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Fears and charms of mobility and transience. Warsaw's central railway station in the 20th century

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Fears and charms of mobility and transience. Warsaw's central railway station in the 20th century

This article presents a differentiated approach to railway stations as spaces of fear, drawing on the ruptured history of Warsaw's central station. While considering the recourse to fear as testimony to a place-specific atmosphere, it analyses the recourse innovatively with regard to the given spatial ordering (Löw) alongside the dynamics of historical discourse (Landwehr). The systematic case study reveals how specific historical moments resulted in unique nexuses of anxieties and insecurities, related both to the materiality and experience of the station, as well as current societal issues and collective fears. Security, control and power are pinpointed as their overarching pivotal categories, possibly relevant to analysing other modern public spaces of fear.

1. Introduction

Hardly any other 19th century technological invention transformed the experience of space in such a massive and ambivalent manner as the railway. While its remarkable speed opened up new, thrilling possibilities of communication, it also heightened risks of accidents, distorted the perception of space and subordinated the body to the power of steam engines. Accordingly, the progress that the invention brought about can be characterised as a kind of an emotional conflict, where “[i]n the cultural imagination of the western world the railway has figured historically both as a celebration of modernity and as a critique of it”.¹ As for railway stations, their depictions were frequently marked by fear or anxiety surrounding at first new technology and its architectural guise, sensory overload, transition from active to passive movement and thus incessantly liminal experience of travel², or, finally, the permeability to criminal and semi-legal practices at the margins of society, especially in view of their traffic capacity and booming new neighbourhoods. As a consequence, they were frequently labelled as *locus horridus*, “a terrible place”, a labelling

¹ Matthew Beaumont/Michael Freeman (eds.), *The Railway and Modernity. Time, Space, and the Machine Ensemble*, Oxford 2007, p. 13.

² As discussed by Marc Augé, *Non-places*, London et al. 2008.

whose exact circumstances have not been investigated systematically in a historical case study yet.³

Such general assumptions about the interrelation between railway-related fear and modernity seem even more problematic with regard to Central and Eastern Europe as a laboratory of modernity in its own right⁴, especially in view of the discontinued histories of national independence in the 20th century, shifting power relations and fluctuating state borders. As for Warsaw's central station, it is not only Poland's overarching socio-cultural context – with its disrupted history of independence, occupation and satellisation, which influenced

³ Scattered reflections of that kind can be found throughout several monographs, which focus mostly on the Western world and stories of physical continuity of the respective train stations, i.e. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise. Zur Industrialisierung von Raum und Zeit im 19. Jahrhundert*, München 1977; Alfred Gottwaldt, *Der Bahnhof*, in: Alexa Geisthövel/Habbo Knoch (eds.), *Orte der Moderne. Erfahrungswelten des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt a. M. 2005, p. 17-26; Jeffrey Richards/John M. MacKenzie, *The Railway Station. A Social History*, Oxford 1986; Jean Dethier (ed.), *Die Welt der Bahnhöfe. Ausstellung des Centre Georges Pompidou (CCI) Paris vom 1. September bis 5. Oktober 1980*; Christian W. Thomsen, *Kathedralen der Moderne? Bahnhofsbauarchitektur - gestern, heute und morgen*, in: Markwart Herzog/Mario Leis (eds.), *Der Bahnhof. Basilika der Mobilität – Erlebniswelt der Moderne*, Stuttgart 2010, p. 17-60; Augé, *Non-places. For the more general interrelation between fear and technology in history*, cf. the forthcoming publication by Martina Heßler/Bettina Hitzer (eds.), *Technology and Fear, Technikgeschichte, Themenheft 3/2019*; as well as current interdisciplinary research of Karna Kalmbach, Andreas Spahn and Ginevra Sanvitale from the Eindhoven University of Technology. From a transdisciplinary point of view, especially the relation between fear and crime (or, respectively, fear and disorder) was pursued. Psychological research has looked into factors which „give rise to feelings of insecurity, crime and vandalism in the station“ at London Waterloo, La Gare de Lyons in Paris and Roma Termini. They revealed discrepancies between actual crime and fear resulting from the perception of crime, and pointed to „victim, time and space, information and services and security“ as notions catering for an atmosphere of fear; cf. D. Uzzell/J. Brown, *Conceptual progress in understanding fear of crime in railway stations*, in: *Psicologia* 21:2, 2007, p. 119-137. Similar research was conducted with regard to Japanese mega-stations, cf. Seiji Shibata et al., *Perception of Disorder and Crime, and Responses to Them in Japanese 'Mega' Railway Stations*, in: Vania Ceccato/Andrew Newton (eds.), *Safety and Security in Transit Environments. Crime Prevention and Security Management*, London 2015, p. 270-288. Furthermore, a precise cartography of fear at railway stations in a multi-disciplinary case study from South Wales sought to unlock the potential of environmental design for reducing both crime and the fear of crime at railway stations; cf. Paul Cozens et al., *Managing Crime and the Fear of Crime at Railway Stations. A Case Study in South Wales (UK)*, in: *International Journal of Transport Management* 1:3, 2003, p. 121-132. None of the studies tackled a case from Central and Eastern Europe or investigated into the historical dimension, though.

⁴ Cf. Joachim von Puttkamer, *Mastery of Space and the Crises of Modernity in Central and Eastern Europe*, in: Joachim von Puttkamer/Włodzimierz Borodziej/Stanislav Holubec

the significance of the capital's main train stations – but also its very materiality ruptured by delays, destruction and decay. Therefore, drawing on the case of Warsaw's multifarious incarnations of the main station as a space of fear, I argue that the relevant image of *locus horridus* needs to be further differentiated depending on the historical context as well as the specific spatial setting; especially considering that this imagery was adopted amidst a largely stable cultural history surrounding the development of Western Europe's railway system. Thus, two questions arise: under which societal and spatial circumstances could Warsaw's main station (hereinafter referred to as the Station) earn its supposedly frightful reputation and how did historical ruptures influence the narrative?

To investigate this question, I consider the recourse to fear⁵ as a testimony of the place-specific atmosphere, by which I draw on phenomenological theories.⁶ However, to explore the nexus between discourse, space and atmosphere, I draw on Martina Löw's sociological understanding of it. Hence, I analyse fear as “the external effect of social goods and human beings realised perceptually in their spatial ordering”, with the perception of space being “always socially pre-structured” and dependent on the “cultural imprint” of the perceiver.⁷ In so doing, I aim to combine the socio-cultural context of such acts of perception with the specific spatial setting: its materiality as well as practices of usage⁸, which I reflect on with reference to relevant projects and plans, drawings and

(eds.), *Mastery and lost illusions. Space and time in the modernization of Eastern and Central Europe*, Berlin/München 2014, p. 17-29, here p. 23.

⁵ Including its variations in the Polish language and culture, in English synonymous with worry, anxiety or nervousness, cf. Tiffany Watt Smith, *The Book of Human Emotions. An Encyclopedia of Feeling from Anger to Wanderlust*, London 2015, p. 106-108.

