

THE STORY OF ONE CASE AGAINST ITS BACKGROUND: PRESERVING THE COACH STATION IN KIELCE

Abstract

Polish transformations in the late twentieth century facilitated fast economic, social, and civilization development; on the other hand, especially within spatial formation, they brought all the disadvantages of liberalism without legal protection. The attractiveness of available Western models, the development of the construction market, as well as altered tastes, resulted in a willingness to liquidate proof of the bygone socialist period, including the field of architecture and urbanism. Afterwards, the rejection mode made way for more sensible measures, even nostalgia and the appreciation of the previously unwanted heritage. This article presents the case of the coach station (“The UFO”) in Kielce against the background of positive and negative examples of the vicissitudes of layouts and objects realized from 1945–1980. The municipal authorities, developers, inhabitants, architects, and urban planners participated in discussions and actions concerning the fate of these objects. The author’s expertise contributed to the final positive result.

Keywords: architectural heritage, urban design, continuity, image of the city

1. Introduction

The first years of the twenty-first century mark the continuous progress of globalization in the world’s flow of information, merchandise, and people. One can also stand in opposition to this phenomenon by supporting local movements, enhancing regional features, and popularizing local craftsmanship and creation. It seems that only a combination of the advantages of both processes may be conducive to a balance in social, environmental, spatial, and even economic, development.

In 2012, the authors of the Charter European Planning – an extension of the New Athens Charter of 2003¹ – emphasized the necessity to search for local separateness as counterweight to the inevitable globalization which can be useful in many areas. The charter proposes a vision for the future of European cities and regions as a network where they should preserve their cultural richness and uniqueness, as well as the diversity inherent in their long histories.

To a large extent (which is obvious), the postulates of the European Planning Charter enhance the message of the principles of sustainable design. According to the decisions of individual states and commonwealth organizations, the twenty-first century should be the age of sustainable economic, social, environmental, and spatial development. The basic assumptions of sustainable development (and the principles of sustainable design) include a number of guidelines – those which refer to saving nonrenewable energy sources, saving energy and water, as well as preserving biodiversity – are most frequently and spectacularly

implemented and propagated. However, we must pay special attention to the principles of respecting a place, respecting a user, and reusing an existing cubature. The 3R principle – reduce, reuse, recycle (with special emphasis upon the second element of this triad) – matches the postulates of the Athens Charter which emphasize distinctness, originality, and local values. In this case, it is important to respect a place with its unique architectural, urban, and scenic values, as well as the predecessors’ works, especially historical ones of high artistic rank.

Polish transformations after the year 1989 facilitated fast economic, social, and civilization development; on the other hand, especially within spatial formation, they brought along all the disadvantages of liberalism without legal protection. The attractiveness of available Western models, and the development of the construction market (as well as altered tastes), resulted in a willingness to liquidate proof of the bygone socialist period, including the field of architecture and urbanism. Afterwards, the rejection mode made way for more sensible measures, even nostalgia and the appreciation of the previously unwanted heritage.

The abovementioned postulates of European urban planners, the principles of sustainable design, and the conscious and subconscious tendency to become distinguished, mean the pursuit, discovery, and enhancement of characteristic features in an urban and architectural space – namely in city building systems, urban layouts, the manners of raising structures, and detail, materials, and maintenance.

2. Postwar Polish urban and architectural heritage

In the postwar period, Poland had indisputable – though very diverse – achievements in the domain of architecture and urban design. Their examples still exist; architectural and urban communities (as well as city dwellers and the municipal authorities) defend against their destruction in an increasingly determined way.

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¹ Amended version of the New Athens Charter (2003) and the European Planning Charter with an additional text concerning spatial planning in Europe. ECTP-CEU, *The Charter of European Planning*, Barcelona 2013.

