

HISTORIC TRAIN STATIONS IN MAŁOPOLSKIE PROVINCE DURING THE RAILROAD INDUSTRY REGRESSION

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Abstract

Historic train stations in Małopolskie Province during the railroad industry regression

Train stations tend to be the most representative constructions of the railroad industry. In many cases they are considered as interesting transportation and architectural monuments. In Poland, where the rail network was developed mostly before World War I, they constitute the most numerous group of monuments of Poland's industrial era. The main goal of this paper is to indicate the historic train station buildings (those dating back to the period 1847-1918) in Małopolskie Province and determine their role in the modern railroad transportation system. As a backdrop for the discussion, a few background elements are included. They are: chosen architectural hallmarks of train stations in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, selected issues concerning the railroad history of Galicia and contemporary aspects of the railroad industry's current regression. It is in this context that the state and prospective utilization of historic rail stations are portrayed.

Key words

railroad industry, cultural heritage, industrial landmarks, railroad industry regression, Małopolskie Province, Poland

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1. Introduction

About 20 thousand kilometers of railroad line had been built before 1918 within Poland's contemporary borders. The rapid expansion of the rail network was thought to be an elementary economic development determinant and was most widely cultivated in Polish land in the Prussian partition, where the railroad industry drew the special interest of the state. Rail networks in other parts of contemporary Poland developed much slower, resulting in less dense rail systems in these areas. For strategic reasons (concerns about facilitating enemy military movements) and economic misgivings (economic marginalization of the country) the railroad industry did not thrive in the Polish Kingdom, which was under Russian control during the time period considered. However, in Galicia, the land captured by the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the expansion of railroads was constrained by low industry development and low local capital potential, an unfavorable situation for the building of private railroads. Despite the differences between the lands in three partitions, any railroad expansion was always accompanied by the construction of train stations. As a result, these train stations represent a major group of industrial era landmarks in modern-day Poland. The abundance and variety of this heritage was not only a result of differences in location within three partitioning countries, but was also derived from a relatively long tradition of railroad line construction (the first ones date back to the 1840s) and dynamic town development.

At the beginning of the 20th century, in response to rising needs, train stations in many towns were significantly expanded, on many occasions receiving very effective design updates. In this way, train stations became showpieces and stood as examples of true glamour, similar to other towns' practices of ornamenting their utilities structures. As a consequence, there are now many train stations with outstanding architectural values in Poland. Large and medium-sized towns draw the most attention now for as such objects: Gdańsk, Wrocław (Main and Świebodzki Train Stations), Opole, Białystok, Lublin, Kraków, Tarnów, and Przemyśl. This contrasts with small towns, where standard designs were the most popular and were copied numerous times. The only exceptions to this trend are those which were built at busy railroad junctions (e.g. Iława, Malbork, Kostrzyn) or border crossings (e.g. Nowe Skalmierzyce on the Prussian-Russian border), where very individual and original objects were erected to celebrate their prestige and import. Presently, it is very interesting to look at the historic railroad heritage as an integral part of the transportation system. Regeneration and adaptation of these buildings to contemporary needs ought to be one of the main elements of a traveler-friendly image cultivated by the railroad, especially during the current dominance of car transportation. Unfortunately, along with the ongoing railroad industry regression in Poland, a gradual degradation of the related infrastructure can be observed, including the desertion of several historic train station buildings.

The author wishes to concentrate on those train stations located in the central and southern parts of Małopolskie Province, which were situated in Galicia before World War I (Fig. 1). Małopolska is a region where the rail network was crystallized before 1911. Today, the share of historic train stations in the overall number of train stations is large; as such, they have become an inherent element of the landscape. Regrettably, the railroad industry in the region has been adversely affected by the ongoing regression, something prominently attested to by the recent reduction in the number of train links.

