




Nowa Huta – between the countryside and the city. Part 2. Economic and political transformation, and a new perspective on Nowa Huta’s place in the landscape of Małopolska

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Summary

The aim of this study is to give an insight into the phenomenon of Nowa Huta, which has been one of Krakow’s districts since 1951, although in 1949 it was planned as a separate city. Particular emphasis in this part is placed on the realisation of the potential of the XVIII District after the changes in the political and economic system that took place between 1945 and 1989. One of the ideas of Tadeusz Ptaszycski, the chief architect of Nowa Huta, was to implement the principles of the ideal city and garden city, i.e. a city with small, low-density buildings and a predominance of green areas. However, industrialisation happened so quickly that it nearly led to the extinction of many plant and animal species. Fortunately, the development did not invade the Nowohucka Meadows, allowing residents to enjoy the benefits of this unique natural site. In 2023, Nowa Huta was declared a historical monument, which gives it additional protection from poorly thought-out investments and supports the development of cultural tourism, historical education, and the creation of cultural trails. Krakow is also covered by a sustainable tourism policy, which supports its cultural heritage and protects the natural environment. The principles adopted combine the needs of tourists with conscious consumption and long-term planning that takes into account ecological solutions and the comfort of residents in accordance with the ‘respect Krakow’ motto. It is also important to engage the local community and visitors in spreading the message about Krakow on social media, for example by using the hashtag ‘#krakow’.

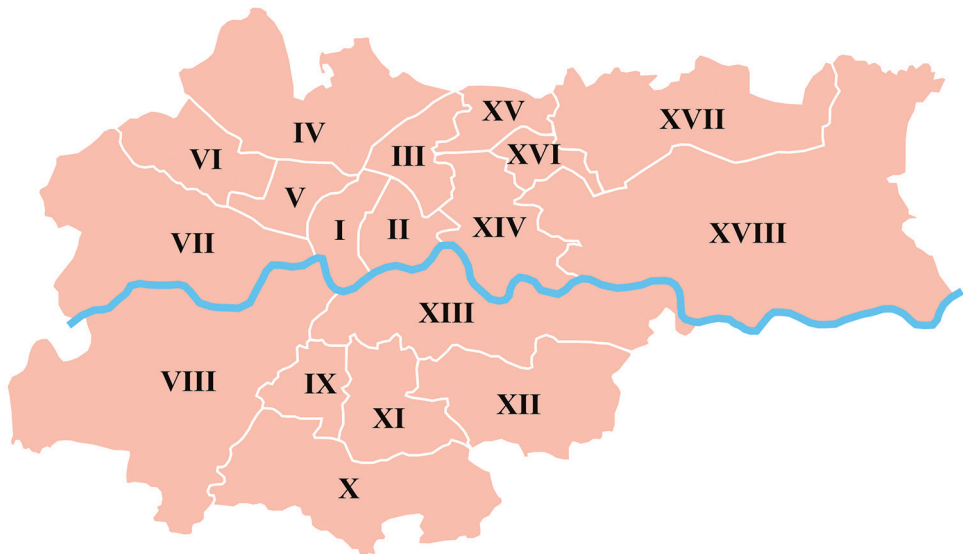
Keywords

Nowa Huta • propaganda • industrialization • ideal city • garden city • Nowa Huta Meadows • greenery • animals • tourism • cultural heritage • historical monument • #krakow

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper, which is a follow-up to the piece entitled ‘Nowa Huta – between the countryside and the city. Part I. The beginnings of the achievement of a socialist utopia’, published in ‘Geomatics, Landmanagement and Landscape’ no. 4 2023, is to introduce, as already mentioned in the first part, mainly to a foreign audience, including urban planners, historians and cultural scientists, the phenomenon of Nowa Huta, which since 1951 has been one of Krakow’s districts, although it was planned as a separate city.

The first part dealt with the fascinating phenomenon that Nowa Huta has become over several decades of Polish history. It focused on the socio-historical conditions that preceded the first stage of the formation and operation of this urban-industrial organism. The second part concentrates on the utilisation of the potential of this organism after the change of the political system. Since then Nowa Huta is not only a monument to socialist realism, but also a location valued by developers and real estate agents.