In a text concerning the precious achievements of post-war Polish urban and architectural thought, it would be impossible not to mention the realization of the urban layout of Nowa Huta, in spite of the obviousness of this example. The city of Nowa Huta, established after World War II, is still a rarity on the global stage. A team of designers, supervised by architect Tadeusz Ptaszycycki, implemented the then most modern mode of thinking about the operation of a city of limited size with a legible urban composition, and a very good layout of social enclosures.² Its programme of primary and secondary services met the requirements of a modern urban centre, whereas the scale of its architecture and inner spaces is still regarded as excellent and appears in the concepts of New Urbanism. Nowa Huta was innovative, therefore it retained its value. The legibility of its layout, and the quality of its transport solutions, enable this district to function and successfully fight for acknowledgement and appropriate rank in the Polish mindset.

In the 1970s, the Cracow University of Technology's Institute of Urban Design and Spatial Planning (the Faculty of Architecture was led by Witold Cęckiewicz), developed the theory of shaping big housing estates, and the formation of innovative concepts. They built various theoretical models of structural units around the most important programmatic elements: the Basic Unit of Social Contacts for c. 500–1,500 m (around a social contact spot); the Unit of Elementary Education (concentrated around a school); and the Unit of Culture, Education, and Recreation (around a service centre). Structural construction, the organization of vehicular traffic and pedestrian movement, and the accessibility of a programme were all solutions that Ralph Erskine applied to the Millennium Village at the turn of the twentieth century. Such scientific accomplishments in the construction of the theory of shaping housing estates and urban structures make an undoubtedly valid achievement worth remembering and teaching within the theory of urban design. Unfortunately, this theory was usually used in research competitions; for example, the estates of the future, in such unimplemented concepts as Chełmońskiego Estate in Krakow, whereas most realizations were incomplete for various reasons.³ We must admit, however, that a number of housing estates built in those years – mainly owing to the authors' knowledge and awareness – satisfy urban criteria, making it possible to attain a good quality housing environment after minor rehabilitation measures.⁴

In spite of economic difficulties (which caused shortcomings in the realization of the municipal programme within urban layouts, and the repetition of mass housing),

some individual buildings, with various functions which prove the authors-designers' professionalism and fit the stylistic trends, came into being, too. Unfortunately, after the transformation of the Polish political system, buildings raised in the 1970s and 1980s began to disappear as unwanted witnesses to the bygone epoch. In Poland, objects of postwar modernist architecture were long perceived through the prism of the political past; as a consequence, they were underestimated and underinvested. Such an outlook often results in a negative assessment from the inhabitants, who mention bad technical conditions, negligence, and a necessity of introducing something "modern". Currently, however, a change in the evaluation of the legacy of the Second World War is noticeable. For several years, Nowa Huta has been regaining its rank as a spectacular urban complex and a good place to live. The same goes for the architecture and urbanism of the city of Nowe Tychy. There are other positive examples. After modernization, the Central Railway Station in Warsaw was rediscovered by the young generation, which appreciated its beauty and innovative design.

Somehow, by accident, railway stations have become examples of the rational preservation of objects – certainly owing to some timeless values, but perhaps because of the weakness of the Polish State Railways which had no money for demolitions and the construction of new structures. Warsaw's stations are of interest.⁵ In the years 1955–1963, the new Central Railway Station, designed by architects Arseniusz Romanowicz and Piotr Szymaniak, was raised. Wojciech Fangor, Jerzy Sołtan and Zbigniew Ihnatowicz prepared its modern interior design. This building attracted people's attention through its aesthetics and functionality. Pedestrian movement was separated here: until the 1980s, Platform 2 (the middle one) was meant for outgoing passengers only, whereas the external Platforms 1 and 3 were for incoming passengers only. The train doors opened onto Platform 2 first, and a little later onto Platform 1 or 3. Moreover, the ticket office halls that led to the platforms were meant for incoming passengers only. In 2006, the refurbishment of the neglected station complex began; now it is included in the entire network of redecorated stops and stations in the capital city.

At the Warsaw Powiśle railway stop, the platforms are still covered by the original concrete shelters. According to the design by Arseniusz Romanowicz and Piotr Szymaniak, this stop and its buildings came into existence in the years 1954–1963. Changes in the treatment of objects from that period are clearly shown by the fate of this place. In 2006 and 2008, the stop and the station buildings were refurbished. In 2008, the provincial restorer suggested including this architectural solution in the register of monuments. In 2013, the names of the designers, Arseniusz Romanowicz and Piotr Szymaniak, were proposed for the little squares outside the entrances to the platforms.