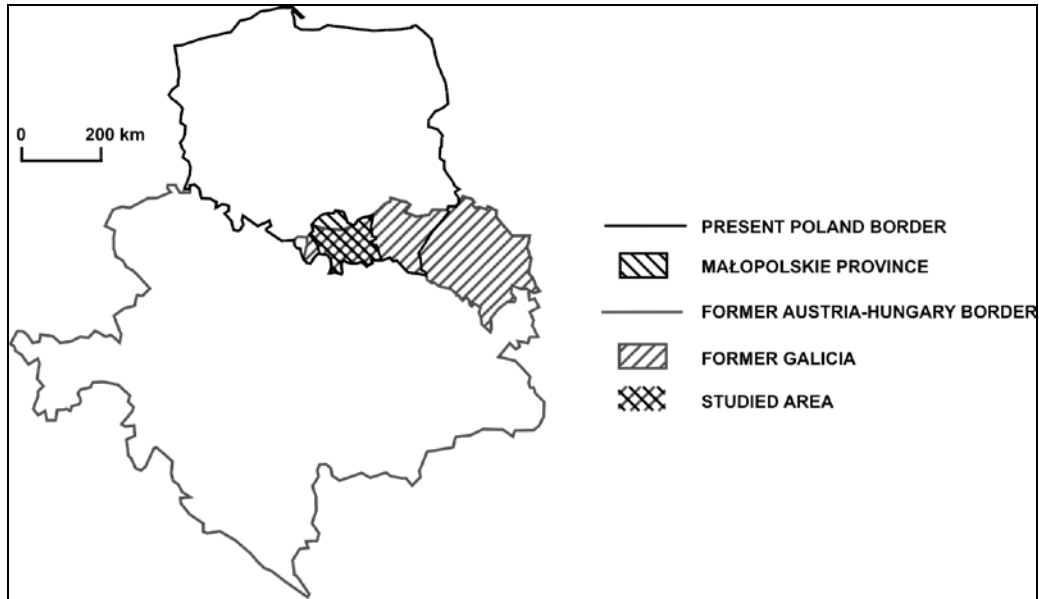


Fig. 1: Location of studied area towards present Poland border and former Austria-Hungary border

Source: Author's work.

2. Train station architecture

The notion of a train station often carries with it confusion about what, exactly, is included in the term. Obviously, the most basic and common elements of the railroad landscape are train tracks, although stations also perform a crucial role in the functioning of the whole railroad system. Trade activities present at train station compounds encompass more than just passenger services. These take place in the specially designed and prepared train station building (Towpik 2004). Other elements of the infrastructure present in the vicinity of train stations, such as engine-sheds, signal boxes and water towers, often possess historic character and are undoubtedly part of railroad heritage, but are not taken in consideration in this paper.

Main train station buildings are the most representative of all railroad edifices and so were specially designed to be aesthetically pleasing. The architecture of train stations erected during the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century embody the artistic trends of the day. These trends in Central Europe (especially in the Austro-Hungarian Empire), according to Kubinszky's (2008) periodization, are classified in the following way: Classicism (from the beginning of railroad construction to 1845), Gothic Revival (1845-1865), Historicism (1860-1918), Art Nouveau (1885-1914), Early Modernism (after 1910) and other regional styles. In Galicia, where railroads were built after 1847, Historicism was the prevailing style. The few examples of Gothic Revival built in Galicia, including Kraków's first train station, have not survived in their original forms. Several other buildings also had to be replaced, a process that occurred during the Art Nouveau period at the beginning of 20th century.

In the time between World Wars and after World War II, train station architecture changed many times. These changes did not affect the former area of Galicia significantly, as only a few buildings constructed before 1918 were rebuilt. Instead, the changing architectural style situation only concerned some junction (e.g. Chabówka, Kraków, Płaszów, and Muszyna) and urban (e.g. Brzesko, Chrzanów, and Oświęcim) train stations. In spite of a common tendency in post-war Poland to build completely new stations in larger cities (especially during the 1970s), those in the biggest cities (Kraków, Tarnów, and Nowy Sącz) were not demolished and so not rebuilt. Nowadays, those in the largest cities portray the most interesting examples of railroad architecture in Małopolskie Province.

