

Modernist Architecture Faced with Contemporary Challenges in the Case of the Służewiec Horse Racecourse in Warsaw

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The characteristics of the historic spatial system

In 1925, the Board of the Wilanów Estate sold the land of the Służewiec Farm to the Society for the Encouragement of Horse Breeding in Poland. It was envisaged that in an area of 150 ha the most modern and largest horse racecourse in Poland would be built, along with the whole administrative, economic and technical support facilities. It was envisioned that the park designed within its area would not only be harmoniously integrated into its entire layout and emphasise large-sized structures, but would also provide a place for weekend recreation close to nature for the residents of the capital.

On the one hand, its location, which was far from the city centre, ensured the comfort of a calm refuge for people and horses, while, on the other hand, it guaranteed long-term stability and the absence of the need to move the site. It was expected that the horse racecourse would be a destination for horse sports not only in the capital, but in the country. It was envisaged that, with its scale and in expectation of the future needs of the lovers of horse sports, it would be unsurpassable and that the expanded technical support facilities would make the new racecourse an ideal training and breeding base.

According to the development concept of the Horse Racecourse drawn up in 1927 by Tadeusz Dachowski and Franciszek Szanior, the main idea was such a distribution of the elements of the project so as to ensure, on the one hand, the best conditions for breeding, maintenance and training of race horses and to enable all the permanent personnel of the Racecourse to use the premises freely and without conflict, while, on the other hand, making the site as open as possible for the lovers of horse sports, with convenient transport solutions and extensive stands.

The original development concept of the Racecourse provided for the use of slopes which were uncommon to this area of Warsaw. After levelling they gave a terraced shape to the site. The distribution of all the most important architectural and compositional elements was subordinated to this scheme. The highest terrace was expected to house the stands and an imposing members' park, while at their foot, on one side a racetrack was to be built, with the access alley on the other side, with two "autoparks"¹. The first of them was to be a publicly accessible one to accommodate 2,000 cars and 25 buses, while the other, much smaller one, was to serve only the audience in the members' stand. The stables and residential and technical buildings, as well as the

other elements of the transport system were placed in the lower terrace, including a side alley leading to the training track, the tramway depot connected with Stands II and III through two underground tunnels and a railway siding. The lowest point in the map of Służewiec was a pond, designed in the north part of the site. The concept envisaged that it would be the central point of the park in the English style².

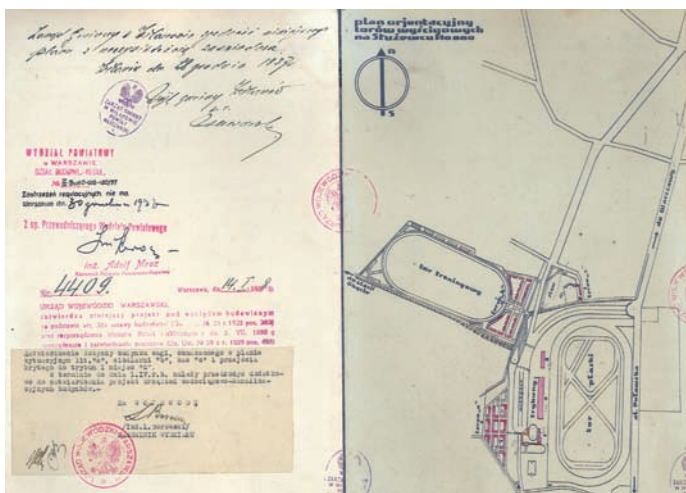
First, it was decided that both tracks would be elliptical in shape. The racetrack was located from north to south, in the eastern part of the site, while the training track ran from east to west, in the north-western part. In parallel, the eastward situation of three stands was subordinated to this orientation in order to avoid the impact of afternoon sunshine on them. Stand III, the so-called Stand of Cheapest Places, was farthest from the race goal. The original concept envisioned that Stand II, called the Grandstand, would not only be the largest stand, but also the largest cubature building on the Racecourse site. It was expected to be a place meant for both rooting for horses and watching races, and a venue for social meetings. Close behind it, the paddock³, the tack room and scales, and the main scoreboard were situated. The whole system was closed by Stand I, the Members' Stand, the elite nature of which was emphasised by a different style than that of the others, its location near the race goal and the abovementioned connection with a separate "autopark" and an elegant garden with a pool and fountain.