⁶ Cf. Gernot Böhme, *Die Atmosphäre einer Stadt*, in: Gerda Breuer (ed.), *Neue Stadträume. Zwischen Musealisierung, Medialisierung und Gestaltlosigkeit*, Frankfurt a. M./Basel 1998, p. 149-162; Hermann Schmitz, *System der Philosophie*, Bd. 3. *Der Raum*, Teil 1. *Der Gefühlsraum*, Bonn 2005 [1969], p. 98-106.

⁷ Martina Löw, *The Constitution of Space. The Structuration of Spaces Through the Simultaneity of Effect and Perception*, in: *European Journal of Social Theory* 11:1, 2008, p. 25-49, here p. 46.

⁸ Thereby I am also aware of the cultural repertoire of relevant social and bodily practices, as well as the difficulty of deciphering them according to emotional scripts known to me – explicitly, but also implicitly – as a researcher of Polish origin, even if they are not the focus of this case study; cf. also Bettina Hitzer, *Emotionsgeschichte – ein Anfang mit Folgen*, in: *HSoz-u-Kult* 23.11.2011, p. 10-11, URL: <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/2011-11-001> [15.04.2020]. An approach to a broader examination of the interplay of communal and spatial constitution of emotional patterns is offered by Benno Gammerl (ed.), *Emotional styles – concepts and challenges*, in: *Rethinking History* 16:2, 2012.

pictures, studies and testimonials.⁹ Furthermore, especially for periods of authoritarian rule with its upswings and demises, the historical discourse analysis provides a suitable framework to examine the issue of fear because it puts historical testimonies in the context of power relations and considers the limitations inflicted on what can be voiced at a given time.¹⁰ Considering this premise, this article refers to a limited, but nonetheless varied selection of literary, press and film sources, in order to gain insights from media which reached different audiences at different times. For the pre-war, war, and early post-war years this selection is based mostly, albeit not exclusively, on available secondary literature from architectural, literary, and social history. Furthermore, a comprehensive corpus of analogical primary sources from the 1970s and 1980s was used, as this period has been pivotal to the research question.¹¹ Finally, for the sake of viability, the sources from the 1990s needed to be narrowed down adequately.¹² Even if somewhat asymmetrical regarding the choice of primary and secondary sources, a semantic and functional analysis of the historical discourse as delimited by the selection of sources is nonetheless expected to foster a multi-perspective approach and, evaluated against the backdrop of the aforementioned findings on materiality and practices, pinpoint the historical prerequisites for fear's appearance in the discourse.

Consequently, the intention of this study is to include and combine factors which have not been considered in a systematic case study of railway station-

⁹ Largely as conveyed by secondary literature, cf. especially Mieczysław Krajewski, *Dzieje głównego dworca kolejowego w Warszawie*, Warszawa 1971; Grzegorz Piątek et al. (ed.), *AR/PS. The architecture of Arseniusz Romanowicz and Piotr Szymaniak*, Warszawa 2012; also author's own research, Aleksandra Łuczak, *Signum temporis? Der Bahnhof Warszawa Centralna als Produkt der Gierek-Dekade in Polen*, Master thesis, unpublished manuscript, European University Viadrina Frankfurt a.d.O. 2015. Other relevant sources are specified accordingly in the following.

¹⁰ Achim Landwehr, *Historische Diskursanalyse*, Frankfurt 2008.

¹¹ In this respect, this publication is based on my Master thesis concerning the production of social space of the Central Station in the 1970s. However, the hitherto corpus was extended especially by an additional broad bibliographical research of periodicals, undertaken within the scope of ongoing PhD research where I tackle the history of urban development of Warsaw's late-socialist city area, of which the Central Station was a crucial part.

¹² For the 1990s the sources had to be narrowed down to press articles published by the daily *Gazeta Wyborcza* (as the first fully independent daily founded in 1989, serving at first as the mouthpiece of the opposition and remaining an important opinion maker in the decade to follow) as well as to the film sources from the archives of the Polish Television, at the moment hardly available for an in-depth analysis, though. Insofar, the findings of this article could be revisited in future after a complementary research on periods proceeding and succeeding the period of 1969-1989.

related fear before. In doing so, it aims at fostering a more critical historical understanding of the origins and mechanics of the “locus horridus” stigma. What the paper cannot provide, though, are implications for regulating the atmosphere of fear by means of design or management, as the collected discourse data does not include reliable specifications of spaces and practices experienced as unsettling. Instead of a precise cartography of fear, then, the paper rather strives for mapping historical categories which correlate with the perception of this specific kind of fear.¹³

2. Dworzec Główny and its temporary predecessors in the Second Polish Republic (1918-1939)

Until 1918, Warsaw had remained a provincial military base of the Russian Empire for over a century following the partitions inflicted upon the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth towards the end of the 18th century. Despite growing necessity and several private attempts to facilitate transport across the city's river Vistula, the two biggest train stations – *Dworzec Wiedeński* and *Dworzec Terespolski* – continued to be dead-end termini, disconnected on different banks. It was not until the regaining of independence and the establishment of the Second Polish Republic in 1918 that the modernisation process gained momentum. One of the very first resolutions of the young state concerned the construction of a cross-city line, which was completed between 1924 and 1933. As part of the same infrastructural modernisation effort, the first edifice of the Station – *Dworzec Główny* – was promptly commissioned. However, construction did not begin until 1932, and was only completed in 1938.

According to architectural historian, Jarosław Trybuś, who references press and archival sources for Czesław Przybylski's (1880-1936) design, both the Station's materiality and public perception symbolised Poland's power ambitions after regaining its independence in 1918. Moreover, the monumental modernist concourse (ground plan 113,5 x 115m) to be entered into from a spacious

¹³ Nonetheless it is conceivable to revisit the findings in future while evaluating further sources, e. g. police records on criminality and social issues at the Station or detailed records of the Polish State Railways on usage and technicalities of the Station. Presumably, the foci, intensities and spatial aspects of the fear's perception as conveyed in the discourse could be compared with more tangible data, thus enabling further specification of the answers given in this paper. However, as for the focal period of this study (and beyond, to the present day), the groundwork on the police records is being laid out by Krzysztof Martyniak from the Institute of Sociology at the University of Warsaw in his ongoing (hitherto unpublished) research; the archival railway records have been destroyed or are otherwise not publicly available.

square (4,256ha), erected from Polish materials and embellished with maps and allegoric depictions of Poland was meant to emanate joy and pride, but also a sense of cohesion in order to inform audiences irrespective of their social background and to “[s]erve the ‘organisation of mass sensations’”.¹⁴ The intention of ordering and renewal corresponded with the needs of Poland’s deeply divided and newly-reunified lands, but it also complimented the modernisation ambitions of then mayor Stefan Starzyński.¹⁵ Consequently, analyses focusing on such positive connotations prevail in the respective historical discourse regarding the prospects and the usage of the edifice. One explanation might be the Station’s short lifespan between its opening in June 1939 and the subsequent damages it suffered from an accidental fire while undergoing some finishing touches to the outbreak of the Second World War and its destructive aftermath.¹⁶