3. History of the railroad industry in Galicia, with special emphasis upon present-day Małopolskie Province

The beginning of the railroad industry in Galicia is connected with the Kraków-Mysłowice (Upper Silesia) rail route, commonly called the Upper Silesian Railroad, built in 1847 (see Fig. 2). As this route was the sole link between Galicia and Prussia, it was a priority to connect the route with other parts of the Austrian Empire. As a result, Emperor Ferdinand's Northern Railroad (a track segment to Bohumin, through Dziedzice and Oświęcim to Trzebinia on the Upper Silesian Railroad) was built between the years 1852-1856, giving Kraków a direct link to Vienna. During the following years (1856-1861), this main Galician railroad route was extended to Lviv through Tarnów, Dębica, and Przemyśl. In addition to these extensions, short branch lines to Wieliczka (from Biezanów, in 1857) and Niepołomice (from Podłęże, in 1858) were constructed. Another important investment took the form of strategic rail routes through the Carpathian Mountains, a project that connected Galicia with northern Hungary. One of these routes was the Tarnów-Nowy Sącz-Muszyna-Leluchów railroad, built in 1876.

The pace of construction of minor and local rail routes after 1880 was relatively slow. The most noticeable, as well as the most strategically important, of those built was The Galician Transversal Railroad, which runs through the Carpathian lowlands and valleys from Zwardoń to Zagórz. The majority of its run is now located within Małopolskie Province as the part of Żywiec-Sucha-Nowy Sącz-Jasło connection. The accompanying Oświęcim-Skawina-Podgórze and Sucha-Skawina rail routes were built at the same time (all in 1884). A ring rail route in Kraków was also built during the 1880s and was connected functionally with the fortifications of Kraków. The Kalwaria-Bielsko line was also built at this time (1888), as a part of a route to Kojetin located in Moravia (through Cieszyn).

At the end of the Galician period (1899 – 1911), a few more local rail routes were constructed, mainly under the directive of private associations. The most important were the Trzebinia-Spytkowice-Wadowice-Skawce rail route (in 1899) and a branch of The Galician Transversal Railroad, which ran from Chabówka to Zakopane through Nowy Targ (also in 1899). The latter was also connected with Hungarian railroads due to the Nowy Targ-Sucha Hora route (1904). The last additions to the railroad system of Galicia were the Tarnów-Szczucin route (1906) and a short route from Muszyna to the Krynica health resort (1911).

Each of the rail routes constructed during the specified time period were characterized by their own distinct train station architecture, although rather in artistic details than substantial functional and constructional variations.