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?search=Krak%C3%B3w+dzielnice&title=Special:MediaSearch&go=Go&type=image>

Fig. 1. The areas of the 18 districts of Krakow and the areas of the former cadastral municipalities

2. The concept of a garden city

One of the ideas of Tadeusz Ptaszycy – the chief architect of Nowa Huta – was to implement the principles of the ideal city and garden city, i.e. low-rise, low-density buildings with above all a predominance of green areas [Kobylarczyk 2019b]. According to the principles, the city ‘should form a defined unity, compact and harmoniously linked

to the existing landscape' [Pluta 2007]. A tender was held for 'the project of a city for the workers of the steelworks, code-named «Gigant» (...). The location was known: the Vistula terrace next to the Wanda Mound. Six works were submitted. (...) Most of the participants designed a tiny estate, adjacent to the conglomerate. Only Ptaszycki's concept took into account how the construction would affect the development of the whole region' [Kobylarczyk 2009]. The housing estate complexes (A, B, C, D) were to form the so-called independent neighbourhood units, or, as it was announced by propaganda, 'settlements of 4,000–5,000 people, equipped with the infrastructure necessary for living and forming a kind of separate town, where the inhabitants would know each other and maintain good neighbourly relations. Housing estates designed in this way were intended to act against the anonymity and sense of confusion that overwhelms the inhabitants of large metropolises' [Mieziań 2004]. Residential buildings, service buildings and facilities for recreation and leisure, 'in which people and space would form a perfect whole' [Klaś 2016], were to meet all the needs of the inhabitants. The most important focal point became the Central Square, from which five arterial streets radially extend [Komorowski 1997]. The streets intersect at right angles, forming residential quarters. This is a very legible, and therefore convenient, architectural layout. It was created 'along an axis – the current Mogiła road – half-way between Czyżyny and the former village of Mogiła, at a distance of about 10 km from the Krakow Main Square' [Gołaszewski 1955]. It was decided that it would be a cluster of 'representative establishments of communal trade, cafes, restaurants, craft service outlets, etc.' [Gołaszewski 1955]. These plans were only partially realised, as the Centre E, conceptually reminiscent of the first Nowa Huta project but architecturally representing postmodernism, was not completed. This was related not only to the high cost, but above all to a change in the perception of the area. There was growing importance attached to its natural qualities. The housing development did not intrude into the Nowohuckie Meadows, allowing the current residents to enjoy the benefits of this unique natural place [Jędruch 2018].

The Nowa Huta Meadows are a 57.17 hectare nature reserve located right next to Central Square. They are an excellent location for relaxation, animal watching and environmental education. It is a remnant of an oxbow of the Vistula River, which used to flow here in the 18th century, leaving a peat bog behind [Kobylarczyk 2019a]. In the 1950s, there were plans to create a recreational area in this location – constructing a lagoon, sports facilities, and a stadium. These plans were not realised, mainly due to a lack of sufficient funds. It was more important to build, and then expand, the combined plant and erect further housing blocks, maintaining the pace of industrialisation. It was for this reason that the construction of the Katowice Steelworks – the largest metallurgical complex in communist Poland – began in the 1970s. It seems reasonable to argue that the adoption of a new flagship investment protected Nowa Huta, with its characteristic buildings and urban planning concept, from 'modernisation', destroying this monument to socialist realism in architecture and spatial planning [NH70... 2020].



Photo: Z. Put. Creative Commons Attribution – Share Alike Attribution. CC BY-SA 4.0 https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Nowa_Huta_meadows,_Krak%C3%B3w,_Poland.jpg

Fig. 2. Nowa Huta Meadows

After the political and economic system transformation in Poland in the late 1980s/early 1990s, the district's status declined, not only economically but also politically. The importance of the steel industry – expensive and highly polluting – began to diminish. The combine, whose name was changed to the Tadeusz Sendzimir Steelworks (named after a Polish engineer and metallurgist), ran into increasing financial problems, which also reflected in reduced care for the environment [Curzydło 1995]. The spectre of unemployment loomed over the district [Radwan 2017]. This had a negative impact on the public mood, the sense of security, and the perception of the neighbourhood as a high crime risk area [Gajewska et al. 2023]. Hence, given these alarming trends, it was decided to bring the area of the Nowa Huta Meadows under protection. In 2003, thanks to local activists led by Danuta Szymońska, then director of the C.K. Norwid Cultural Centre, the meadows were declared an 'ecological utility', which allowed for their protection within the 'Natura 2000' network [Użytek ekologiczny... 2023]. In 2004, the Voivodeship Conservator of Monuments decided to include the area in the Register of Monuments of the Małopolska Voivodeship [Układ urbanistyczny... 2004]. This, in turn, stopped any changes from happening, allowing only activities aimed at tidying up the area and restoring its original appearance. This direction was confirmed by another resolution in 2009, which extended protection to the natural and cultural heritage of Nowa Huta [Resolution 2009]. The existing measures were complemented by the establishment of a plan of conservation tasks for the Natura 2000 Łąki Nowohuckie area (PLH120069) in 2017 [Ordinance 2017]. There were 13 protection areas designated at that time, covering: regulation of the level of the groundwater table within the meadows; the use that prevents the advancement of the secondary succession processes (obligatory action); extensive cutting of hay meadows (optional action); observation of changes and reactions of the habitat to the introduced conservation measures; monitoring of the conservation status of the natu-