By contrast, literature offers an alternative, more ambivalent image of a station’s order and function; particularly with the examination of a poem and a short story dedicated to the Station that date back to 1934 and 1936¹⁷, respectively, when trains began cutting through the city along the newly constructed cross-city line, which was also prior to the completion of the modernist edifice and while a temporary building, *Dworzec główny*, remained in use. At its 1921 origins, the makeshift terminus was wedged between platforms, the construction site and residential houses, which made it less suitable for operating at the city’s tangent. In addition, its concourse – though open and spacious – was much less presentable and much smaller (60 x 24m) than needed. Another modest makeshift structure (396m²) was raised in 1933 nearer to the construction site, for the needs of long-distance traffic.¹⁸ The literary works cited convey the Station as crowded, bustling and not very user-friendly. As literature historian Wojciech Tomasik further argues, such a characterisation of the Station’s atmosphere promotes its adoption of the *locus horridus* moniker, particularly as it concerns the dehumanising depiction of passenger masses and their

¹⁴ See Jarosław Trybuś, *Station Zero*, in: Piątek, p. 132-159, here p. 144.

¹⁵ Cf. Grzegorz Piątek, *Sanator. Kariera Stefana Starzyńskiego*, Warszawa 2016. On the notion of order in modern and modernist urban thought cf. Thomas Etzemüller, *Sozial engineering als Verhaltenslehre des kühlen Kopfes. Eine einleitende Skizze*, in: Thomas Etzemüller (ed.), *Die Ordnung der Moderne*, Bielefeld 2010, p. 11-40.

¹⁶ Jerzy Stanisław Majewski, *Warszawa nieodbudowana. Lata trzydzieste*, Warszawa 2005, p. 245-252.

¹⁷ Helena Boguszewska, *Na dworcu*, in: Helena Boguszewska, *Przedmieście*, Warszawa 1934; J. Czechowicz, *Pod dworcem głównym w Warszawie*, in: *Prosto z mostu*, 1936, p. 46; both analysed in Wojciech Tomasik, *Ikona nowoczesności. Kolej w literaturze polskiej*, Wrocław 2007, p. 215-217.

¹⁸ Krajewski, p. 84-131.

experiences in which they are deprived of personal names and become reduced to social functions. They are characterised by their function of travelling – referred to through the prism of travel destinations and carried objects, all of which point to a depersonalising influence of modern standardisation. From the semantic point of view, the fear is further induced through maritime connotations, as the passengers are referred to as a “human current” “flowing” through the station as their shipping point. The consistent, incessant movement filling the interior of the Station evokes an image of sea – a prototypic space of fear, both due to its vastness and impossible delineation as well as latent and sudden threats innate to the sea voyage.¹⁹ More importantly, it connotes modern imagery of the city as a machine or an organism²⁰, where the commuters function as mechanical parts or flow like blood cells through the veins. The anonymity and standardisation that this imagery represents reflects societal insecurities concerning modernisation. Finally, the only individuals singled out from the swarming masses are social outcasts – the immovable, permanent witnesses of the goings-on, which intensifies the fear.

Moreover, the prevalence of fear outside of the cultural mainstream – for instance, in literary texts of a relatively small reach – denotes its function as a tool of cultural criticism, which extends beyond a critique of infrastructural shortcomings and highlights the extent to which the railway – as played out at the Station – has brought about social transition. In fact, apart from the large group of apparently undistinguishable long-distance travellers, the remaining nameless mass embodies the lower class, an emergent group inundated with the daily nuisance of the suburban train commute from their residences on the city’s outskirts – newly-integrated into its administrative boundaries – to their places of work in industry and commerce.²¹ Even though the Polish state aspired to modernity (e.g. by introducing the first social policies), social disparities and shortcomings of modernisation could be found in the practices witnessed by day at the Station and portrayed in literature through powerful, dehumanising metaphors. By comparison, a contemporary newspaper report – at the time probably the most influential journalistic genre – broaches similar issues regarding social representation at the Station, but draws a differing interpretation.²² In this journalistic account, the Station’s main hall is observed and des-

¹⁹ Lars Koch, *Angst. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, Stuttgart/Weimar 2013, p. 150-151.

²⁰ Sonja Hnilica, *Metaphern für die Stadt. Zur Bedeutung von Denkmodellen in der Architekturstheorie*, Bielefeld 2012, p. 53-102, 143-176.

²¹ Andrzej Gawryszewski, *Ludność Warszawy w XX wieku*, Warszawa 2009, p. 30-36, 243-247, 305.

²² Jan Dąbrowski, *Drugą taksą...*, Nowe pismo 21/1934, reprinted in: Jan Dąbrowski (ed.), *Niepiękne dzielnice*, Warszawa 1963, p. 385-389.

cribed at night where it is presented as a tranquil, almost empty space, a place where passengers sleep in waiting rooms. Most significantly, the author highlights the presence of a vigilant policeman who successfully disposes of outcasts, such as thieves and the homeless, thereby delineating a space in which the social order and security are maintained easily and visibly. Even though the Station in its night-time setting is not completely free from “disturbance”, it can be a place devoid of fear, a kind of safe haven for weary travellers rather than a vessel to an untamed, teeming human mass, which, in a broader sense, was consistent with the political vision of an exclusive, yet effective modern governance of public space.

In summary, the Station as viewed by the literati, who were more sensitive to social issues of the day²³, is a place where cultural transition becomes visible and where insecurities and setbacks of modernisation could be explored. The provisional arrangement and insignificant architectural shape gave way to an undisturbed exploration into the fears connected to (dis-)order, anonymity and exclusion, which are incorporated into the Station’s interior and made visible on the cultural margin in accordance with fear’s nature as a liminal emotion.²⁴

3. „Warschau Hauptbahnhof” under German occupation (1939-1945)

The „reconfiguration of the political order in Europe during World War II and the Nazi’s extremist version of modernity²⁵ reshaped the Station’s materiality and function significantly. Unlike the 1930s, during the German occupation of Warsaw (1939-1945) and seizure of the Station, the presence of fear was shaped by a militant conflict between two unequal parties, the occupiers and the occupied, who each aimed at reordering the Station’s space to their purposes.

From 1939/1940 onwards, the remnants of Przybylski’s *Dworzec Główny* – now denoted in huge letters as *Warschau Hauptbahnhof* – were refurnished and stripped of embellishments reminiscent of its Polish origin. Access restrictions were no longer based on travel classes but race, with the Station’s restaurant “Mitropa” marked *nur für Deutsche*, only for Germans. In fact, the Nazis used the Station primarily for military transports to the East. In accordance

²³ Cf. e. g. Józef. Olejniczak, *Czechowicz nowoczesny?*, in: Jerzy Świąch (ed.), *Józef Czechowicz. Od awangardy do nowoczesności*, Lublin 2004, p. 73-84; Grzegorz Gazda, *Dwudziestolecie międzywojenne. Słownik literatury polskiej*, Gdańsk 2008, p. 24.

