

RAILWAY STATIONS AS GENERATORS OF SYSTEMIC REPAIR OF THE CITY CENTRE OF KATOWICE. RETURN TO THE ESSENCE OF THE CITY

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Abstract

The debate on the essence of the city calls for the consideration of the role of its structural elements in the loss or strengthening of this essence. The Author's understanding of the 'essence of the city' is its accessibility and diversity: accessibility of diversity and diversified accessibility. In this context, the subject matter of this paper is an analysis of the role of railway stations and the public spaces that accompany them upon the example of Katowice.

Citygenic role of the railway line and stations in the incorporation and development of the city

The establishment of the railway station in Katowice was connected with the development of industry within the territory of Upper Silesia in the second half of the 19th century – in the period when this region was ruled by the Kingdom of Prussia. In 1836 a project of a link between the railway area of Upper Silesia and Wrocław, and further on Berlin or Dresden, was proposed. In Upper Silesia the course of the line led through Gliwice, Zabrze, Świętochłowice, and Mysłowice – initially omitting Katowice, which later on found itself on the list of towns intersected by the railway line. On 5 April 1841 the Upper Silesian Railways Society was established – the Wrocław-Mysłowice line itself was executed in stages, and the section from Świętochłowice through Katowice to Mysłowice was put into use on 3 October 1846. The station of Katowice was located outside inhabited areas – between the villages of Dąb and Szopienice, right in the area of the today's railway station. The decision to build the railway station had a direct effect on the extremely rapid development of Katowice, as well as of the industrial plants located in this area, which over subsequent years got gradually connected with the system of railway links that was emerging. In June 1858, under an agreement concluded between the Upper Silesian Railways and the Warsaw-Vienna Railway, the construction of a link between Szopienice and Zabkowice was launched – the celebration of the opening of this section was held as early as in one year (on 24 August 1859), and several days later it was put into public use. The launch of this section was significant from the point of view of the continuity of the railway line; furthermore, it allowed trains heading for Warsaw to avoid the territory of the Austrian Empire.

During the execution of this line, the previous railway station of Katowice was demolished and a new edifice was erected, which today constitutes a part of the present 'old railway station'. The building that was erected then matched the scale of the fast developing industrial city, as well as it addressed the needs of servicing of the prestigious railway connection between Warsaw and Vienna. Thanks to this line Katowice obtained a convenient connection with the Polish Kingdom, with Galicia, the Czech state, as well as further into Prussia, and it became an important border railway hub, which started to play an essential role in the cargo traffic, and later on in the passenger traffic in all directions. Due to the growing passenger traffic, the station of Katowice became the second largest passenger railway station – right behind Wrocław – of the Upper Silesian Railway. This factor, next to the cargo traffic, constituted a motor for the development of Katowice, constituting one of the main citygenic factors of Katowice, which also thanks to it obtained municipal rights in 1865.

At the end of the 19th century it became obvious that owing to the rapid development of the city the railway station needed to be extended. Due to the existing urban tissue, it was decided to divide the railway station into two parts: the passenger and the cargo part. The existing railway station was extended in the period 1906-1908, by adding a new building to it, which fulfilled administrative functions. The old station took over the passenger function, whereas nearby a part servicing the cargo traffic was erected (in the place of the today's new railway station), together with the fan-like steam locomotive bay located to this day several hundred meters to the west from the today' railway station. The extended edifice of the passenger railway station became a link between two parts of the city intersected with the railway line (via underground passages), and thus it was accessible from the north from Dworcowa street (the main entrance), as well as from the south from Kościuszki street. In the interwar period, when Katowice was incorporated to Poland, as well as in the period following the World War II, this station still played a very important role in the railway traffic network in the scale of the region.