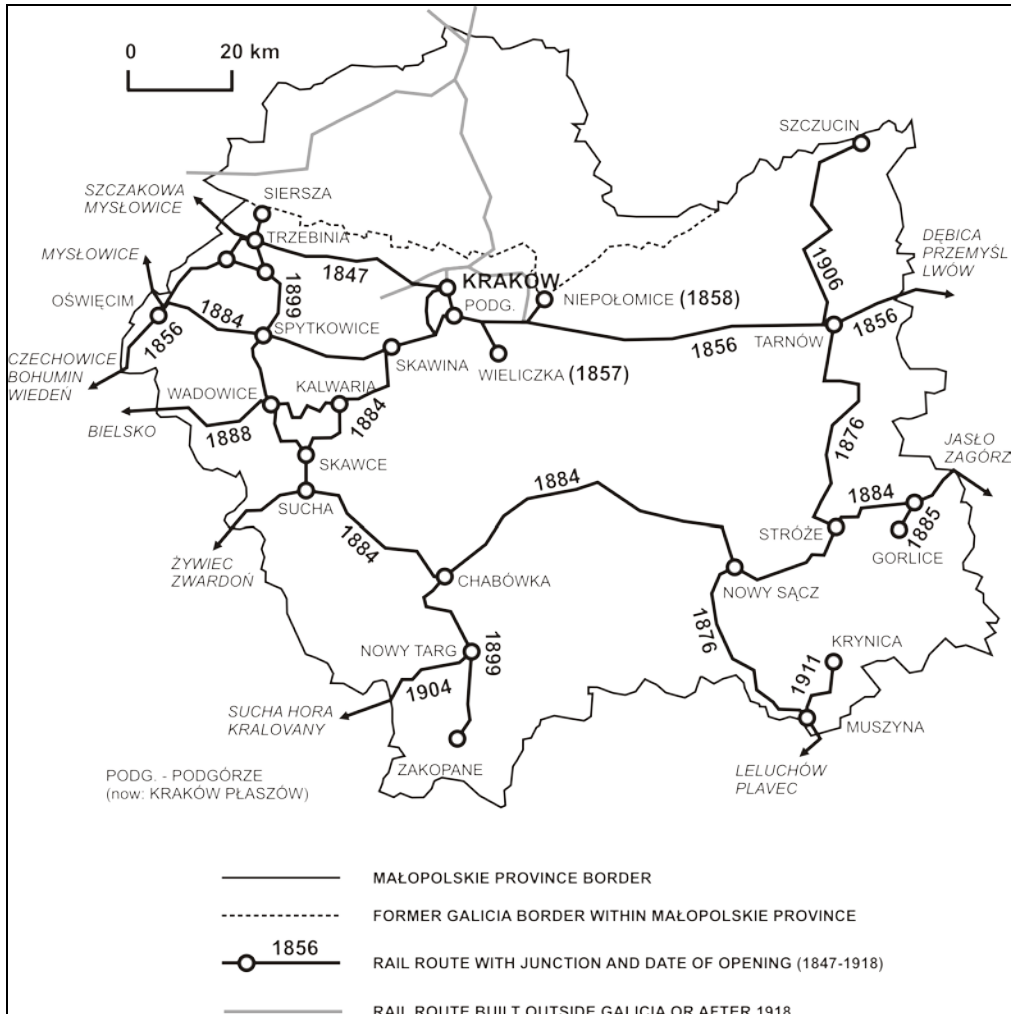


Fig. 2: Development of railway network in the land of present-day Małopolskie Province before 1918

Source: Author's work based on: Taylor 2007.

4. Historic train stations along Galician rail routes in Małopolskie Province

The author's main objective was to single out those train stations, which, thanks to well-preserved original architectural forms, testify of the epoch in which they were built and can be classified as railroad construction landmarks. In Małopolskie Province, 64 such edifices fulfilling these requirements were found, all of them built in the period between 1856-1906. Fig. 3 presents the locations of these train stations.

A majority of these preserved complexes contain small to medium-sized train station buildings erected after 1880 (Fig. 4 and 5). They were constructed according to the typical designs prepared by The Department of Construction and Equipment, a subdivision of The Railroad Construction General Office under the Railroad Ministry

in Vienna. Such buildings are common throughout the entire area of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire, but tend to vary as far as building materials are concerned (Kubinszky, 2008).