²⁴ Koch, p. 148.

²⁵ I refer to Zygmunt Bauman’s interpretation, as discussed by David Kuchenbuch, *Geordnete Gemeinschaft. Architekten als Sozialingenieure – Deutschland und Schweden im 20. Jahrhundert*, Bielefeld 2010, p. 17.

with the *Pabst Plan*, the intention was to diminish the Station's importance by scaling back its connections and beginning the transition to its role as a provincial stopover on the way to the German East. As the architectural historians Niels Gutschow and Barbara Klein argue, these oppressive measures originated from a fear of Polish resilience and the notion of Warsaw as a "source of danger," a commonly-held belief which can be traced back to the 19th century's experiences of the Tsarist regime in occupied Warsaw, especially with regard to the armed rebellion of the November Uprising of 1830/1831.²⁶ Thus, one could argue, at this stage fear as such led to draconian measures intended to restrict and intimidate.

Given that Poles were largely excluded from this central public space, an account of relevant everyday experiences and perspectives is missing from the Polish secondary literature. Nonetheless, during this period in Warsaw, the Station was shrouded in an atmosphere of "interspersed fear", due to the perpetual possibility of the space turning unexpectedly into one of *razzia*, eviction, denunciation, arrest or even deportation.²⁷ Interestingly, the intimidating configuration of the Station and its featuring as a prominent infrastructural asset reserved for Germans made it vulnerable to attacks from the resistance as proven by a shell attack on the aforementioned Mitropa restaurant, which was carried out by the Polish Underground in 1942 as part of coordinated retaliatory attacks across the city. According to the witness and historian, Władysław Bartoszewski, the event brought consternation to the occupants who feared further attacks, which led to a tightening of oppressive measures governing the use of public space, such as through the extension of the curfew.²⁸ As photo evidence suggests, the Station was also a key military target for the insurgents during the culmination of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, which – most likely due to its military nature – had remained unconquered.²⁹ Finally, in 1945, it was razed to the ground during the withdrawal of the German army.

According to a largely retrospective perception, fear paired with aggression can not only be understood as a device used to reorder the space of the Station for both the occupier and occupied, but also as an outcome of this reconfiguration as well. As such, fear underlied both the new spatial ordering and the att-

²⁶ Trybuś, p. 148-152; Niels Gutschow/Barbara Klein, *Vernichtung und Utopie. Stadtplanung Warschau 1939-1945*, Hamburg 1994, p. 29-30, 34-38, 128-130.

²⁷ Cf. the most detailed and prominent study on the topic by Tomasz Szarota, *Okupowanej Warszawy dzień powszedni*, Warszawa 1978, p. 505-530. Speaking of interspersed fear in Szarota's research, I refer to Koch's term of *entortete Angst*, op. cit., p. 148.

²⁸ Władysław Bartoszewski, *1859 dni Warszawy*, Kraków 1974, p. 333; Szarota, p. 527-528. According to the historian Krajewski, another shell attack on Mitropa in 1943 resulted in exorbitant contributions the city was charged with, cf. Krajewski, p. 129.

²⁹ See Gutschow / Klein, *Vernichtung*, p. 133.

empts to subvert it from below. While strict rules regarding the Station's accessibility and its visible military significance were made to subjugate and intimidate the local population, it turned into a physical and symbolic target for the Polish Underground's attack of 1942, which served to stoke fear and vulnerability – feelings familiar to the occupied – into the occupier.

4. *Dworzec Centralny at the peak of Polish People's Republic (1945-1989)*

After the war, Warsaw served as the capital city of People's Poland from 1945-1989 and as a satellite of the USSR. After the wreckage of the Station was cleared, the residents of Warsaw were set to endure decades of temporary arrangements concerning the worthy and ultimately long overdue replacement of *Dworzec Główny*.³⁰ Like its predecessor in the 1930s, *Dworzec Centralny* (constructed between 1972-1975) marked a significant modernisation effort and was portrayed in propaganda as being a collective success and a source of pride for the whole nation. This time, the restorative project aimed to legitimise the ruling communist party and its achievements while, in the spirit of the *Détente*, strengthening its geopolitical bond with the West by showcasing its updated, contemporary architectural triumph, which adhered to international design trends of the day and implemented the latest Western technology.³¹

Unlike its predecessor's limited lifespan, the *Dworzec Centralny*'s ongoing usage allows for a more multifaceted study of fear, even if following certain recurrent motifs. For instance, on the surface the aforementioned fear of modernisation appeared to be under control owing to international high-tech design. Contrary to an alleged *locus horridus*, the architecture of the Station was believed to epitomise comfort, openness and egalitarianism with a feeling of spaciousness and visibility created by a translucent glass concourse built directly over underground platforms. Additionally, access to the Station was expanded following the development of an extensive network of tunnels and flyovers that connected it to the city centre – all in all the Station comprised almost 30,000m² usable floor space. If the dehumanizing experience of the railway filled the literati with apprehension in the 1930s, the official TV and magazine features in 1975 fuelled the optimistic faith in technological advancement, represented by the system of escalators, vending machines, or the principles of the automotive city. According to the tenor of the press coverage,

³⁰ Not that they went utterly unnoticed: Warszawa Główna in particular – a modest brick edifice – entered the collective imaginery via a satiric song „Niedziela na Głównym“ by Wojciech Młynarski, as an ironic epitome of a boulevard and mobility hub in one, tailored just right to Warsaw's modest needs.

³¹ For more background information see Łuczak (cf. footnote 9).

the Station would act as a “pacemaker for imagination”, an indispensable guide to society’s progress towards a modern urban lifestyle.³²

However, the technology, which was often equated with “modernity” in the press (as the quality of being modern)³³, did not transition so smoothly into everyday practices. First encounters engendered the threat of falling down the escalators, insecurity in face of sliding doors or the anxiety of getting lost in the complex underground “labyrinth”.³⁴ Still, in the early 1980s, to an anthropological eye, the Station represented an “atomised city, whose inhabitants [had] not yet developed tools to make themselves familiar with their environment”.³⁵ Even if put into perspective by developing practices and habits of usage, insecurity recurred and was aggravated when signs of breakdown, decay, vandalism, and construction errors emerged. Concerns about stolen luggage carts, leaking ceilings or lights going off were treated as matters of security rather than minor, readily-fixable maintenance blunders. In the first years following construction, these subsidiary issues of maintenance might have served as a means of mobilization to prompt repairs or hard-currency purchases of missing spare parts.³⁶ Throughout the 1970s, ever so small but successful improvements played into the hands of the party executives, who were eager to take responsibility for the positive outcomes.