An interesting example of a preserved object (as well as the decision makers' changeable opinions) is the Emilia

² The team included: Arch. T. Ptaszycycki, B. Skrzybalski, J. and M. Ingarden, A. Fołtyn, S. Juchnowicz, T. Rembiesa. After: A. Lorek, *Kontekst kulturowy architektury i urbanistyki sowieckiego totalitaryzmu w świecie wybranych utopii społecznych*, Cracow University of Technology Press, Krakow 2012.

³ The authors of the structural units and estates of the future concepts included: W. Cęckiewicz, J. Gyurkovich, H. Grabowska-Pałęcka, W. Seruga, A. Wyżykowski, K. Bieda, S. Deńko, A. Palej, G. Schneider-Skalska, H. Skalski and A. Frysztak.

⁴ They include the estate complex of Mistrzejowice Wschód, whose initiator was Witold Cęckiewicz.

⁵ Information on Warsaw's stations after: Wikia, (online): http://warszawa.wikia.com/wiki/Warszawa_Powi%C5%9Ble, (date of access: 2014-02).

Pavilion in Warsaw. It received a new function in accordance with its contemporary needs. Based on materials provided by the Postwar Modernism Association, the furniture salon “Emilia” at 51 Emilii Plater Street was constructed alongside the neighbouring residential building in 1967–1969. The authors were Marian Kuźniar and Czesław Wegner; the interior designers were Marian Kuźniar and Hanna Lewicka. Kazimierz Gąsiorowski designed the café mosaic.⁶ A curious solution was to connect the second storey of the pavilion with the café situated in the neighbouring residential building (including an office and trade space) by means of lacings. It produced a cosy public space. However, according to press bulletins, the new function – the seat of the Museum of Modern Art – is temporary and planned for three years. Through the decision of the provincial restorer of January 3, 2013, the pavilion was deleted from the communal register of monuments. According to the restorer’s spokeswoman, “It would be difficult to regard the furniture store Emilia as a historical monument. This relatively young object was realized within typical solutions which are still applied.” However, the capital restorer claims that Emilia is a unique building which confirmed its timeless character while acting as the temporary seat of the Museum of Modern Art.⁷

3. The Coach Station – an icon in the city of Kielce

Against the background of the presented cases, processes, and object vicissitudes, we reveal a successful attempt to preserve the Coach Station, which, although an icon of the city of Kielce, it faces some threats. The authors, architect Edward Modrzejewski, and engineers Jerzy Radkiewicz and Mieczysław Kubala, designed and realized this layout in the years 1975–1984. It is an excellent example of a well-interpreted functionalism, and assumed an original form of good architecture (with solutions on a European scale). At that time, it was the most modern station of this type in Poland. It was expected to serve around 1,500 buses and 24,000 passengers daily. The station was designed on a rotunda plan with circular traffic exposed by the roofing rings. It had internal transport solutions that were very convenient for passengers.

Apart from the vanguard solutions of the traffic concept (and the integrally related form), the designers introduced a number of technological innovations. For the very first time, they installed pragotrons – special boards placed on the platforms that specified destination and departure times. They also introduced a visual head office (monitoring) with cameras installed on each platform. The design created a connection between the ticket office level and the platform level by means of escalators. This solution was not realized, but the construction makes it possible to insert

stairs at any moment. The design provided for a footbridge, or an underground passageway, from the railway station to the coach station, guaranteeing a safe connection.

Due to a dome with bulging skylights, and rings forming the roof and the surrounding shelters above the platform, this layout was nicknamed, “The UFO”. Along with the visible towers of the historical Church of St. Cross, it is a recognizable symbol of the city. Thus, it was obvious that the architectural and cultural value of this object as a spatial sign required the preserved integrity of all the elements – constituting the originality of the form which resulted from the pioneering functional solutions. The appreciation of the value of this object resulted in its inclusion in the communal register of monuments (August 23, 2011). It gives essential information on the Polish Motor Transport Station, such as its location, type of maintenance, material, and condition (good).