ral habitat; use of meadows providing habitat for butterflies (obligatory action); extensive cutting of hay meadow providing habitat for butterflies (optional measure); implementation of hydrological monitoring based on piezometer readings; monitoring of the conservation status of the species and its habitat; updating of knowledge on the conservation status of butterflies; removal of invasive and expansive plants; reduction of the negative impact of anthropopressure. A nature trail and viewing platforms have been created. The area is now a refuge for 370 plant species and 69 bird species, including many listed in the international 'Red List of Threatened Species' (e.g. corn crake, red-backed shrike, little bittern). The meadows are also a roosting site for starlings, magpies, swallows, quackers, and many other species that stop here during migration and the breeding season. The abundance of species also applies to insects. There are rare species of butterflies here: scarce large blue, dusky large blue, violet copper, and large copper [Wójcik 2008]. In 2019 the City Council of Krakow passed a resolution to establish the Nowa Huta Cultural Park [Park Kulturowy Nowa Huta 2023]. This decision sealed the process of protecting this unique urban complex from uncontrolled development that does not conform to the original architectural concept. Meanwhile, in 2023, Nowa Huta was declared a Monument of History, which is expected to support the growth of cultural tourism and historical education, but also open the way for efforts to enter this part of the city on the UNESCO World Heritage List [Nowa Huta została ogłoszona Pomnikiem Historii 2023]. Yet just as importantly, taking into account the conservation guidelines, the area has strengthened its recreational functions, mainly thanks to a pedestrian and cycle path running along the causeway in the southern part, starting from Biskup Padniewski Street towards the allotment gardens, to Odmętowa Street [Kraków w formie – Rowerowa pętla po Nowej Hucie 2021]. Also noteworthy is the nearby Stefan Żeromski Park. This area forms a triangle between the Na Skarpie housing estate, the Stefan Żeromski hospital, and the Nowa Huta Meadows. Equipped with numerous attractions for children and benches, the site complements a didactic path on which visitors can learn about its environmental values and ways of ecologically sustaining green areas [Łąki Nowohuckie, zielone miejsce na spacer 2020]. The site has been adapted for people with disabilities, giving the opportunity to encourage social tourism without barriers.

The second frequently visited place is the Forest of Mogiła, located in the valley of the Vistula River. Its shape resembles a triangle overgrown with a unique tree stand, so while walking the trees provide pleasant shade. The open spaces offer opportunities for camping and dancing, although the amphitheatre has not been completed [Perzanowska 2007]. Helena Ratajewska recalls that as a little girl she used to go there with her parents every Sunday to watch the performances of folk bands, which took place in the concert shell [Filemonowicz, without the year of publication].

3. Investing in tourism is worthwhile

In addition to serving the basic functions of a place to live and work, urban settings of cities are also an invitation to spend leisure time [Faracik et al. 2015]. The development of cultural tourism is measured, among other things, by the degree to which it

is used and also adapted to fulfil new functions. A factor that increases attractiveness and creates tourism growth is the recognition of cultural assets as significant for the heritage of humanity. Confirmation of this thesis is the entry of the medieval Old Town inside the Planty, together with Wawel, Stradom, and Kazimierz, on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1978. 'The entry was based on the so-called IV criterion, where it was stated that Krakow represents an outstanding example of a particular type of building, an architectural complex, a set of technical objects or a landscape that illustrates significant stages in the history of mankind' [Łasocho 2020].