However, in 1989, after years of neglect and impeded maintenance caused by economic crisis, these everyday anxieties made the headlines and culminated in the image of “fear of the Station’s potential death”.³⁷ Undoubtedly, such

³² E. g. Centralny, WFDiF, Poland 1976; K. Lengiewicz, Dworzec Centralny PKP w Warszawie, in: Tygodnik Kulturalny 48/1975, p. 1, 8; W. Śmiałkowski, Dworzec XXI wieku, in: Stolica 12-13/1975, p. 2; W. Fiałkowski, Rozrusznik wyobraźni, in: Kultura 3/1976, p. 14. Still, at times the press doubted it, pointing to the idleness of established practices of city-dwellers of mostly rural origin, e. g. Ewas, Nowoczesność zobowiązuje, in: Życie Warszawy 293/1975, p. 5; B. Henkel, Zwyczajny dzień na Centralnym, in: Sztandar Młodych, 31.12.1975; DC wymaga większej opieki, in: Express Wieczorny 250/1976, p. 7; W. Pawłowski, Parę lat później, in: Polityka 9/1980, p. 4-5.

³³ R. Jabłoński, Stali bywalcy dworca Centralnego, in: Słowo powszechne, 23.01.1989.

³⁴ E. g. Tu Warszawa Centralna, in: Głos Pracy, 05.12.1975; S. Zieliński, Dworzec na laurach, in: Głos Pracy 03.05.1978; L. Bukowiecki et al., Dworzec to nie wszystko – listy do redakcji, in: Prawo i Życie 27/1980, p. 2; Listy do redakcji [„Polityki”], AAN, MK, sygn. III/181, p. 157-159.

³⁵ A. Urbański, Jedno pytanie, in: Regiony 1/1983, p. 144-146, with regard to Andrzej Mencwel, Warszawa – Dworzec Centralny, in: idem, Widziane z dołu, Warszawa 1980.

³⁶ E. g. DC wymaga większej opieki and, following it, Kan, Centrala DOKP odpowiada, in: Express Wieczorny, 15.02.1977.

³⁷ tom, Centralny się sypie, in: Dziennik Ludowy, 08.02.1989; for similar concerns see also e. g. Z. Pawłowski, Parę lat później; A. Dziekańska, Na Dworcu Centralnym, in: Stolica 34/1984, p. 11-12; M. Adamski, Szwajcarzy byli zdumieni – to jeszcze działa?!, in: Express

an extreme personification emphatically reinforced concerns about malfunctions bringing habitual activities to a halt. In the face of backwards practices, technological scepticism moved from the margins to the centre of the discourse, after years of being downplayed with a barrage of futuristic imagery and propaganda at the peak of the Station's splendour. This shift in the discourse marked the crumbling of the erstwhile modern faith in architecture and technology as powerful, creative forces as well as their fallibility and dependence on human agency, practices, and money. As unsettling as motion and velocity at the new multi-level labyrinthine Station might have been for its users at the start of the decade, by the end of the 1980s it was the disturbance of these features that aroused fear in the discourse, a sense of unreliability and disillusionment corresponding to notions of modernity's "failure".³⁸ Unsurprisingly, this turn in the discourse coincides not only with the crisis of the master narratives and of the socialist state, but also with the onset of "post-modern" thought in Polish architecture and urban planning.³⁹

Moreover, the technological vicissitude as well as the Station's intricate design inspired an artistic account of its atmosphere, in which fear also makes an appearance, the poetic documentary *"Dworzec"*.⁴⁰ Similar to the inter-war period, in 1980, the everyday side of modernity embodied by the Station attracted the artist's attention at the moment when the glamorous lustre of the Station's first years of operation had begun to fade as economic strains and increasing social dissatisfaction with the socialist regime set in. Krzysztof Kieślowski (1941-1996), the artist drawn to the Station's public space and a renowned representative of the so-called "cinema of moral anxiety", was particularly attuned to the public mood, human emotions and ethical questions.⁴¹ The use of the contemporary medium of film enabled Kieślowski to pierce the spatial ordering of the physical levels and hideouts within the Station revealing a cross-section of society. In that "societal trifle", in Kieślowski's own words⁴², fear takes up considerable space. In a panoramic night view, the illuminated glass concourse is introduced with the accompaniment of menacing

Wieczorny, 20.02.1985.

³⁸ A notion topical in current urban research, cf. Stephen Graham, *Disrupted Cities. When Infrastructure Fails*, New York 2010; Paul N. Edwards, *Infrastructure and Modernity. Force, Time, and Social Organization in the History of Sociotechnical Systems*, in: Thomas J. Misa et al. (eds.), *Modernity and Technology*, Cambridge (Mass.) 2003, p. XX.

³⁹ Cf. e. g. Alicja Gzowska/Lidia Klein, *Postmodernizm polski. Architektura i urbanistyka*, Warszawa 2013.

⁴⁰ *Dworzec*, directed by Krzysztof Kieślowski, WFDiF, Poland 1980.

⁴¹ One of the most prominent of them being the series of feature films *Dekalog: The Ten Commandments* from 1989.

⁴² Mikołaj Jazdon, *Dokumenty Kieślowskiego*, Poznań 2002, p. 105.

music. A series of close-ups of the prestigious architecture follows, which reveals an atmosphere of nervousness and tension encased in glass and marble that not only captures the typical haste, greetings and goodbyes, but also the misunderstandings, misinformation and equipment malfunctions. A crowd of apathetic, drowsy or drunk individuals circulates between the platforms while others lethargically occupy the packed waiting rooms where they spill over into the giant main hall and its environs. What was meant to be a cutting-edge international hub of mobility had become a dystopian morass of frustration and apathy.

While these intimate vignettes reified the Station's unsettling disorder, they grew in significance when considered against the backdrop of overzealous reports regarding the country's alleged feats in modernisation – which were broadcast across the Station's own public TV sets – as a general feeling of mistrust – personified by surveillance cameras monitoring struggling commuter – permeated the atmosphere. Such an overt display of cognitive dissonance makes Kieślowski's "disquietude" transcend the concerns of rapid modernisation or technological failures. Indeed, it projects them onto the moral ground of misconstruction and misperception of reality in the public space – just as in the public discourse.

While Kieślowski perceived the Station's users as part of the complex system of levels, corridors and trajectories as well as their deeply unsatisfactory interactions with the technological equipment, his account highlighted the assemblage character of the space and facilitated a highly ironic commentary concerning seemingly sophisticated international architecture and its equation with „modernity“. Despite the relative marginality of the documentary, the film's sombre undertones and manifest criticism, paired with its apparent accuracy of capturing the scenes along with the tense historical moment, led to its eventual confiscation.⁴³

⁴³ Ibidem, p. 47.