Figure 1. View of Dworcowa street and located opposite the "old" railway station - Hotel Monopol. Originally Dworcowa street served roles a railway station square - public space with services and greenery



Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

Figure 2. View of the building of the "old" railway station after extension in 1908 - station was extended by a new building performing administrative functions



Source: www.old.katowice.eu

For about 100 years the railway station erected in the 1850s was the most important railway structure in Upper Silesia. The rank and prestige of this place in Katowice is confirmed not only by the fact that it serviced one of the most important railway connections at the time, or that this station fulfilled the role of the main stopover for passengers travelling within the territory of Upper Silesia, but also by the impact of the location and prestige of the edifice of the railway station on the urban space relating to it. Dworcowa street, where the station as located, was perceived as the main public space of Katowice at the time. At the corner of Dworcowa and Pocztowa streets the first outpatient clinic in Katowice was opened. In the interwar period at 5 Dworcowa street there was the office of the Railway Directorate. Until 1939 the 'Central' hotel, the 'Kaiser-Automat' restaurant, the 'Monopolowa' restaurant, the Agra u Commerzbank bank, the Dresden Bank, the Railway Saving Fund, and many other institutions functioned at Dworcowa street. At the time, this 'functional dyad' (railway station – street) was the core of the developing city – the prestigious building of the railway station, as well as the prestigious character of Dworcowa street, operated like one organism accumulating all sorts of functions and activities which were the essence of the city of Katowice.

Two railway stations. The fall of the 'old' railway station due to the erection of the 'new' one as a synonym of urbanism – development, and then degradation

In the 1950s, due to the reached capacity and volume limits of the railway station, as well as owing to the fact that only one of all the platforms was adjusted to servicing of long trains, a decision was made to erect a new edifice of the railway station in Katowice, which was to become a new symbol of the city, corresponding to the development of the second half of the

20th century. Two locations were taken into account: the first one was a thorough reconstruction of the territory of the then cargo station, and the second – re-designing of the entire railway system and location of the edifice of the railway station near the Baildon Steelworks. Eventually, it was decided that the second option was too costly and time-consuming, and it was decided to reconstruct the area of the cargo railway station and to erect the main edifice of the railway station from the side of the exit of Stawowa street, where in the course of construction a temporary pavilion of the railway station was located. The reconstruction of the railway station consisted of two stages: the first stage was connected with the reconstruction of the entire trackway system. The first platforms were put into use in 1958, and the last ones along with the pavilion from the side of Kościuszki street – 10 years later. The second stage comprised construction works focusing on the main edifice of the station and some smaller pavilions with secondary entrances to the railway station. In 1959 a competition announced by the Polish Architects Society for a design of a new edifice of the railway station was settled – the winner was a team of Warsaw-based ‘Tiger’ architects: Waław Kłyszewski, Jerzy Mokrzyński, and Eugeniusz Wierzbicki ¹. In 1964 the entrance pavilion from the side of Andrzeja Square was put into use. For the purposes of the construction of the main edifice of the station, a sequence of eclectic tenements in the quarter between 3 Maja, Młyńska, and Stawowa streets was demolished. The construction of the station was completed in 1972 and throughout the entire period of its operation it was regarded as Poland’s best example of brutalism in architecture. Due to mining experts’ opinions, during the designing process it was decided that the roof should be supported by powerful reinforced-concrete posts, which assumed a very characteristic and unique form of ‘chalices’. The edifice of the railway station was 140 metres long and 53 metres wide, and its cubic capacity was 76,314 m³. Two floors of the main edifice were interconnected with a shopping and service pavilion at the level of the tunnels leading passengers to the platforms, as well as linking the railway station with the southern part of the city and Andrzeja square. The upper floor of the main hall of the station was occupied predominantly by a huge waiting room with ticket windows, as well as a coffee shop, newspaper stands, a post office, an information desk, and office spaces – all this crowned with a spectacular ceiling with the ‘chalices’. The lower floor – somewhat less spectacular – also held ticket windows, as well as a restaurant, a bar, toilets, the left luggage office, the lost property office, and a daily hotel connected with the waiting room on the first floor. The two-floor functional system was connected with a very characteristic system of access to the railway station from the south – the upper floor was accessible only on foot from a several hundred metre long footbridge – a trestle – linking the railway station with 3 Maja street and public transport stops located along it. The footbridge was running over the coach station servicing the entire Upper Silesian conurbation. The lower floor, on the other hand, was accessible for persons using car transport or taxis.