In April 2013, the Local Spatial Management Plan, prepared by the Spatial Planning Department of the Office of the City of Kielce (for Central Kielce – Area I.1.3 – Czarnowska, Żelazna St. – Polish Motor Transport Station), was rendered available for public inspection. It proposed an interesting concept of preserving the station, using its potential, and shaping the surroundings as a continuous existing urban structure. It was on a scale suitable for the city. The investor, who purchased the area with the object, tried to push the concept of building another gigantic shopping centre, which would absorb the object to form a monolithic plasma “coating” the building. Trade communities, the inhabitants, and the local press became involved in actions focused on preserving the urban and architectural values of the object and the area. The municipal authorities asked me to elaborate on an assessment whose objective was – according to the contract – “to formulate an expert’s standpoint in the face of contradictory evaluations and propositions submitted in the course of the current public debate on the future of the Coach Station on Czarnowska St., Kielce, in the context of the proposal for a local plan, and the presented investor’s concepts”.⁸ I agreed to prepare the survey, fully convinced about the appropriate direction of the development of the area proposed in the local plan. I assumed that there would be no more historical monuments here; we would be able to take advantage of the legacy of modernism, effectively perceiving objects from that period as a unique testimony to the art of designing and building in accordance with the principles of functionalism, which have never lost their value.

The assessed area had to be perceived comprehensively within a scale of the functional and compositional structure of the surrounding grounds, and the entire city. I had to establish a hierarchy of problem importance, not from the perspective of the months to come, but farther out – from

⁶ *Powojenny Modernizm*, Postwar Modernism Association, (online): <http://www.powojennymodernizm.com/o-nas>, (date of access: 2014-02-02).

⁷ *Bryla.pl*, (online): www.bryla.pl/bryla/1,85301,1,13167004,Pawilon_Emilia_wykreslony_z_ewidencji_zabytkow.html (date of access: 2014-02).

⁸ This text includes extensive fragments of the following survey: G. Schneider-Skalska, *Assessment of the Architectural and Urban Values of the Polish Motor Transport Station in Kielce in the context of possible functional and spatial transformations in this area* commissioned by the City of Kielce. Available (online): www.rzecz-nik.org/data/Oferta/Pliki/678_V_OPINIA_PKS_KIELCE_-51.pdf, (date of access: 2014-02).

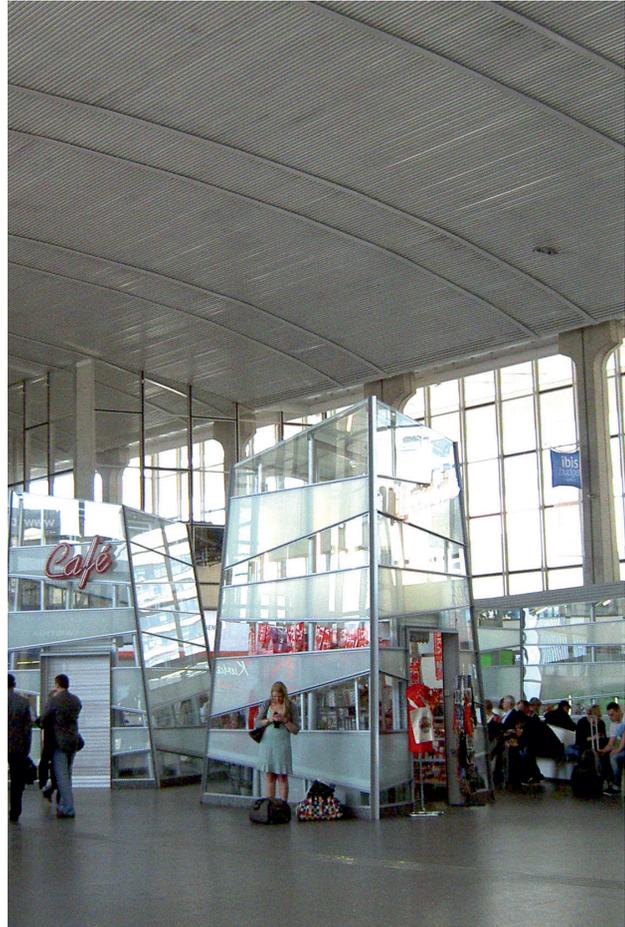
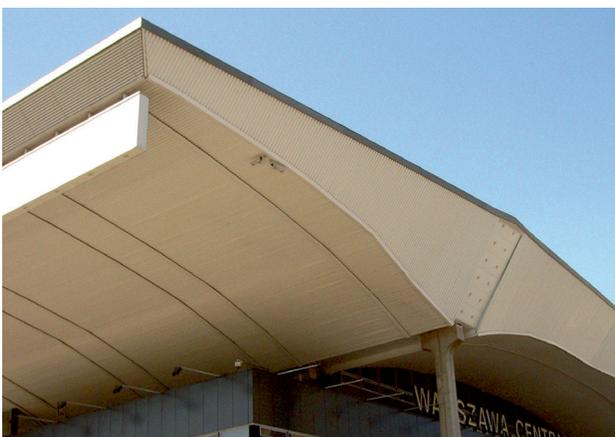