Nowa Huta offers interesting cultural heritage paths with a wide variety of themes (including architectural, cultural, literary, biographical, military, natural history) [Klaś 2019]. Among them, for example, one can mention trails of wooden architecture, Cistercian, Romanesque, modernism, manor house, Jagiellonian, World War I front-line, Krakow Fortress, Solidarity, literature, outdoor sculptures and installations, John Paul II, women [Marcinek and Myczkowski 2017]. It also attracts with periodic cultural events, including: 'Zajrzyj do Huty' ['Have a look at Huta'] (organiser: Museum of Nowa Huta, date: September, aim: to bring the little homeland closer and promote the heritage and cultural potential of the district, audience: people of all ages) [Zajrzyj do Huty 2023]; Bulwar[t] Sztuki (organiser: Theatre Łaźnia Nowa and House of Utopia – International Centre for Empathy, date: June-July/August, aim: engaging with culture and art at your fingertips, audiences: people of all ages) [Zapraszamy na Bulwar[t] Sztuki 2023]. Moreover, residents celebrate their neighbourhood during the 'Dni Nowej Huty' ['Days of Nowa Huta'], held since its inception (organised by District XVIII Nowa Huta, date: September, aim: to nurture the memory of the history and heritage of this unique place, community integration, promotion of local entrepreneurs and organisations, audiences: people of all ages) [Zapraszamy na Dni Nowej Huty 2023].

Considering Krakow's wide range of tourist attractions, it is not surprising that in this year's ranking of the 'Top 10 Best Places to Visit in Europe', prepared by the international portal Holiday Cars, it ranked third, the highest of all Polish cities [Stanowska 2023]. However, this is not the end of the good news. The Onet.pl news portal, citing the British consumer website 'Which?' on 29 November 2023, reported that Krakow and Valencia ranked as the first most popular destinations for a so-called city break (92%), ahead of Stockholm (91%), Berlin, Funchal, Seville (89%), Paris, Athens (79%), Dubrovnik (77%) or Split (72%). The data were presented based on an analysis of travel experiences to 31 European cities, in terms of their attractiveness. 'Each location was rated in seven categories: food and drink, accommodation, cultural sights and attractions, shopping, accessibility, crowd density, and value for money. The overall score was calculated based on respondents' level of satisfaction' [Brytyjczycy wybrali najlepsze miasta w Europie. Polska z pierwszym miejscem 2023]. The growing interest in Poland, and in particular in Małopolska and Krakow, is also reflected in tourism statistics. A significant upturn was recorded by the John Paul II Airport in Balice, which in 2022 'had 7,394,176 passengers, which accounts for 88% of the passenger traffic from the record year 2019' [Summary 2022]. The increased interest in the city is also visible through the accommodation base. In 2010, 7,973,724 people used accommodation,

in 2020 – 6,841,762 (pandemic year), and in 2021 – 8,823,230 [Rocznik Statystyczny Województwa Małopolskiego 2022]. The podhaleregion.pl portal, relying on Selectiv's ICT data, reported that 'in 2022, Małopolska's revenue from tourism amounted to just over PLN 11 billion, while current data allowed to estimate that this year will exceed the revenue from the record-breaking 2019, when it reached 15 billion. (...) Summing up the summer tourist season in Krakow and Małopolska, it is important to note spectacular increases in tourist traffic, especially from abroad. The summer holiday season saw a 174% increase in the number of foreign tourists compared to the 2022 holiday season – from 128,000 to 352,000 (...). The number of domestic tourists (excluding residents of the Małopolska voivodeship) increased by 3% in August 2023 compared to August 2022 – from 1.63 million to 1.68 million. (...) Comparing the holiday months in 2023, it should be noted that in August 2023 the number of people visiting the region increased by 24% compared to July 2023. The number of foreign tourists (excluding Ukrainians) increased by 13% in August 2023 compared to July 2023 – from 166,000 to almost 187,000. An even greater increase of 36% was recorded among domestic tourists (excluding residents of the Małopolska voivodeship) compared to July 2023 – from almost 1.23 million to 1.68 million. Just as in July, tourists from Germany, the USA, Great Britain, Slovakia, and Israel were the most frequent visitors to Małopolska in August, while domestic travel was predominantly from the Mazowieckie, Śląskie, Małopolskie, Podkarpackie and Dolnośląskie voivodeships. Compared to July this year, the length of visits of foreign tourists changed in August; one should note a definite prevalence of one-day and 5–8 day visits in favour of 3–4 day visits' [Letni sezon turystyczny w Krakowie i Małopolsce (podsumowanie) 2023]. When analysing tourism data, it is worth remembering that the European Games were held in Małopolska and Silesia in 2023. According to estimates provided by Onet.pl on 6 July 2023, the event brought significant financial benefits to Krakow, as 'the Games were an opportunity to raise over PLN 500 million. On top of that, there was funding for road and infrastructure investments and sports. Overall, what Krakow gained many times exceeded the costs incurred in hosting the Games, which amounted to PLN 100 million' [Igrzyska w Krakowie kosztowały krocie... 2023]. It will take a few years to capitalise on the branding value, but the event can be expected to pay off even more [Borek 2023].