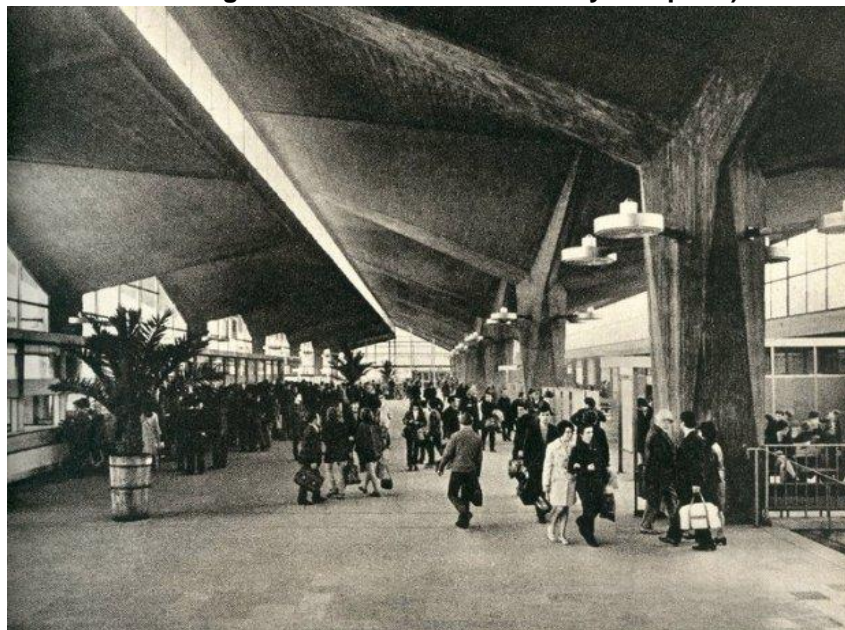
¹ One of the best known teams of architects after the World War II. The exact biography and the rich output of the team, including the description of the railway station in Katowice, is contained in a book by Tadeusz Barucki - *Tygrysy/Tigers*, Wydawnictwo Salix Alba, Warsaw 2014

Figure 3. View of the building of the "new" train station built in 1972, according to a design competition won by team "Tygrysy": Waclaw Kłyszewski, Jerzy Mokrzyński and Eugeniusz Wierzbicki



Source: www.bryla.pl

Figure 4. A view of the interior hall of the "new" station (level of cash and footbridge entrance from the Szewczyka Square)



Source: www.bryla.pl

Figure 5. A view of the footbridge entrance into the "new" station from the square Szewczyka Square and 3 Maja Street



Source: www.bryla.pl

As the 'brutalist' work of the Tigers was put into use, the building of the 'old railway station' at Dworcowa street was gradually ceasing to fulfil its role in terms of the railway function, as well as the representative one. The same affected Dworcowa street itself, which from a characteristic, prestigious and elegant public space inseparably connected with the edifice of the railway station, with a very rich functional programme in the nearby buildings, became a back street / a car park, which occupied its entire characteristic width, which had always predestined it to the role of a square.

Figure 6. View of the present space Dworcowa Street - visible dominance of cars and the lack of a defined public space in front of the "old" station



Source: www.katowice.naszemiasto.pl

Ever since the opening of the new railway station and since the occurrence of the problem of 'development' of the old station, the authorities of Katowice did not have any clear concept for the development of the building of the station and of Dworcowa street. After over 50 years this situation has not changed, despite the fact that in 1975 the building of the railway station was included in the inventory of monuments.

The edifice of the 'new' railway station was a synonym of Katowice's urbanism – it became an icon and a representative salon of the city – a top class public space embedded in the railway station. Unfortunately, throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, the building of the 'Tigers' was never renovated and its interiors were filled with quite accidental service outlets, which chaotically filled its 'clean space opened towards the city'². It was gradually falling into decline, transforming this representative space, used by travellers and inhabitants alike wishing to use its auxiliary services, into a nest of pathology and degrading this place into a space not accepted by inhabitants, dangerous, calling for definite interventions.

Revitalisation ideas: competitions – original intention to return to the essence of the city:

Dworcowa street competition: 'Intensification of urbanism', via the quality of public spaces.

The authorial design vision of space development around the 'old' railway station³

The density, interspersion, and diversity of functions in city centres foster the development of the area and is a factor of the sense of security and mental comfort by the increase of the activity of streets in different times of the day and night.