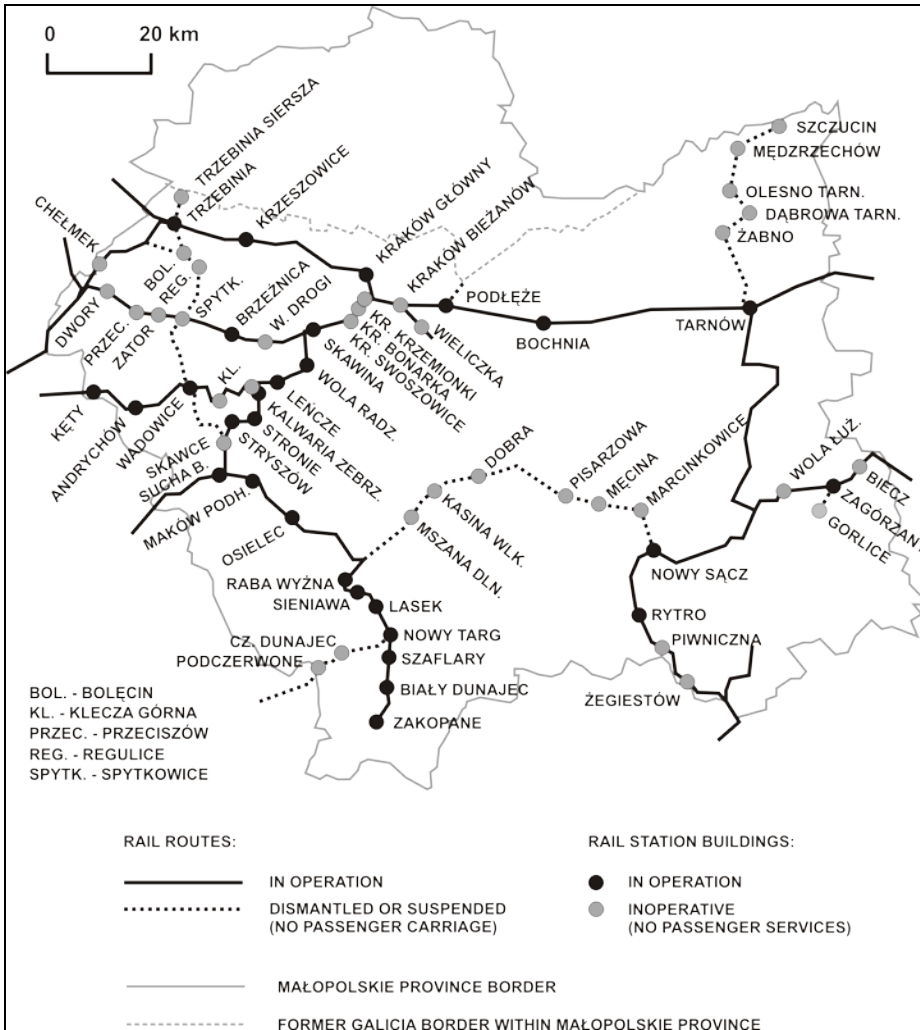


Fig. 3: Historic train station buildings in Małopolskie Province
 Source: Author's work.

A typical period building joined “Neo-Renaissance architecture with Tyrolean roofs” (Bylina, 1999). The most characteristic elements of this architecture type were accented building corners (rustication), the framing of windows and doors, decorative cornices that separate the second floor from the ground floor and risalits in the front of the building. On the side of the station where the tracks pass, wooden verandas were built, often supported by cast iron columns. Train station building sizes varied depending on the their significance. Simpler forms are represented by train stations located along the Tarnów-Leluchów, Chabówka-Zakopane and Wadowice-Bielsko rail routes, with those constructed by Northern Railroads being



Fig. 4: Typical for The Galician Transversal Railroad small-sized train station building (Kasna Wielka, Chabówka-Nowy Sącz route).
Source: Own photo.



Fig. 5: Train station in Sieniawa (Chabówka-Zakopane railway route).
Source Own photo.

the only ones in Galicia that were not plastered, but instead had a brick veneer. Some of the buildings along the Tarnów-Szczuczyn rail route were only single-storied.

The oldest train stations on the main rail routes (Trzebinia, Krzeszowice, Kraków Bieżanów, and Wieliczka) and train stations in the biggest cities (Kraków, Tarnów, Nowy Sącz and Bochnia) display more unique architectonic characteristics. The last three edifices, erected in lieu of obsolete objects from the 1850s and 1870s, date back to the first decade of the 20th century and were plainly inspired by the Art Nouveau movement (Fig.6). The train station in Kraków, on the other hand, while originally in the Gothic Revival style, was rebuilt in the Neo-Renaissance style (Rymar, 2005).



Fig. 6: Train station in Tarnów (before renewal). An example of Art Nouveau architecture in rail building industry
Source: Own photo.

While all of the features Galician train station architecture will not be fully described here, nevertheless it must be understood that the train stations preserved in the urban and rural landscapes of Małopolskie Province represent a valuable and varied artistic heritage.

5. Train station architecture in conjunction with the railroad industry regression in Małopolskie Province

As mentioned at the beginning of this work, the railroad industry (including its historical heritage) in Małopolskie Province faces the problem of regression, which has worsened since the beginning of the economic transition in 1989. Taylor (2007) fingers the basic causes of this phenomenon as: insufficient state policy concerning the railroad industry, a diminishing railroad transportation demand and improper

management, which hinders the transportation offering-to-needs compatibility; it allows, instead, for financial irresponsibility and infrastructure devaluation at an unprecedented rate.

In the carriage services, this phenomenon is most simply expressed by a piecemeal decrease in the number of train connections, in some cases leading to complete shutdowns of particular routes. This situation has widely affected Małopolskie Province (Fig. 7). So far, a few rail routes have been partly or completely dismantled (Nowy Targ-Sucha Hora, Trzebinia-Spytkowice, Wadowice-Skawce, Kraków-Kocmyrzów, and Podłęże-Niepołomice). Some operating routes have excluded passenger carriers, such as the Chabówka-Nowy Sącz and Tarnów-Szczucin lines. Finally, there are some rail routes (Kalwaria Lanckorona-Wadowice, Stróże-Jasło) where daily services are limited to only one or two pairs of connections, an action that is nonsensical and naturally opposed to the social role of the railroad industry.