5. Dworzec Centralny in times of transition throughout the late 1980s and the first decade of the Third Polish Republic (1990s)⁴⁴

This more modern, multifaceted perception of fear can also be explained as a product of the Station's intricate relations with the surrounding neighbourhood. Aside from being connected via underground passages to the bus and tram network as well as neighbouring streets and housing areas from the outset, plans revealed that within two decades the Station was to be connected to neighbouring glass skyscrapers via footbridges as part of the broader vision, which constituted it as the core of the "City West" (*Centrum Zachodnie*) – a 55ha multifunctional urban complex bustling with business, tourism and entertainment.⁴⁵

As for the apprehension coming from those plans, it was predicated upon the prognosticated impact of the Station and its perception followed a dynamic comparable to the aforementioned technology-related fear. As early as 1975, fear figured at the cultural margins in niche cultural magazines, where two sociologists, Aleksander Wallis (1930-1984) and Marcin Czerwiński (1924-2001), published their concerns. With the upswing in future prognostics and urban cultural studies, they worried about the historically "bad reputation" of railway stations as places which foster "pathology" and "deviance." As such, they were critical of the concept of the Station as a hub for the future prestigious City and advocated for their separation.⁴⁶ However, the sociological discipline was not held in high esteem by the socialist state and such a sceptical and unpopular opinion on the prestigious undertaking also ran counter to the beliefs of the architects in charge. Indeed, Jerzy Skrzypczak (1929-2018), the urban planner responsible for the master plan of the City West, was committed to modernist orthodoxy and maintained an unwavering belief in the capacity of

⁴⁴ Because of the dynamics of the identified narratives of fear, as presented in the following chapter, it did not seem justified to separate both decades – despite the undeniable radical systemic changes brought about by the year 1989 as well as the intensification or shifts, respectively, of recurrent motifs in the discourse around that time. Nonetheless, it is rather the years 1979/1980 which act as the critical moment here – a notion not so far off given the recent research on 1979 as a turning point, cf. Frank Bösch, *Zeitenwende 1979. Als die Welt von heute begann*, München 2019.

⁴⁵ For more details about the idea of the „City-West“ see Aleksandra Łuczak, *Innowacja czy kontynuacja? Awangarda a praktyki poszukiwania centrum w socjalistycznej Warszawie lat 60. i 70. XX wieku*, in: Agnieszka Karpowicz/Weronika Parfianowicz/Anna Wandzel (ed.), *Almanach antropologiczny* *communicare* 7/2018: *Miasta/Awangardy*, p. 127-138.

⁴⁶ A. Wallis, *Przewidywany program społeczny zachodniego rejonu centrum Warszawy w perspektywie lat 1980-2000*, in: *Kronika Warszawy* 4/1973, p. 5-22; A. Wallis, *Społeczne problemy Zachodniego Rejonu Centrum*, in: *Kronika Warszawy* 3/1976, p. 5-28; M. Czerwiński, *Zapiski przechodnia*, in: *Argumenty* 1-6/1976, p. 9.

design and technology to turn the whole complex into a “well-functioning organism”.⁴⁷ The Station’s main creator, Arseniusz Romanowicz (1910-2008), who was incessantly involved in all the construction projects throughout the Station’s history since the 1930s, romanticised the multi-storey, permeable Station as a “theatre” of modernity, mobility and urban life “merged with the city”, but orchestrated in a modern fashion in terms of design and chosen materials.⁴⁸ In addition, their modernist agenda was compatible with the prevailing ideology that imagined an optimistic future, which made it difficult for discussions surrounding the sociological fear of the pernicious agency of the Station to take hold in the discourse. Unsurprisingly, “order” and “security” were prominent buzzwords that were featured eagerly in the media’s description the Station.⁴⁹

Once again, the more the capacity of running the Station smoothly deteriorated and the monolith of the socialist state crumbled, the more the perception of fear shifted from the margin to the mainstream. Simultaneously, censorship loosened, and from 1985 onwards, diverse newspapers increasingly reported on the atmosphere of vigilance, tension, and mistrust within the Station where thieves, prostitutes, and the homeless were believed to have taken possession of the Station as a stronghold for their depravity.⁵⁰ Yet again, in the face of disillusionment with modernity, the once celebrated architectural achievement itself became blamed for public nuisance. For instance, underground corridors and shops were eyed in a particularly suspicious manner because their corners, bars, and cafés were preferred by the homeless. To other users’ disconcertment, the homeless camped on heated benches and in glassed waiting boxes on the underground platforms. The underground galleries above the platforms were no longer perceived a “theatre of modernity”, but rather lookout points attractive to thieves who used any given open space as their personal hunting ground. One newspaper reader even demanded the luggage lockers to be removed to prevent thieves and the homeless from storing their belongings and to discourage them from prowling at the Station.⁵¹

⁴⁷ J. Skrzypczak, Zachodni Rejon Centrum Warszawy, in: *Architektura* 8-9/1973, p. 309-311.

⁴⁸ A. Romanowicz, Dworzec Centralny w Warszawie, in: *Architektura* 8-9/1973, p. 312-316; W górę zygzakiem, in: *Życie Warszawy* 45/1976, p. 3; A. Romanowicz/Z. Danielak/R. Garbowski, Dworzec Centralny PKP w Warszawie, in: *Przegląd Budowlany* 6/1975, p. 306-317.

⁴⁹ E.g. bor, Porządki na Centralnym, in: *Życie Warszawy*, 10.08.1977 and many more.

⁵⁰ J. Kirzyński, Dworcowa codzienność, in: *Rzeczywistość*, 31.08.1986; A. Jackiewicz, Uciec od dworca byle jakiego..., in: *Kurier Polski*, 05.12.1985; G. Pisarewicz, Cienie w światłach Dworca Centralnego, in: *Trybuna Ludu*, 18.02.1985; R. Jabłoński, Stali bywalcy.

⁵¹ E. g. J. Włosek, Central Hilton, in: *Tygodnik demokratyczny* 8/1986, p. 14-15; Cz. Curyło, Dwa oblicza Centralnego, in: *Express Wieczorny*, 22.12.1989; cf. also n. 35.

Such statements which held the materiality of the Station responsible for the spread of deviant behaviour indicated the capacity overload, which afflicted the Station since the late 1970s. First, the oil crisis of 1979 made many switch from cars to trains, so that masses of people queued in front of ticket offices and luggage drop-offs or camped in the main hall due to overcrowded waiting-rooms. Apart from that, the restaurants, shops, and services at the Station attracted a greater number of customers than was expected because their supplies were better than in other districts of Warsaw.⁵² Last but not least, the Station compensated for the low standard of living in the immediate neighbourhood – for instance, in 1980, the press reported that local residents were using the Station's public showers on a daily basis.⁵³ On the whole, an official study from 1979 estimated that 40 per cent of all customers were non-travellers.⁵⁴

Moreover, further dynamics of the fear narrative correlated with developments related to the future City West. Out of the five planned high-rise buildings and the one large shopping mall to link them, only one skyscraper was erected in 1979. Though work had already commenced on the second structure, construction came to a halt under martial law between 1981 and 1983. Work resumed in 1985 owing to American investment under new circumstances of the economic reform and was finally completed in 1989. From then on, the underground passages connected the public space of the Station to an exclusive Marriott hotel, boutiques, a casino and a city terminal of the Polish LOT-airline. In other words, they linked two opposites: the anonymous and popular, horizontal public space of the Station with the restricted and luxurious, vertical space of the skyscraper. Thus, on the one hand, a hidden permeable space between otherwise separate settings was formed, which permitted users to interact in either a spontaneous or premeditated manner. On the other hand, the hidden underground hall served as a variation on the realm of Hades, a secluded space destined for the mysterious, the illegal and the marginal.⁵⁵ Consequently, the discourse at the time reflected a general feeling of vulnerability in these spaces connected to the Station.