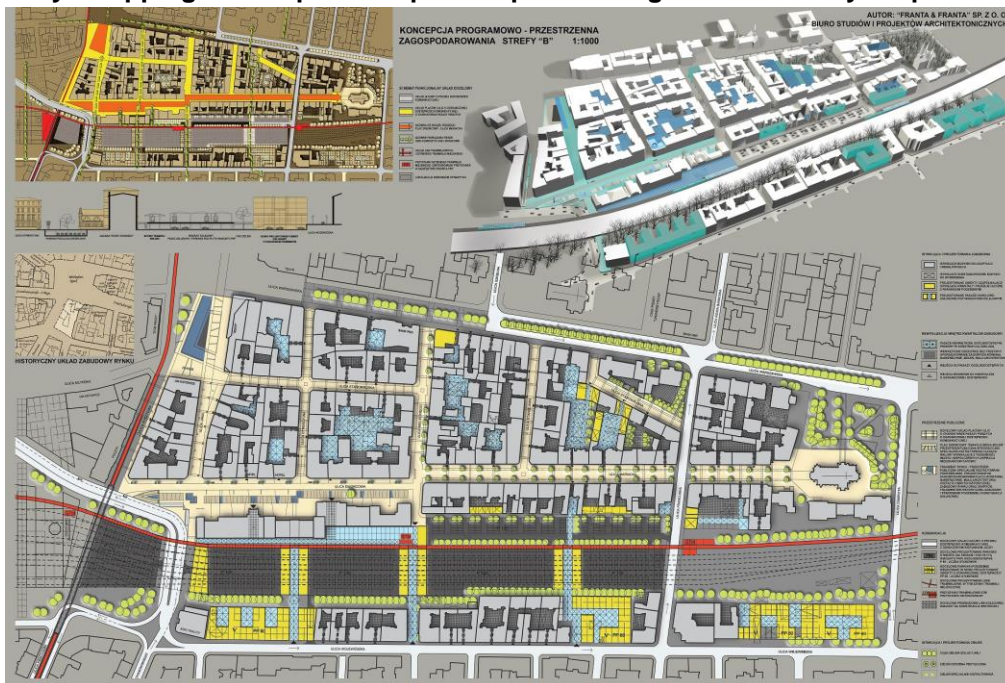
The competition for a concept of land development in the area of Dworcowa street and adjacent streets (located in the centre of Katowice) was also to answer the question referring to the traffic system, but only in the context of justification for the decision taken by the city authorities in advance, concerning excluding Dworcowa street from traffic.

² This is how the authors of the design described the spatial concept of the railway station.

³ Competition design awarded with the 2nd prize in the competition of the Polish Architects Society in 2005 for the 'Programme and spatial concept of the architectural and urban development of Św. Jana, Dworcowa, Mariacka streets and Mielęckiego, Stanisława and Starowiejska streets in Katowice' – design team: Ewa Franta, M.Sc.Eng.Arch.; Piotr Franta, M.Sc.Eng.Arch.; cooperation: Monika Wilk, M.Sc.Eng.Arch.; Julian Franta – student at the Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology; Maciej Franta - student at the Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology.

One of the fundamental conceptual assumptions of the project awarded second prize - in terms of traffic - was to exclude Dworcowa street from the road traffic on its entire length, i.e. from Poczтова street as far as to Mielęckiego street, in order to create a pedestrian passage – the Old Railway Station Square – with the prestigious significance for Katowice. For the same reason it was decided to exclude Mariacka street from the car traffic along the section from Mielęckiego street until Francuska street – as an extension of the pedestrian passage of Dworcowa street. Due to the character of the entire concept of rendering the city centre accessible exclusively to pedestrians, it was assumed that the target would be to exclude Starowiejska, Stanisława, and Mielęckiego streets from car traffic, as well.

Figure 7. The competition concept awarded 2 prize - an attempt to create a public space in Dworcowa street and the streets adjacent to it. The project involved the recovery of the space by swapping these spaces in public spaces designed exclusively for pedestrians.



Source: the Author's archives, 2005

In terms of functional and spatial transformations, it was proposed to adapt and revalorise the complex of former Polish Railways structures at Dworcowa street, with the proposed conversion into a prestigious 'Old Railway Station' Gallery with diversified functions relating to culture, trade, and administration (art gallery, exhibition halls, restaurants, coffee shops, clubs, top quality retail outlets gallery). Due to the proposed rich and diversified functional programme of the 'Old Railway Station' Gallery, it was decided to place the Fast Municipal Tramway stops⁴ at

⁴ Fast Municipal Tramway – the authors' name for a tram which would make use of a free track in the city centre of Katowice and both railway stations. The tramway would allow for a collision-free and rapid transport around the city centre and further on to external quarters of the city and adjacent towns.