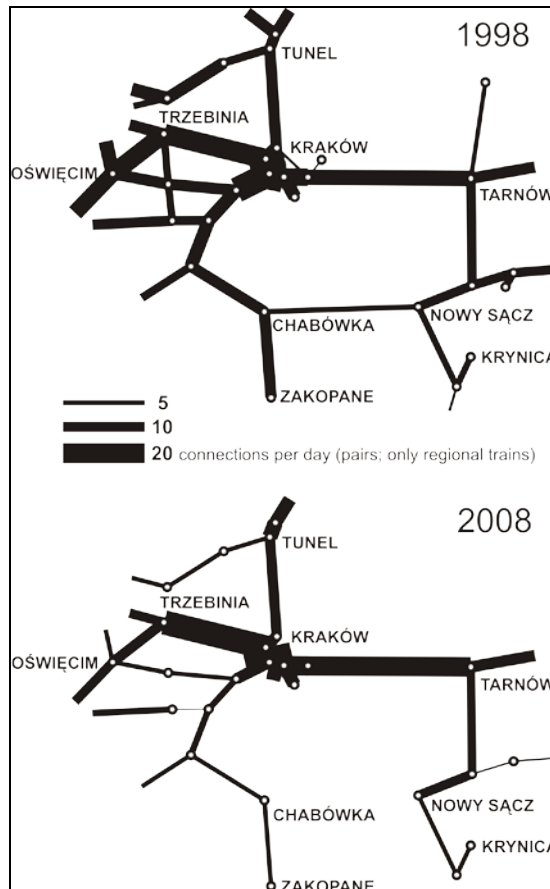


Fig 7: Railroad industry regression in Małopolskie Province: decrease in the number of train connections between 1998 and 2008

Source: Author's work based on: Rejonowy rozkład jazdy pociągów 1997/1998; Sieciowy rozkład jazdy pociągów 2008/2009.

One of the dimensions of the current crisis is the gradual degradation of railroad infrastructure, including those of historical character (Fig. 8). After the disassembly of routes and suspension or complete resignation from passenger carriage services on certain lines, only 45% of the 64 Galicia-age buildings are still in operation. (Here, operating train stations are defined as those which are equipped with a ticket office and waiting room open for at least a few hours a day; based on information from train stations, stops and passenger service ranges enclosed in *Sieciowy Rozkład Jazdy Pociągów 2008/2009*.)

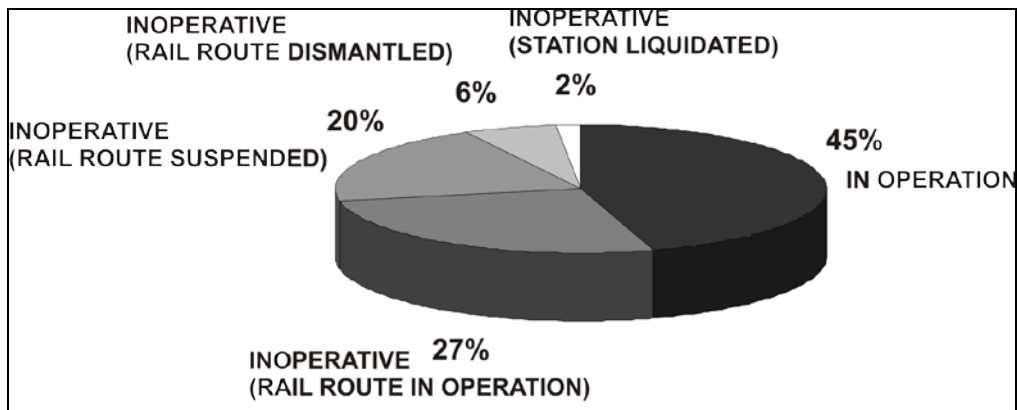


Fig 8: Utilization of historic train stations in Małopolskie Province.

Source: : Author's work.

Another 27% of the 64 Galicia-age buildings are those stations located on operating railroad routes where no forms of passenger services are found and no public waiting rooms are available (usually on low traffic lines). The rest of the considered railroad stations are situated next to completely abandoned or suspended routes. The majority of them are utilized (partly or entirely) as housing and only rarely perform other services (e.g. Kasina Wielka, Kraków Krzemionki, Gorlice, and Krzeszowice).