Such negative developments reinforced the Station's poor reputation and brought the existing hyper-vigilance to an extreme. According to press re-

⁵² Jens Dangschat, *Warschau*, in: Jürgen Friedrichs (ed.), *Stadtentwicklungen in Ost- und Westeuropa*, Berlin 1985, p. 763-969, here p. 932.

⁵³ R. Wiśniewski, 42 piętra, in: *Prawo i Życie* 20/1980, p. 1, 8-9.

⁵⁴ L. Rudziński, A. Tokarski, *Analiza potoków ruchu pieszego na Dworcu Centralnym w Warszawie*, in: *Drogi kolejowe* 1/1979, p. 20-27.

⁵⁵ Cf. Sebastian Machleb/Niko Rollmann, *Reise durch den Untergrund der Städte. Architektur, Kultur und Konstrukt*, Berlin 2013; Rosalind Williams, *Notes on the underground. An essay on technology, society, and the imagination*, (Mass.) 2008.

ports, the underground was considered to be ungovernable and outside the parameters of typical societal power relations and hierarchies.⁵⁶ Undoubtedly, the intricate materiality of this space made it difficult to control. However, the variety of the actors who perceived it as such, signifies the political and economic changes taking place in Poland at the time. To begin with, in 1989 the police, whose official post was located in the Station's underground, publicly acknowledged their defeat in deterring thieves and the homeless from the premises: "They, the homeless, aren't afraid of us at all. We do our thing, they do their thing. [...] What can you possibly do about it?"⁵⁷ Unlike the smooth, almost-heroic enforcement of the law as depicted in the aforementioned inter-war reportage, the police's acknowledgement from early spring of 1989, several months before the end of People's Poland, demonstrates the degree to which the regime's power had eroded. In addition, the Station's management expressed scepticism concerning any further expansion of the Station's surroundings – be it another hotel, a luxurious department store or the subway. On the grounds of their everyday experiences, they expected the city's underbelly – comprised of shylocks, prostitutes, and thieves – to flourish and they doubted the police's capacity to restrict the "underground city".⁵⁸ Finally, individuals who managed the shops and stores that had been wedged into the Station's once spacious underground in the aftermath of economic reforms entered the discourse. Strikingly, one of them shared the fear of the Station's management – but at the same time he alone claimed to observe his agency as far as protection was concerned: namely he meant to have obtained a gun in order to (successfully) defend himself from burglaries and extortions by the local mafiosi.⁵⁹

Such a reconfiguration related to the perception of fear demonstrates that once order had corroded from the top, concerns about security and protection from the underground "gangland" became absorbed into individual everyday practices. Matters of security were transferred from the authorities to the public. Given these uncertainties, and the underground's projective potential in mind, one could also argue that the unruly underground of the Station was suited to give even more room to fears of the future. This sentiment becomes more apparent in the press' upswing of the 1990s, the first decade of the present-day Third Polish Republic. In fact, the most relevant press reports on the Station published in the up-and-coming liberal daily newspaper, *Gazeta*

⁵⁶ First depiction of this kind dates back to 1986, see J. Kirzyński, *Dworcowa codzienność*; J. Włosek, *Central Hilton*.

⁵⁷ M. Jędrzejewski, *Bezdomni z Centralnego*, in: *Argumenty* 13/1989, p. 1, 6-7; also J. Kirzyński, *Dworcowa codzienność*.

⁵⁸ R. Jabłoński, *Stali bywalcy*.

⁵⁹ W. Łuka, *Podziemne przejście do kapitalizmu*, in: *Prawo i Życie* 15/1991, p. 8-9.

Wyborcza, focused its coverage almost exclusively on thefts, assaults, prostitution, the taxi mafia as well as homelessness, which reinforced an image of the Station as a space eluding standard measures of social control.

As for the shopkeepers, the question of security was not their only concern at that time. The economic transformation from a planned economy to capitalism, which was set in motion in 1989, brought new flows of capital and hope concerning the Station's refurbishment as well as further expansion of the City West. Through the newly established link to Marriott and the implantation of further kiosks and boutiques into the underground, the passage itself was also transformed to such an extent that a press report proclaimed it to be the "passage to capitalism".⁶⁰ However, for the lessees of shops and stores in Station's underground, that passage proved to be anything but simple. Having previously profited from the partial reinstatement of private business activity (much to the disadvantage of eroded state enterprises), they were now faced with the prospect of competing against wealthy foreign investors, who imposed new challenges on them causing insecurity to abound. The underground passage became symptomatic of uncertainties which had befallen many small businesses and, even more, erstwhile state employees, who were often overwhelmed by the new challenges of capitalism.⁶¹

Interestingly enough, those various existential fears of the underbelly were approached with an emphasis on contrastive emotions and ephemeral values such as mercy, which, as I show, brought about changes in media coverage, but also the physical space of the Station itself. For instance, weekly periodicals and even public television stations broadcast documentaries tackling the issue of homelessness at the Station⁶², which transformed those who had been treated as invisible into an integral part of the Station's imagery.⁶³ The press aimed to build support for the shopkeepers by appealing to the readers' sense of camaraderie and compassion – be it for their entrepreneurial dreams or commitment to the social issues – while was also demonstrating their indispensable purpose (as in the case of a local innkeeper who wanted to start a soup kitchen for the homeless).⁶⁴

Even more significantly, the urban tissue was reconfigured by and for actors, who for ideological reasons had remained in the shadows during the

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

⁶¹ Cf. Z. Pisz, Doświadczenia społeczne w procesie transformacji systemowej w Polsce w latach dziewięćdziesiątych, in: *Problemy polityki społecznej. Studia i dyskusje* 2/2000, p. 101-119.

⁶² E.g. *Wesołe miasteczko* (1990), *Jestem kim jestem* (1991), *Podróże do Polski* (1991).

⁶³ M. Jędrzejewski, *Bezdomni z Centralnego*.

⁶⁴ E.g. *Wesołe miasteczko* (1990), *Jestem kim jestem* (1991), *Podróże do Polski* (1991).