Fig. 1–5. Two first photographs show the Warsaw Powiśle Station, whose pure modernist volume corresponds with the socialist realist pylon. Three other photographs present the beauty of the roofing over the Central Warsaw Station – rediscovered after restoration – and its interior, which “absorbed” new glass forms after modernization. All photos by the author

the perspective of the spatial development of Kielce, and the formation of the high value of its urban space. I also had to consider the possibilities of emphasizing distinguishing characteristics of the city: special features, and unique architectural and scenic values. These were important on account of their cultural, social, and marketing values. There was a necessity to answer the following question: how many interesting objects worth remembering (included in the communal register of monuments, and fixed in the memory and awareness of the inhabitants of Kielce) are there?

My standpoint included several parts pertaining to the subject matter, such as:

- the conditions of the location, including the cultural values and the integrity of the form worth preserving;
- the significance of the inclusion in the communal register of monuments;
- spatial and scenic values, as well as view sequences worth preserving;
- the specificity of the current social perception of successful architectural realizations from the Polish People’s Republic period;

- spatial distinguishers, icons, and urban marketing;
- the integrality of the composition and the autonomy of the architectonic form – possible limits of integration;
- the characteristics of the local plan;
- reference to the investor's concept;
- summary and conclusions.

As I wrote in my survey, a spatial environment emotionally influences the user through its form and, more broadly, through the construction of its spatial structure, features distinguishing individual objects, their functions, and – which is of high importance – social significance. Most well-remembered cities have some exposed characteristic areas or objects where a user feels comfortable, owing to an adequate amount of impressions and the quality of public space; they are unique thanks to their form. These distinguishing elements crystallize the space; they are legible and memorable; they show the development of the city, its identity, and the appreciation of individual achievements.

The values of the area around the coach station in Kielce (and the building itself) form an entire sequence. They are as follows: the high architectural and functional values of the object; the beauty of the architectural complex, including the coach station with the silhouette of the Church of St. Cross; the identifying and compositional values of the corner limited by Czarnowska and Żelazna/Gosiewskiego Streets; the visual relationship between both stations (Polish State Railways and Polish Motor Transport); visual contact with the new centre in the vicinity of Piotrkowska St., with the dominating Provincial Office; and scenic values visible from a distance.

In the case of this spatial layout, one of the most important spatial conditions has been its location. The nearness of the coach and railway stations gives the city a unique chance to create a special transport complex not far from the centre – comfortable, satisfying high functional standards, with beautiful public spaces, first and foremost associated as a transport complex integrated functionally, as well as spatially and scenically. Most variously sized European towns and cities reveal and expose the function and object of the railway station. They enhance its role as a special spot, a symbol of the city. Such measures result from the elementary (transport) function of the railway station and the conviction that a user should not spend too much time looking for it. It is also a chance to boast of an atypical form in the age of identical architectonic forms.

