed many of its inhabitants. In consequence of the so-called Gdańsk Slaughter, the State of Teutonic Order took over the city with the whole East Pomerania. Archaeological research which took place after World War II at the Old Town (Stare Miasto) area (taking advantage of the destruction) indicates that at the beginning of the 14th century most of the city (located under Lübeck law in the 13th century) was burned to the ground and leveled (Biskup, 1978; Loew, 2013; Stankiewicz and Szermer, 1959). After a favorable treaty with the Polish King Casimir III the Great, signed in 1342 by the Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights, Ludolf König von Wattzau, the new leading urban complex of Gdańsk, the Main Town, was relocated under Chelmno law. At the core of the damaged Gdańsk the new urban structure of the historical city center emerged.

At the same time when the Main Town gained a number of privileges, for example: the right to build a bricked fortification system (Biskup, 1978) which became the foundations of the present structure of its green belt. The city also gained the square that was used for coal and wood trade which was called anger umme sente Gertruden kirchhof, or fallow land next to the Saint Gertrude cemetery (Biskup, 1978). This vast square was located just outside the walls, at the crossroads of the main routes to the city. It was one of a number of similar market squares serving the city whose urban fabric did not include a city market, unlike in other Baltic cities located under Lübeck law (Holst, 2002). Today’s Coal Market Square, similarly to The Wood Market Square, The Hay Market Square and The Crawfish Market Square, functioning initially as this single vast square, ultimately developed in the urban fabric, when Gdańsk fortification system developed over several centuries.

After The Thirteen Years’ War, at the beginning of the second half of the 15th century an upspring of Prussian cities and local nobility started between the Prussian Confederation allied with the Kingdom of Poland and the State of Teutonic Order, and
Gdańsk came back under the reign of the Polish Kings. In consequence the Old Town complex gained its own medieval fortification system which absorbed the first wedge-shaped part of the vast Wood Market Square. With the quick development of war art the city gradually grew rich, and the evolution of the medieval fortification system lasted to the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries when they were replaced by a modern fortification system which embraced the whole historical inner city including the Main Town and the Old Town. Although the new fortification system absorbed the next part of the original vast square, The Coal Market Square, it remained separated (as it is today) from The Wood Market Square because of its relation with the Old Town urban structure. Still The Hay Market Square and The Crawfish Market Square, the sizeable fragment of land related with Saint Gertrude Hospital remained outside the border of the city (Stankiewicz and Szermer, 1959).

3.2. The development of The Coal Market Square

The Coal Market Square became a proper city square at the beginning of the 17th century. It is clearly visible in a Gdańsk layout drawing from 1600 or 1601 which was found a few years ago in Stockholm. The historical character of city’s urban structure was closed in a line of firm edges. The Coal Market Square located just inside the fortification system on the city’s peripheries is clearly marked out in juxtaposition to the Main Town, the Old Town and the Old Suburbs urban structure. For a long time The Coal Market Square remained a peripheral urban area of the Main Town. Finally, at the beginning of the so-called long 19th century (during a tumultuous period for Gdańsk) the ultimate shaping of the metropolitan image of The Coal Market Square as the main city square started. After two hundred years of being surrounded by a tight ring of modern fortifications, the city was forced to be densely built up. Tenement buildings that very often offered low standard filled up not only urban blocks but also closed squares and absorbed the line of the former Main Town medieval fortification system. At that time not so many public buildings were created, but one of them had a great influence on future of The Coal Market Square.

In 1798 – 1801 the north frontage of The Coal Market Square was closed by the new City Theatre build in place of the old moat dividing it from The Wood Market Square. This new building designed by the Gdańsk city architect Carl Samuel Held was splendid for its times (Stankiewicz and Szermer, 1959), and probably because of its characteristic cupola it was called Kaffeemühle which means the Coffee Mill (Loew, 2013). The value of The Coal Market Square as a city square had clearly increased. Thanks to the repeatedly reconstructed City Theatre which remained the center of cultural life during the whole 19th century (Loew, 2012), The Coal Market Square gained the character of one of the most representative spaces in Gdańsk (Lorens, 1998b). Buhse’s plan prepared between 1866 and 1869, just before the so-called Great Redevelopment of Gdańsk, shows an untouched structure of a medieval city with its densely built-up area surrounded by a tight ring of modern fortifications. Changes that had taken place in the city were reflected in the plans from subsequent years, which makes it easy to follow the transformation process.

3.3. The metropolitan Coal Market Square

Until the end of the so-called long 19th century, Gdańsk was part of the Prussian state structure as a second-rate, provincial city with a stronghold status (Lorens, 1998b).
Gdańsk still had a historical structure of a medieval city with its densely built-up area surrounded by a tight ring of modern fortifications. Therefore defense requirements had a fundamental influence on its urban structure (Biskup, 1998). In 1871 the city was placed within the borders of the German Empire, in 1878 it became the capital of the recreated province of West Prussia and slowly started to emerge from economic stagnation. Changes related to the origin of the Gdańsk Ring that had taken place in the city at the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries during the so-called Great Redevelopment of Gdańsk, transformed the pre-modern closed city into a modern open city (Omilanowska, 2010).