the back of the historic structures of the Old Railway station and an integrated public transport stop in the area of Pocztowa street⁵. It was also decided to transform Dworcowa street into a prestigious public space 'Linear Garden LIGHT – WATER – GREENERY'. In the vicinity of the railway embankment, in the direct neighbourhood of the 'old' railway station, it was planned to erect shopping and service galleries with public car parks linking both sides of the city. Due to the sub-standard character of the set-back buildings in the area of Dworcowa street, it was decided to demolish them in order to create internal yards allowing to stimulate additional spaces near Dworcowa street for public use.

A street is so much more than a road. A road is just a traffic channel, whereas a street is a social space, a public expression of the fashion in which people live and contact each other, entering all sorts of interactions. Such a street as Dworcowa is so much more than just a street – it is the 'old railway station square'. In order to reveal the rich architecture of the existing buildings and to strengthen the prestige of the place, the composition of shaping of the public space of the Old Railway Station Square was based most of all on a simple and legible form of the square development, linear due to its proportions - the Linear Garden: light, water, greenery – with an emphasis put on the main dominants and directions of the existing and planned spatial relations, such as Św. Jana, Dyrekcyjna, Mielęckiego streets, the end of the square in the area of Pocztowa street, and the main entrances to the 'Old Railway Station gallery'. It was decided to introduce water in the Linear Garden in the form of fountains, water belts, and 2 illuminated water posts, which were to constitute an essential element of the development of the Square. Belts of low greenery for the purposes of exposition (an open-air gallery of industrial arts) and specially shaped vertical greenery (on cuboid posts made of stainless steel) along the northern frontage of Dworcowa street additionally revive this space, making it more friendly towards all its users. It was decided that most fittings of the square should be completed with seats with a simple form of a concrete bench finished with a sandstone slab, located along the green belts and connected with the light posts. All the aforementioned elements of the 'Linear Garden' allowed to zone the space of the Old Railway Station Square, dividing it into 3 parts – the space directly connected with the 'Old Railway Station' Gallery, the space of relaxation focused around the 'Linear Garden', and the shared zone at the northern frontage of the Square, whose character was adjusted to the free flow of pedestrians heading for different destinations, making use of all the services accumulated there. The composition of the square was completed with an underground car park, intended predominantly to cater for the parking needs of guests of the 'Monopol' and 'Diament' hotels, with an option of linking the level of the car park with the level of the basements of the hotels and the Old Railway Station Gallery.

⁵ Change of the course of the tramway – simplification of its course between the northern and southern part of the city. This solution would allow to link the tram stop with platforms of the 'new' railway station from the east.

Figure 8. The competition concept awarded 2 prize – “Linear Garden” at the Dworcowa Street – an “old” railway station square postulated in the competition design