The essence of the presented location is its corner situation. No matter if it is the corner of a building or, as in this case, the corner of an urban structure, a corner plays a special role in the composition of a city (which emphasizes a place by facilitating a view from three sides.) Talking about views and beauty spots, we must allow for the view from a pedestrian or a driver's perspective, which is crucial for the quality of an urban space. The value of views has its informative and aesthetic dimension. In the presented case, we are dealing with a rare opportunity to preserve the sequential character of views, which enables a passerby

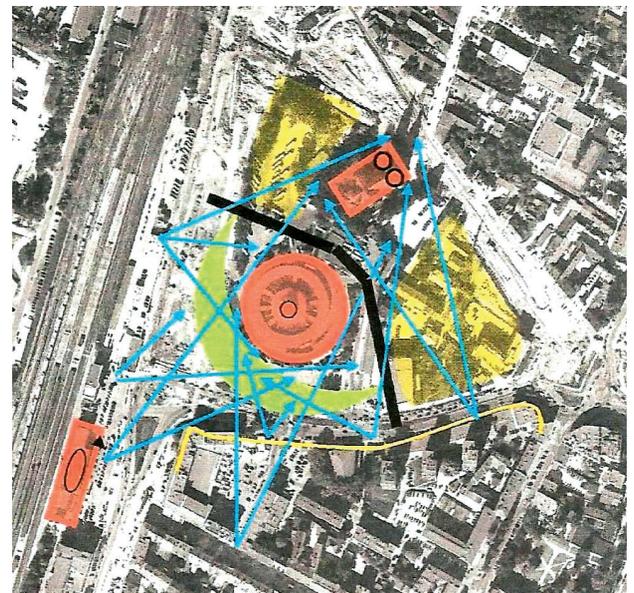
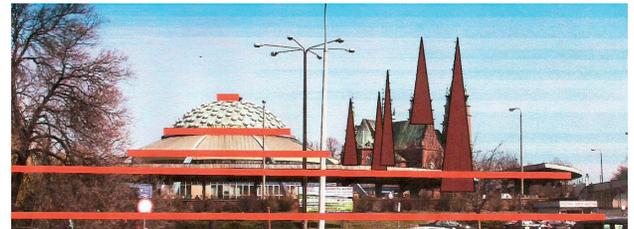
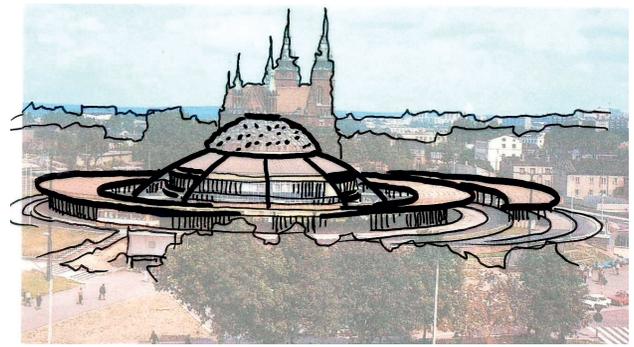


Fig. 6–8. The first illustration shows the integrality of the form which had to be maintained. Another illustration presents the characteristic juxtaposition of horizontal lines in the station layout and vertical forms in the church volume

to watch the changing composition of the coach station as a rising volume, starting from the external roofing circles to the dome top with the Church of St. Cross from three basic directions. Let us note that, according to the theory of urban composition, man tends to remember spatial layouts consisting of objects which somehow depend on each other – such an image gets fixed, especially if it comes into view in the field of vision from different directions. In the existing layout, one can clearly see the designers' successful attempts to produce spatial, architectural, and colour connections with the church built before the construction of the station. It is characteristic of the silhouette seen from the city centre.

The volume of the coach station in Kielce makes a strong and cohesive form in the city. It requires a vast

space around it for securing an appropriate field of formal impact, both on the ground plane and in view fields. It also plays a suitable role in the space of the city. The size of this field assumes special significance regarding the noticeable “expansion” of this volume in the space by means of the rings which branch off the dome.