The metropolitan character of the city today is often associated with the 19th-century architecture and urban structures. The representative function of new Gdańsk ring road complex was strengthened by the buildings constructed in the style of German Neo-Renaissance, the national style of the German Empire. The German Empire architecture created in Gdańsk between 1871 and 1914 served an important role in shaping Gdańsk regional identity (Heimat) as a city rooted in the unified German state (Vaterland) (Omilanowska, 2009). In the last decade of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century Kaiser Wilhelm II, together with a close circle of politicians and artists, consciously used architecture as a political tool (Omilanowska, 2008) by making „a broad range of efforts [...] aimed at employing art and architecture into the processes of the cultural unification of Germany” (Omilanowska, 2009). Its aim was to underscore the German character of Gdańsk, which had clearly balanced between German and Polish cultural influences, with the related specific nature „created by living in disputed border territories” (Davies, 2004). However, architecture of German Neo-Renaissance was also an object of strong criticism, also by German architects of that time, who spoke openly against giving Gdańsk a ‘Berlin touch’ or employing „lavish, fashionable decorations” (Gruszkowski, 2009).

In fact, the lavishly decorated Danziger Hof hotel, designed by a Berlin architect Karl Gaus and located near High Gate (Brama Wyżynna, is probably the best example of the architecture of that period. Destroyed during World War II, it still influences the perceptions of Gdańsk inhabitants. Constructed between 1896 and 1898 as one of the first new buildings, this most luxurious hotel of pre-war Gdańsk, built on the dirt ground still present after the leveling of the fortifications, must have made a great impression on Gdańsk inhabitants as a herald of changes to be brought about by the Great Redevelopment of Gdańsk. Observing the symmetry principle towards the Danziger Hof hotel, a Reichsbank building (today a branch of the National Bank of Poland) was constructed on the other side of High Gate in 1905 and 1906. It was designed by a Berlin architect Max Hasak (Gruszkowski, 1999). Until the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries High Gate was the opening of the most important historical and symbolic axis, Royal Route on which The Coal Market Square was threaded. At last The Coal Market Square changed its location from the city’s peripheries to its heart.

After the city extended at the turn of the 16th and the 17th centuries it absorbed The Wood Market Square and The Coal Market Square, which constituted half of the original vast square related with Saint Gertrude Hospital, while the rest of it remained outside the city. At the turn of the 19th and the 20th centuries during the so-called Great Redevelopment of Gdańsk (The Hay Market Square) and The Crawfish Market Square were finally absorbed by the city as a part of its new premier zone,
the Gdańsk Ring. At last the whole vast square given to the Main Town in 1342 was within the city borders. Danziger Hof and Reichsbank buildings constructed on both sides of High Gate together made only one frontage of the designed layout of the new city square, Heumarkt or The Hay Market Square – so different from its today’s form (Omilanowska, 2010). Since existing buildings occupied the area of the former berm, the Royal Route axis was not prolonged under Stübben’s plan and Heumarkt layout was to continue to serve as a glamorous gate to Gdańsk city center. This square, which was new to the urban fabric, was to be shaped by two more frontages, the northern and southern ones. Just behind High Gate, at the crossing of the Royal Route and a new city boulevard of Dominiks Wall Street (Waly Dominikańskie), today Jagiellonian Wall Street (Waly Jagiellońskie), a high-class layout of highly symbolic, historical and prestigious significance was to be created. Already in 1903, a monument of German Kaiser Wilhelm I on horseback by Konigsberg’s art professor Eugen Börmel was placed just behind High Gate at the crossing of the two most important composition axes on the city plan.

However, the assumptions of Stübben’s project were never fully implemented. Although subsequent detailed designs envisaged the creation of a southern building compound, the construction was abandoned and urban green areas existed there only until 1945. The northern building compound was significantly limited by the decision to preserve the Irrgarten or Small Labyrinth (Mały Błędnik) city park. Its remaining section that was actually constructed did not match the scale of the rest of the layout. Cancelling the construction of the northern and southern building compounds significantly reduced the aesthetic value of the whole layout. As a result, a city square did not develop there and the scale of the existing buildings situated on both sides of High Gate, given the absence of the remaining part of the layout, clearly overwhelmed this important relic of defense architecture.

3.4. Degradation

After the Great Redevelopment and the construction of the Gdańsk Ring, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, The Coal Market Square reached a peak of its development as a high quality public space, a metropolitan square with important official features. The post-war political attitude to the architecture of German Neo-Renaissance, which was derogatively referred to as ‘Prussianism’ or as „buildings face lifted to deutsch, deutscher, am deutschenst” (Friedrich, 2001), was unequivocal and aimed at its ultimate removal from the panoramas of the cities in the Regained Territories. The last opportunity to restore its metropolitan character were Socialist Realism designs. However, they were not implemented as the People’s Republic of Poland abandoned the style in 1956 (Bugalski, 2013). Within the post-war reconstruction of the Main Town, The Coal Market Square became part of the green belt layout. It is clearly visible on project plans that this new ring road complex does not create a complete and uniform system of green public spaces. Designers defined two bands – northern and southern – as green bands, while the western band at The Coal Market Square section was primarily meant to serve official functions, a role similar to the one it served before the war. However, coherence to the entire Main Town Green Belt layout was to be provided by the remains of the medieval fortification system.