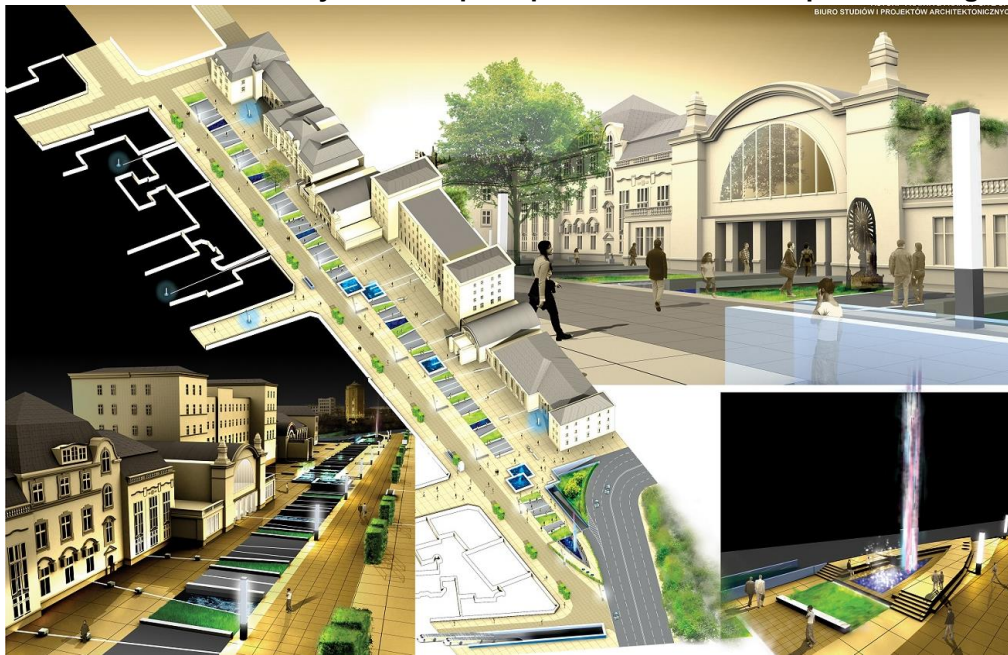


Photo: the Author's archives, 2005

The layout of the square was completed with pedestrian zones – Mariacka, Św. Jana, Mielęckiego, Stanisława, and Starowiejska streets. The postulated development of other streets was to focus on pedestrian zones, executed in stages.

The development of individual passages was adjusted to the character and sections of individual streets. The public space is shaped by the appropriate selection of materials and elements of fittings – the surface layout emphasises entrances to internal passages in development quarters, representative low street lighting and illumination of buildings create an atmosphere of intimacy, and the decorative greenery – a green line along Mariacka street, a line on one side of Mielęckiego street, green sections along Starowiejska street – complete the whole composition and subtly revive the public space.

The intention of the described concept was to ‘restore the memory and the prestige’ of the former Dworcowa street, and to create its new dimension adjusted to the needs of the contemporary society of the post-industrial city. The way the city is perceived constitutes an essential part of its identity.⁶ And it is perceived through the prism of the history and the present.

⁶ Anna Franta, *Rola restrukturyzacji obszarów postindustrialnych w kreowaniu nowych rodzajów przestrzeni publicznych metropolii – stymulująca funkcja przyjętych regulacji*. Publishing House of Cracow University of Technology, Czasopismo Techniczne, Cracow 2007.

'City Centre' Competition – 'New railway station – urbanism stimulator – generator of systemic repair and continuity, and complementarity of public space in the scale of north-south links.

The authorial design vision of development of space in the area of the 'new' railway station in Katowice⁷

The key role for the determination of the spatial structure of the central zone of each city is played by the integral approach to functional, spatial, and traffic solutions in the area, especially the correct determination of their mutual relations and revalorisation.

In the period when the aforementioned project was undertaken, the condition of the 'new' railway station was far from the standards expected by its users. It kept functioning as an element linking both parts of the city, but the quality of those connections, as well as the lack of logical spatial relations between the railway station and the public spaces on both its sides, called for a total vision of its reconstruction.

One of the main elements crystallising the presented concept is offering the city centre exclusively to pedestrians, creating sequences of public spaces emphasising the existing urban structure of the architecture of Katowice in the area of the Roundabout – Korfantego Avenue – Market Square, as well as the area of the Railway Station – 3 Maja street – Warszawska street (the northern part of the city), and Kościuszki street and Andrzeja square (the southern part of the city), demarcating an area with a limited access for car traffic and the priority for public transport in the traffic solutions of the centre of Katowice that stems from it.