Undoubtedly, the volume of the coach station in Kielce makes a special landmark in the urban structure of the city. In order to fulfill its function, a landmark must have – as Kevin Lynch and Kazimierz Wejchert write – a special or unforgettable feature. It is recognizable if it has a clear shape, if it contrasts with its background, and if its spatial location is exposed. In the case of the station in Kielce, the first condition is satisfied by the designers’ talent. Whether the other two conditions are fulfilled depends on the adopted concept of developing the area of the station itself, as well as the surrounding grounds. Freeing the foreground from development does not mean a total lack of possibilities of introducing the trade and service function; these have always accompanied railway complexes and are expected both by the permanent residents and those who come here on a bus or train, but also – which is of great importance – by the investors. The law of “good continuation” says that architecture must change and be a testimony to the time of its construction, yet with a maintained continuity, respected scale and compositional principles, and with the exposition of what was most valued in previous periods. The presented relations between the coach station in Kielce, the Church of St. Cross, and the open landscape make an exceptional example of the proper sequential character of styles, as well as respect for historical objects and compositional layouts in the scale of the city.

The coach station in Kielce is a praiseworthy example of Polish architectural and engineering thought, thus the significance of decisions taken at the stage of the local plan (as well as at further stages, leading to the reestablishment of the appropriate rank of this fragment of the city – not only within functional solutions, but in the formation of high quality spaces, and the preservation and exposition of original architectural, compositional, and scenic values). Transformations included in the local plan serve to emphasize those architectural and spatial features which will help the city take maximum advantage of the original and innovative realization of the station and its compositional values, ones fixed in the inhabitants’ and outsiders’ awareness, in Kielce.

Some representatives of trade organizations, city dwellers, and the local press have joined actions which aim at maintaining and exposing the undoubted values of the station.⁹ The presented opinion, together with other professionals’ standpoints, was also argued. So far, the effect of these measures has been positive. In July 2013, the Municipal Council adopted the Local Plan in the form prepared

by the Spatial Planning Department at the Office of the City of Kielce. Let us hope that this object – an example of good, original architecture important to the city and its residents – will make a significant functional and spatial element of the city and its image.

4. Conclusions

We can identify the main elements of a good strategy for the protection of the postwar architectural heritage.

- As the described case shows, the desirable effect was attained through actions shared by experts, architects, urban planners, the inhabitants, and the local media. An appropriate strategy was adopted by means of public discussions, arguments pertaining to the subject matter, and popularized opinions.
- Shaping public opinion and raising the citizens’ spatial awareness is an important assignment for all those who try to combine historical values with the requirements of the present day. Given the number of professional articles – emotionally loaded with very important local patriotism and concerning the transformations of the presented area – we can say that this process goes on. Social groups, such as the Postwar Modernism Association, or websites, such as Warsaw’s Central Station Fans, are formed. Educative actions must be continued so that the inhabitants’ voice would be conscious and helpful while taking spatial decisions in the city; they would bring about positive results as in the presented example.

In conclusion, we could ask the following question: to what extent are all the people that are responsible for spatial development aware of the rank of an architectural work, or an urban layout, for the image of a city in the context of the search for separateness and distinguishing features that can be used in urban marketing? In this case, the method of urban catalysis ought to consist of the good use and exposition of the architectural and urban legacy in order to increase the value of the surrounding areas, to arouse investors’ interest in the neighbourhood of a place which – acting as a symbol – is prestigious in the structure of the city.

The lower diagram sums up the analysis: spatial relationships between the coach station, the Church of St. Cross, and the railway station; the significance of the corner, the foreground, and the views (elaborated by the author).

⁹ Local opinions can be found in such articles as *Dworzec PKS*, (online): www.polskaniezwykla.pl/web/place/530,kielce-dworzec-pks.html (April 2013) or *Biały wieloryb zamiast spodka? Kielecki PKS do przebudowy* (online): www.bryla.pl/bryla/1,85301,13872002.html, (date of access: 2013-05).

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