The post-war Gdańsk reconstruction plans put significant stress on the western front of the city center that overlapped with the Gdańsk Ring road complex. Already
in 1946 this area was designed to become a new center for the city, a commercial and administrative district that would offer complementary functions to the historical old town under reconstruction (Rymaszewski, 1984). The reconstruction of the western front of Gdańsk city center was to be conducted in accordance with the Socialist Realism style dominating between 1949 and 1956 in Poland. Based on Gdańsk city center plan from 1952, the competition assumed designing a number of layouts which were „to be an expression of a modern socialist city”. The most important element and the dominating feature of this space was to be a monumental Central Culture House, which was to close the Royal Route axis from the west. A large square in front of it was envisaged as a place of „mass gatherings and manifestations” in relation to which a parade route was to be designed. The vicinity of the Main Town that was being reconstructed was also taken into account (Lier, 1954). The Socialist Realism design was in some way similar to the series of concepts prepared by Nazi planners which included a completely changed image of the limited scale of Stübben’s modern premier zone. In place of the abandoned concept of Heumarkt a new idea of a huge Gauforum was proposed (Bugalski, 2013).

When Socialist Realism ended in the People’s Republic of Poland in 1956, the unimplemented competition projects of 1953 for the Gdańsk Ring area were the last real attempt at planned development and, in a sense, at recreating the character of that area. The metropolitan character of the premier zone of the city created at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was finally lost. The discussion on the shape of buildings at The Coal Market Square’s western frontage was very important for this perspective. Still, before 1949 a group of designers following the trend of reconstructing cities in line with The Polish School of Conservation who were responsible for saving the heritage of Gdańsk’s most important historical old town complex, the Main Town, influenced the direction of reconstructing the Gdańsk Ring on a much smaller scale than the metropolitan pre-war layout. The conservation community proposed to replace the pre-war residential buildings with a low two-storey construction referring to the classicist enclosure of stalls and stands of the first half of the 19th century, termed as „Empire-style building with colonnade”\footnote{ROBiDZGd (Gdansk Regional Centre for Research and Documentation of Historical Heritage), file documentation, a letter of provincial conservation officer to the Ministry of Culture and Art of 5 September 1949 (Gawlicki, 2012)}. It was also trying to get through a concept of constructing buildings along a longer section of the former Gdańsk Ring on a scale that would roughly match „the height of the modern fortifications that surrounded the square until the end of the 19th century” (Gawlicki, 2012).

In the course of the post-war reconstruction Gdańsk city center was restored and developed only partially. The attitude towards all influences of Prussian architecture and urban planning present in Gdańsk, despite their much higher quality in comparison to the earlier-mentioned architecture that had grown in the line of medieval fortification system area, rendered it impossible to make any efforts to reconstruct this layout. Gdańsk was deprived of its urban fabric that could foster the emergence of a new center within the historical inner city, despite that fact that some examples of metropolitan architecture belonging to that layout had been preserved, including the Main Station complex, the National Bank of Poland and City Council buildings. Even now the reconstruction or any kind rebuilding of The Coal Market
Square’s western frontage are abandoned. Today this damaged keystone element of two ring road complexes of Gdańsk, in some way forgotten Main Town Green Belt and the devastated Gdańsk Ring gives an opportunity to start a process of complete reorganization of the urban structure of Gdańsk city center.

4. Summary

The Coal Market Square is the keystone of the urban structure of Gdańsk city center determined by two ring road complexes which cannot function well without their point of connection. The creation of high-quality public spaces, such as the areas of The Hay Market Square and The Crawfish Market Square in relation to The Coal Market Square, which could serve as a link between two co-existing rehabilitated ring road complexes, the Gdańsk Ring and the Main Town Green Belt could make it possible to create a new valuable and unique urban structure of Gdańsk city center. This is also associated with many new development opportunities which can make this space a center of true metropolitan importance.

As has been said the transformation of Gdańsk transport system has been underway for several years thanks to EU funds. The to-date linear system intersecting the entire metropolis is being replaced by a ring system created for Gdańsk. The degraded space of the Gdańsk Ring that has so far been occupied by overgrown transport solutions can slowly be redesigned by the city. The current situation offers an opportunity to recreate Gdańsk’s two ring road complexes at one go, with a point of connection, its keystone, The Coal Market Square. It seems that it could have a positive influence on the future urban structure of the entire historical inner city. There is a unique opportunity to recreate a metropolitan premier zone which, located in the vicinity of the reconstructed complexes of the Main Town, the Old Town and the Old Suburbs could stand a real chance of becoming a center that Gdańsk needs so much today, adequate to the scale of this million-strong metropolis.

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