These results indicate the need to invest in the development of the tourist base. In order to maintain sustainable development of Krakow, it remains essential to attract tourists by, among other things, creating an interesting offer for a longer stay. The challenge is a serious one, because, as analyses by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism indicate, the summer season of 2023 can be considered very good: 'there were over 97% more visitors from the Czech Republic than the year before, 47% from Lithuania, 36% from the United States, 27% from Slovakia, and 8% from the United Kingdom. Overall, the number of foreign arrivals increased by 36% and domestic tourist traffic by 7%, compared to the same period in 2022' [Frydrykiewicz 2023]. The dynamic expansion of the restaurant base is another important element in building Krakow's image. To some extent, the crowning achievement of these efforts was the awarding of Michelin stars to three Polish restaurants, including one from Kraków – the Bottiglieria

1881 restaurant, which was the only one in Poland to receive a second star [Polska w Przewodniku Michelin 2023].

An important aspect of social tourism concerns the elimination or reduction of barriers preventing people from exercising their right to tourism. The scope for supporting this idea was the subject of a debate held in Mszana Dolna in June 2023 [Rozwój turystyki społecznej... 2023]. The opportunities for safe cycling or other singletrack were also discussed, which complements the idea of spending time actively, but also raises concerns. The NIK report, published on 27 April 2023, shows that ‘in 2020 the total length of roads for bicycles in our country, which were under the management of local self-government units, amounted to 17.3 thousand km (...). Compared to 2019, 1.7 thousand km of cycle paths have been built (i.e. 11%)’ [Infrastruktura rowerowa w miastach... 2023]. In 2014, the length of this type of infrastructure in Krakow totalled 142.5 km, while in 2022 it reached 250 km [Coraz więcej dróg rowerowych w Krakowie... 2023]. In 2023, the Municipality of Krakow allocated PLN 17.9 million for the creation of cycle paths [Program budowy ścieżek rowerowych 2023]. At the same time, it should be noted, that the NIK indicated as threats ‘the lack of indicators which would allow monitoring of the set objectives of the prepared planning documents concerning cycling infrastructure’ [Infrastruktura rowerowa w miastach... 2023]. A problem, also affecting the Nowa Huta Meadows and other green areas, are scooters abandoned practically everywhere, which creates an obstacle for people as well as animals. Another challenge that needs to be urgently addressed is the traffic of singletracks such as electric scooters on pavements and recreational paths. The media are increasingly reporting not only about pedestrians being hit, but also about a person on a scooter suddenly running under a vehicle. These situations occur because scooter users share pavements with pedestrians, but develop much higher speeds. In Poland, the limit set by municipal authorities is up to 20 km/h [Dorocki 2022]. Data from the Police Headquarters shows that ‘the number of road accidents involving electric scooter users has increased. In the eight months of 2022, 324 accidents were recorded in Poland (...), three people were killed and 323 injured’ [Warner 2023]. A safer form of travel is by bicycle. The Krakow authorities in 2023 made 250 electric bicycles available to residents, primarily for long-term rental [Mapy rowerowe 2023]. A significant new trend emerging in the leisure sector is sustainable tourism and its growth will need to be given more attention in spatial planning.