People's Republic. For instance, in 1992 Monar, an NGO dedicated to the rehabilitation of drug addicts, repurposed an unused storeroom of the Station's restaurant and installed a bathhouse for the homeless.⁶⁵ As a consequence, the once denigrated, excluded group was visibly elevated from the underground of the Station to the over-ground level while the passengers' showers were given back their initial function. Finally, in 1994 the main hall of the Station was designated as suitable venue for a recital of Christmas carols, which were broadcast on television and featured a performance by singer-songwriter Jacek Kaczmarski (1957-2004), who was also known as the voice of the *Solidarność* opposition.⁶⁶

Consequently, the once marginalised segments of society, who were previously confined to the physical and metaphorical underground, were now elevated and showcased. Such a renewal in the management of public space corresponded with a change in the broader cultural discourse of the Third Polish Republic, due in part to the political elites' adoption of a more Christian disposition. After over forty years of Soviet hegemony, the tabooed religion resurfaced amid the struggle to reshape a new national identity. Moreover, given the historical importance of religion in the Polish culture, the combined values of mercy, charity, and public spirituality could also mark a cultural response to the insecurity and adversity of the new epoch, which confronted generations of Poles with previously unknown problems. From a spatial perspective, the transitory character of the Station as a multifarious meeting point made it equipped for signalling social issues and for hosting charitable causes.⁶⁷ While the underground, which linked the spacious concourse with the American skyscraper, stood for the fear of criminality, insecurity, and struggles of transformation, the over-ground area of the Station represented the landscape of a society undergoing a significant transformation in order to become a hopeful space of social inclusion.

6. Conclusion

This paper sought to evaluate the hitherto scattered reflections on railway stations as spaces of fear by systematically investigating a Central Eastern European case, rarely looked at until now, over a period of almost a century.

⁶⁵ jap, Łaźnia dla bezdomnych, in: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19.12.1991 and similar articles throughout 1991-1992; also TV features: *Ciepłej* (1991), *Czysta sprawa* (1992).

⁶⁶ *Szukamy stajenki* (1994).

⁶⁷ As showed by the example of German *Bahnhofsmissionen* since the late 19th century, cf. Renate Zitt, *Wort Gottes im Bahnhof? Seismograph Bahnhofsmission*, in: Herzog/Leis, *Der Bahnhof*, p. 127-142.

Through adduced examples I argue, that under conditions of historical discontinuity there is hardly one single explanation for how a railway station could figure as a space of fear. The 20th century history of Warsaw's central station demonstrates that the narratives of station-related fear were not necessarily conditioned by the sole experience of mobility of crime. They rather became intertwined with specifics related to the given physical space itself, but also, even more importantly, with the overarching social and political contexts surrounding its usage.

To begin with the latter, the perception of fear was influenced by the balance of power between those who perceived the Station through the practices of everyday life and those directly in charge of the respective decision-making. Within the context of the modernisation narrative, the initial ordering of the station's space by authorities and experts contributed to a largely matter-of-fact perception of the Station as an infrastructural asset and one that was subordinate to the rule of superiors. Even if insecurity in the face of novelty and major technological breakthroughs entered the public discourse, the perception of fear was largely relegated to the cultural margins. Such configurations could change, however, if existing power relations became destabilised following major crises or breakthroughs. During these events, perceptions of fear or anxiety in the Station advanced from their marginal significance in literature or niche magazines to the focal point of pieces in the mainstream press and television. Furthermore, such perceptions also transformed the physical space from its intended, orderly use to one that embodied a subversive potential, through emphasis on the public character of the space and its capacity to reflect social grievances or issues. While fear acted as a signpost of conflicts and challenges to the established order, the temple of modern mobility could morph into a token of unpredictability as well as a setting in which social order was negotiated. Exactly how obvious and comprehensive actors could be while evoking such an atmosphere of fear, was determined by the historical availability of certain media along with prevailing social structures and the extent of the given regime's restrictiveness in terms of order and security – or, in other words, concepts of social engineering. Evidently, the more oppressive a regime was, the more tangible means were chosen to make the perception of fear transpire: from literary allusions in a democratic republic to a militant assault on the structure under German occupation to a semi-documentary film created under a socialist regime. However, during unsteady times of a democratic transition, which saw the relaxation of former restrictions and the imposition of new insecurities at the same time, the perception of fear frequently dominated the main discourse while also opening loopholes for new actors to implement

their own spatial ordering of the Station, which brought about its own kind of fear-regulation at the station.

With regard to the role of physical space, the sheer scale of infrastructural investment as well as the crucial role of a central station for transport and communication purposes made it an inevitable site where power and fear manifestations could be staged. In addition, the public and transitory character of the space lent visibility to a broad range of ephemeral encounters and their respective qualities, which largely consisted of a fluid spatial ordering, where both human beings and social goods played a role. The perception of fear coincided with the notion of marginal groups being constantly present at a place of transit and their unsettling spontaneous practices, which seemed to arbitrarily modify the spatial ordering in ways that were not compatible with the intended or common usage. In general, the measures aimed at regulating or excluding undesirables, such as eviction or separation, fostered an atmosphere of greater security. However, in some cases, these incidences could trigger fear-based responses depending on whether they were oppressive for the majority of visitors (e.g. surveillance cameras) or simply ineffective (e.g. police surveillance). Additionally, design specifics influenced, while in use, the perception of this power dynamic. In other words, it made a difference, whether the Station was a simple open concourse with one major entrance that could be easily watched over by a policeman, or an intricate multi-storey system, fully accessible and partly confined to the underground. Where spontaneous practices could flourish, confusion about order and security arose and fear was perceived more intensely, namely in liminal spaces, such as bustling halls and waiting rooms, but also, more specifically, dark corners, half-public niches or long passages, which blurred the borders between edifices of diverging character. Finally, fear was perceived with regard to encounters with technology: not only concerning the use of unfamiliar technical equipment, but also the growing dependence on it. The latter fear was aroused particularly in times of crisis, when the technological fallibility came to light and maintenance could not keep pace with progressing deterioration. As such, this form of fear represents a more general condition of late modernity and the disillusionment with technology's agency and reliability.

In conclusion, depending on the historical moment, not one specific kind of fear but a unique nexus of anxieties and insecurities could emerge – not (only) as an implication of a specific experience of public space, but as a correlate of a variety of spatial and social circumstances. The most important contribution of this historical insight into the station-related fear might be how – under certain socio-political circumstances – the relevant perception of fear could transcend the plain dimensions of design, usage or crime issues, while correspond-

ing with other, space-unrelated collective fears of the time. The common denominator of those – often overlapping – narratives can be identified as the categories of security, control and power. Whether this linkage is distinct to railway stations or applicable to other public spaces in the modern period, is a question that could be pursued prospectively in comparative studies. Consequently, such insights could help further the knowledge on how far the connection goes between the mandate of the modern 20th century social engineers to order and rationalise, and the fears typical of the “liquid modern age”, as experienced at the dawn of the 21st century.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Cf. Etzemüller; Kuchenbuch; Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid fear*, Cambridge (Mass.) et al. 2006.