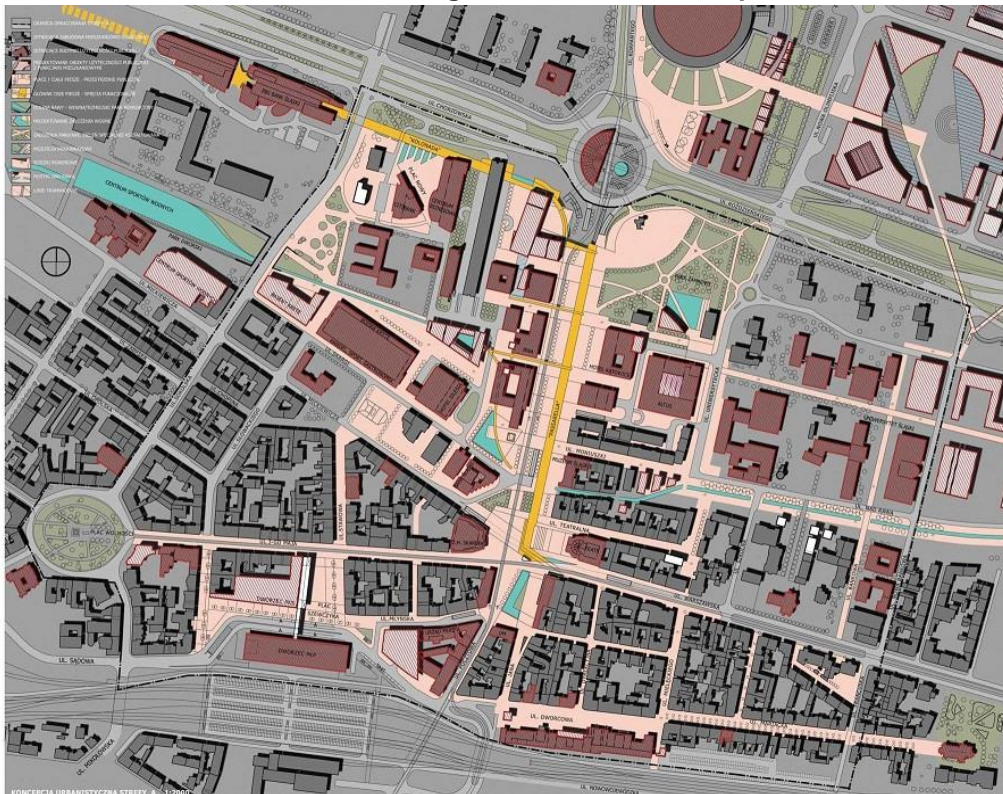
An element recognised as essential for shaping of the centre of Katowice, as a centre of the Upper Silesian agglomeration with the population of 3 million, acceptable by its users, was the execution – as a targeted solution - of an integrated public transport stop in the vicinity of the railway station and Pocztowa street, along with the execution of an underground coach station, as well as the execution of the Silesian Regional Railway replacing in the city centre the route of the tramway along Wolności square, 3 Maja street, Warszawska street, accompanied by the liquidation of the road traffic along Korfantego street, with shifting of the tramway towards the west and introducing it in Pocztowa street in order to demarcate a more convenient course of the tramway to the other side of the railway tracks.

The 'new' railway station since its very beginnings had always had a very characteristic structure – it was a link between the two parts of the city. In the concept referred to above it was

⁷ Competition work granted with the 3rd award in the competition of the Polish Architects Society in 2005 for the 'Development of an urban and architectural concept for the development of the city centre in Katowice' – design team: Anna Franta, Ph.D.Eng.Arch.; Ewa Franta, M.Sc.Eng.Arch.; Julian Franta, M.Sc.Eng.Arch.; Piotr Franta, M.Sc.Eng.Arch.; cooperation: Maciej Franta - student at the Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology, Ewa Szafraniec - student at the Faculty of Architecture, Cracow University of Technology, Monika Wilk, M.Sc.Eng.Arch.

decided to emphasise the role it fulfilled in the public space of Katowice. It was decided to crystallise and improve the legibility of relations towards the north from the edifice of the railway station along Stawowa street and further on to the newly-designed service and recreation zone to the west of Korfantego avenue.

Figure 8. The competition concept of awarded 3 prize in the competition - an attempt to create a public space within Korfantego Avenue and the streets adjacent to it. The project involved the creation of pedestrian spatial relationships between several key points in the central area of Katowice, including a clear link between the railway station zone and Korfantego Avenue and main square



Source: the Author's archives, 2007.

Additionally, it was managed to complete the development quarter adjacent to the railway station⁸ with a structure which was to fulfil the function of a coach station, as well as to create a public space in Szewczyka Square, where for years there had been final stops of many public buses servicing the Upper Silesian agglomeration. This way it was managed to create two linear sequences of public spaces, where one along the direction of east-west connected Wolności square and via the passage along 3 Maja street intersected the Market Square and further on reached the passage along Warszawska street, which was supposed to be a pedestrian zone

⁸ It was partially demolished in connection with the execution of the 'new' building of the railway station.

along some more several hundred metres, and the second along the direction of north-east intersected the railway across the revitalised railway station and further on across Szewczyka square, Stawowa Street it slowly reached Korfantego avenue and the space of the Roundabout, which in this concept was to be a keystone of all the sequences of public spaces.