4. Conclusions

Nowa Huta was intended to be a showcase of the People’s Republic of Poland – a state with a classless system, a statement of social change, and an ideological message. However, from the very beginning, efforts to implement this premise met with resistance from the inhabitants. This is why every important foreign delegation visited first Wawel and then Nowa Huta. Visitors included Valentina Tereshkova, Fidel Castro, and Marshal Rodion Malinowski (commander of the Warsaw Pact). The authorities boasted of their achievements while remaining silent about the costs of popular resistance. The struggle centred, besides property issues and historical truth, on faith. It must be remembered

that the people who came to Nowa Huta were committed to religious traditions and thus there was a strong relationship between people, animals, land and work, taking the form of care for the commons entrusted to man. In this context, the presence of animals and respect for them became an element of upholding tradition – a struggle against the new authorities – who ‘regarded the horse as a relic’ [Sami swoi 1967]. Today, it is important to recall, especially to younger researchers, that communism neglected the spiritual sphere, understood not only in its religious aspects, but also in the ecological. Nature was to submit to industrialisation. The changes were so fast that they almost led to the extinction of many plant and animal species. Environmental pollution caused fauna to flee outside the cities. Thirty years ago hardly anyone saw storks, roe deer, wild boar, squirrels or even bees in the city. Instead, chimneys and the smoke that flew from them were visible – a measure of the progress of civilisation [Domke 2018]. Socialist cities such as Nowa Huta were becoming ecological deserts – but up to a point.

Looking at Nowa Huta today one may notice a large number of wild animals as well as companion animals, which especially senior citizens keep at home. For many of them, a dog or cat is a substitute for a deceased spouse – as giving them human names could be understood [Nowa Huta – miejsca niezwykłe 2019]. The abundance of green areas promotes the coexistence of humans and animals. Also pigeons – which are a symbol of Krakow – have populated this district. Contact with nature is an important element of human socialisation. Nowa Huta, in this respect, is a perfect example that depriving people of this contact is harmful and ineffective in the long term.

The history and development of Nowa Huta as a monument to the idea of building a socialist city ‘without God’ was driven by many factors, including its location on agricultural land situated in the north-east of Krakow. It is presented in the subject literature as a new model of urbanisation, which linked the emergence and development of the city to the construction of an industrial centre, which was related to the country’s forced industrialisation [Adamski 1975]. Nowadays, the 18th District is a popular tourist attraction as visitors, not only from Poland but also from abroad, want to immerse themselves in communist atmosphere, which has been very well preserved in the architecture and urban planning in Nowa Huta. Not only do they walk between socialist realist buildings, look at stylised flats, peek into shelters, take photos with the tank standing next to the Museum of the Armed Act, but they also get a taste of the era in the Stylowa restaurant or milk bars [Wizyta w mieszkaniu z epoki 2023]. This experience is particularly valuable for people from the ‘free world’ – those on the other side of the Iron Curtain, to whom this system is alien. Unfortunately, very often their fascination with the architecture and planning order of the ‘old Nowa Huta’, a kind of ‘cult’ of the People’s Republic of Poland, blinds them to the totalitarian nature of this system, which not only harmed people, but also destroyed the natural environment.

Krakow and its districts are covered by a policy of sustainable tourism, i.e. one that benefits the city and the local community, supports its cultural heritage and protects the natural environment. The adopted policy combines the needs of tourists with conscious consumption, and long-term planning that takes into account ecological solutions and the comfort of residents in accordance with the ‘respect Krakow’ motto. This activity is

also linked to the city authorities taking responsibility for the storytelling of Krakow. The unification of the narrative and the format is connected with a concern not to distort the past. Also important is the positioning of the city's reputation in international rankings, participation in national and international projects [Polityka zrównoważonej turystyki Krakowa... 2021]. The activation of the local community and visitors by multiplying the message about Krakow on social media is also vital. They are encouraged to participate in various initiatives such as the 'Tell me the city' ['Opowiedz mi miasto'] [2023] campaign by the Krakow Museum, which engages residents and tourists in discovering the past. It is also important to encourage the use of hashtags, such as '#krakow' used on Instagram, which takes us to the city's website [Kraków 2023b] (similarly on Facebook [Kraków 2023a]). The city, like many others in the world, has a Visual Identity System (SIW), which not only makes it stand out from others, but is part of its promotional strategy. It is derived from a logotype referring to the medieval plan of Krakow's main square with a characteristic street grid. The white and blue colours allude to the city's flag, whose traditions date back to the Free City of Krakow (1815–1846). The white symbolises purity and the blue represents the ribbon of the Vistula River. The coat of arms, which is a symbol of tradition, prestige and uniqueness, plays a prominent role in the identification of the city [Księga znaku – System Identyfikacji Wizualnej Krakowa 2023].

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