For now, no reversal back to the previous roles of these buildings can be expected, as the section of Polish State Railways (PKP Real Estates) responsible for railroad infrastructure is recently more interested in sales than utilization. This direction will certainly not affect the railroad industry positively, but instead leave it bereaved of passenger service stops. In light of the large-scale sale of railroad real estate campaign planned by the railroad administrator over infrastructure, a question arises about what new functions train station buildings, including historic ones, can and should perform.

Taylor (2007) points out that small railroad stations are often converted into apartments and seldom play another role in production or services again. The process of donating buildings to former railroaders is very slow, and, in the meantime, they remain abandoned and continue to deteriorate. Larger buildings, chiefly those located in cities, tend to be converted into more commercial spaces such as clubs, stores, warehouses, restaurants, and municipal institutions. Train stations located outside of housing districts often remain unused and fall into disrepair.

6. Train station renewals as an attempt to restore the railroad industry image

Even as the gradual decline of the railroad industry in the Małopolska region continues, any and all of the initiatives that might help to restore its image of a convenient and safe means of transportation are important. Unfortunately, there are not many new investment projects being made of Małopolskie Province train stations. The only one to be carried out so far was a comprehensive attempt to renew historic train station buildings that only resulted in some repairs to the railroad infrastructure located along the so-called John Paul II's Railroad Route. This route runs from the Kraków Main Train Station to Kraków Płaszów, Kraków Łagiewniki, Skawina, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Lanckorona, and Wadowice. A special electric multiple unit (14WE) was installed to serve this route with the aim to provide links to places connected with the memory of Pope John Paul II (Wadowice, Kraków, and Łagiewniki) and a sanctuary in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. Before the launch of this so-called Pope's Train in May 2006, all of the rail buildings along the way were regenerated. In reality, the verb "regeneration" should not be used here, as the work conducted can only be described as a "face lift". Building façade repairs were neither accompanied by improvements of passenger services nor platform renovations.

Despite these repairs, some train station buildings remained unused and were quickly devastated. Similarly, replacements of railroad tracks and infrastructure accompanied by a route speed increase to 100 km/h were measurable benefits that were not taken advantage of. This mainly concerns the Kalwaria Lanckorona-Wadowice route, where the tracks remained in a terrible technical state. The tracks have since been repaired, but, unfortunately, the improvements achieved were not used to correct the transportation offering of the route, which is now served by only one pair of connections. A tangible chance to create a modern connection was wasted. The train station renewals that have taken place are only tentative in character and have not induced any significant improvements to the quality of train travel.

Among other investments in recent years, only some repairs of the Trzebinia (in 2005) and Tarnów (presently happening) train stations can be mentioned. This situation attests to the tendencies to renew only crucial train stations (junctions or those located in big cities) on main routes. Accordingly, this depicts a marginalization of the regional and local railroads in Małopolskie Province.

7. Conclusions

The historic train stations in the part of Małopolskie Province that was under in Austrian partition (so-called Galicia) before 1918 total 64 edifices of various forms. These are very valuable items of interesting heritage that are permanently ingrained in the region's landscape. Note should be taken of the fact that the railroad industry regression in Poland induces a significant reduction in the number of transportation offerings and excludes train station buildings from productive use. Presently, 55% of the historic train stations in Małopolskie Province are closed. These closures mainly affect local routes, where no further prospects can be found to restore or augment the frequency of train runs. It seems as if one of the most probable processes in the following years will be the piecemeal selling off of railroad properties by those in charge of state railroad infrastructure. It is hard to predict what consequences this

will bring for railroad heritage preservation projects in Małopolskie Province. The only positive changes that can be expected only involve the most important train stations located on major railroad lines.

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HISTORIC TRAIN STATIONS IN MAŁOPOLSKIE PROVINCE DURING THE RAILROAD INDUSTRY REGRESSION

Summary

The railroad network in Małopolskie Province, developed mostly before World War I, came into its own with the creation of an interesting system of 64 local train station buildings. Despite their precious value as examples of 19th century and first decade 20th century train station architecture, they are in serious jeopardy. The main reason for this is a decline in the railroad industry in Poland, which is expressed by a significant decrease in the number of connections and an exclusion of most train station buildings from use. The marginalization of local railroads in Małopolskie Province will most likely bring about a significant change in the function of many train stations that are currently closed.