Figure 9. The competition concept of awarded 3 prize in the competition – conceptual view of the Korfantego Avenue – main public space in Katowice



Source: the Author's archives, 2007

Railway stations have always fulfilled the role of generators of traffic in the city. Currently, railway stations have become multifunctional transfer nodes, which to a greater and greater extent influence their surrounding areas. The hybrid character of their spaces accounts for the fact that the areas surrounding railway stations become more and more dependent on them – good spatial and functional solutions should have a decisive effect on the quality of changes in the space that surrounds them, becoming the generator of a systemic repair of the city.

Figure 10. Conceptual scheme of the extension of “new” railway station area with car parks and public space Szewczyka Square between “new” railway station and 3 Maja street

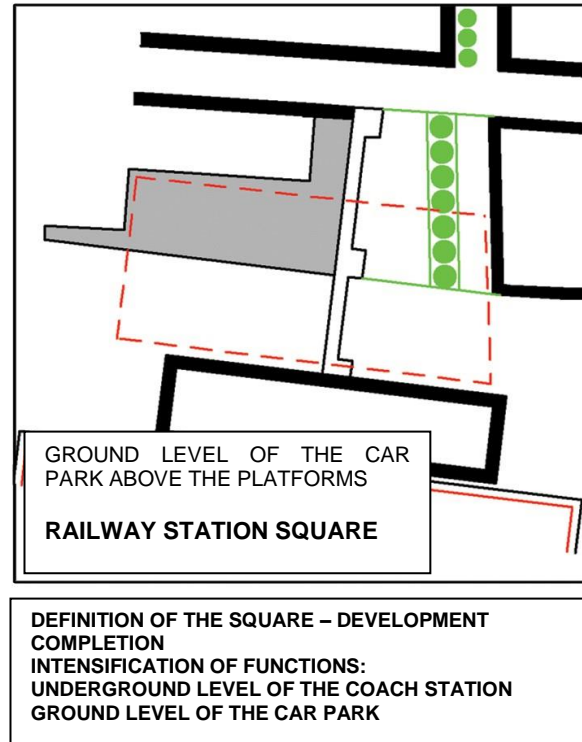


Photo: the Author's archives, 2007

Current state – implementation of the investment in the railway station zone. Return to or loss of the essence of urbanism?

Due to the Football European Championship organised in 2012 in Poland and Ukraine, the Polish Railways (PKP) decided to modernise the most important railway stations in Poland, including the railway station in Katowice, which was to be reconstructed together with the area adjacent to it. In 2010 the reconstruction of the station area was launched. The investor's operations came in for numerous protests when it was revealed that the initial reconstruction was in fact to consist in the demolition of the work of the 'Tigers' and replacing it with a shopping and service structure, and the function of the railway station itself would be marginalised to platform passages and a relatively small hall – a makeshift of the railway which for years then had been the pride of the city. The very conceptual idea to combine two parts of the city with a railway station prevailed, but it was no longer so legible as it had been in the demolished project. Today a pedestrian wishing to reach the northern part of the city from the southern one, needs to cross the little legible shopping zone before reaching the space of 3

Maja street. The new investment was much greater than the 'brutalist' railway station. The newly-erected shopping gallery took over the entire space of Szewczyka square, converting a potential public space⁹ into an introvert shopping space, separated from public spaces of the city. The basements of the project hold an underground car park and a coach station, which eventually is only a remnant of what used to function here for more than half of a century.

Balance – this is a word which during the period of operation of the 'old' as well as the 'new' railway station was a synonym of these spaces. Wherever there was a top-quality public space (external and internal), an appropriately balanced functional programme, which created the feeling of complementarity of these spaces, made this space equally accessible for everybody at each time of the day. The lack of relevant knowledge and awareness of the municipal authorities and investors, driven exclusively by the profits, leads to the execution of non-functional structures, which have a destructive effect on the fashion in which the public space that surrounds them functions, as well as on its diversity. The accessibility of diversity – the diverse accessibility – both these co-existing notions very distinctly define the characteristic functional programme of areas of old railway stations, as well as contemporary hybrid solutions of transfer nodes in city centres. They also define in the same way the sense of functioning of a contemporary city as an appropriately balanced structure, rich in diversity, as well as diverse in terms of its accessibility.

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⁹ Over the entire period of operation of the Tigers' railway station, there was a bus depot in Szewczyka Square, which serviced the entire territory of the Upper Silesian agglomeration.

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