Following the tracks and stands, the most important elements of the construction of the new site were all the service and residential sites, stables, as well as stables with living quarters. They provided the basis for the correct functioning of the entire technical support facilities of the Racecourse and, thus, for ensuring the highest comfort of its users. It was decided that these sites would be combined into two larger groupings, which the designers called Settlements A and B. Settlement A consisted of two-storey, horseshoe-shaped buildings in the south-western part of the Racecourse, designed in particular to house large stables with many horses and a large personnel. In each stable building, rooms were also provided for stable boys and so were "apartments with conveniences for trainers". Carousels for horse lunging were also planned in the centre of each horseshoe. Due to such construction, the whole complex, which was independent of the others, could be leased to one

1. Autopark – a term used by the designers of the Służewiec Horse Racecourse in drawings, plans and descriptions of the design to denote a parking lot.

2. Spychaj H. Inwentaryzacja zieleni Toru Wyścigów Konnych na Służewcu w Warszawie (Inventory of the greenery in the Służewiec Horse Racecourse in Warsaw – in Polish), ms, Regional Office for the Protection of Monuments, Warsaw 1985/86, p. 32.

3. Paddock – a grass- or sand-covered enclosure where jockeys can finally prepare for the competition before they enter the track, mount their horse and present themselves to the audience, bettors and bookmakers.



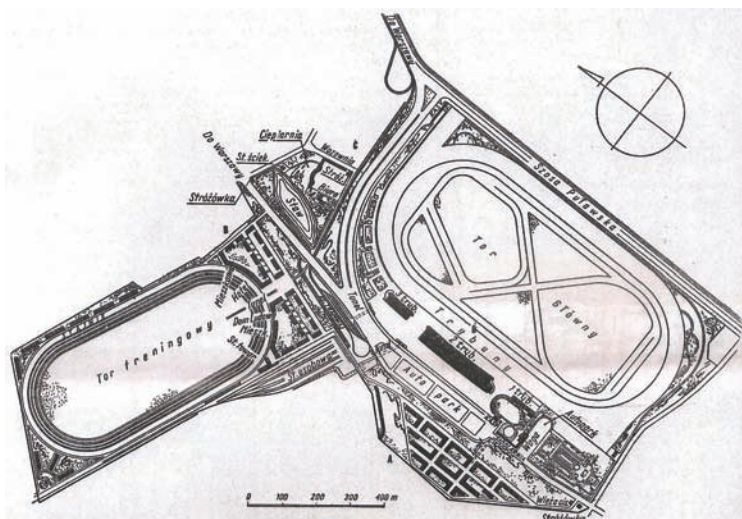
1. Development project of the Horse Racecourse in Warsaw from 1938. Materials from the collection of the Sports Lottery

horse riding club. In turn, Settlement B was the complex at the training track. It consisted of residential buildings, separate from stables, with many smaller apartments, along with stable buildings which were divided inside into smaller units designed to house smaller stables with a low number of horses. The complex was to be complemented with service buildings where a kindergarten for the personnel's children, a day care centre, a canteen, a reading room for stable boys, a laundry and small shops were located. The purpose of all this was to ensure the highest comfort for the personnel and owners of the stables and to avoid the need for them to frequently travel to the city 7 km away.

In the northern part of the Racecourse, close to the pond, support facilities were located, with the inspector's house, office rooms and apartments for administration staff and site, as well as a greenhouse, a coach house and garages.

The transport system integrated the entire space and all the abovementioned elements of the development into one, consistently functioning whole and ensured the practical autonomy of the Racecourse from the external transport system. The most important elements of this system were the solutions applied for the main roads leading into the area of the Racecourse. Under a large number of agreements with the Warsaw planners and the then Board of City Roads, it was decided that Służewiec would be connected with Warsaw by almost a straight line as a result of extending the planned NS II Route to the site of the Racecourse. The whole site was divided into two parts – the first one with the racetrack and stands; and the other with the remainder of racetrack

2. General plan of the Horse Racecourse in Warsaw from 1927. *Architektura* 10/1957



support facilities – by the main access alley, leading from the gate in Puławska Street to the gate in Wyczółki Street. Another important element of the transport system was a side alley leading directly to the training track and Settlement B. The intersection of the side alley with the NS II Route was designed in the form of a two-storey crossing, with the side alley running at its lower level. In addition, this alley ended with an underground tunnel for horses, leading directly to the training track. Another tunnel for horses was designed at Settlement A. It directly connected the residential and stable sites with the paddock and the racetrack.

The preparation of the best system for collective transport was just as important as the planning of roads for motor transport. For this purpose it was proposed that a tramway depot would be built in the north-western part of Służewiec for the Służewiec – Wierzbno line. The pedestrian traffic between the depot and the betting desks at Stands II and III was conducted through underground tunnels to avoid the crossing of the pedestrian routes with the roads for motor transport.

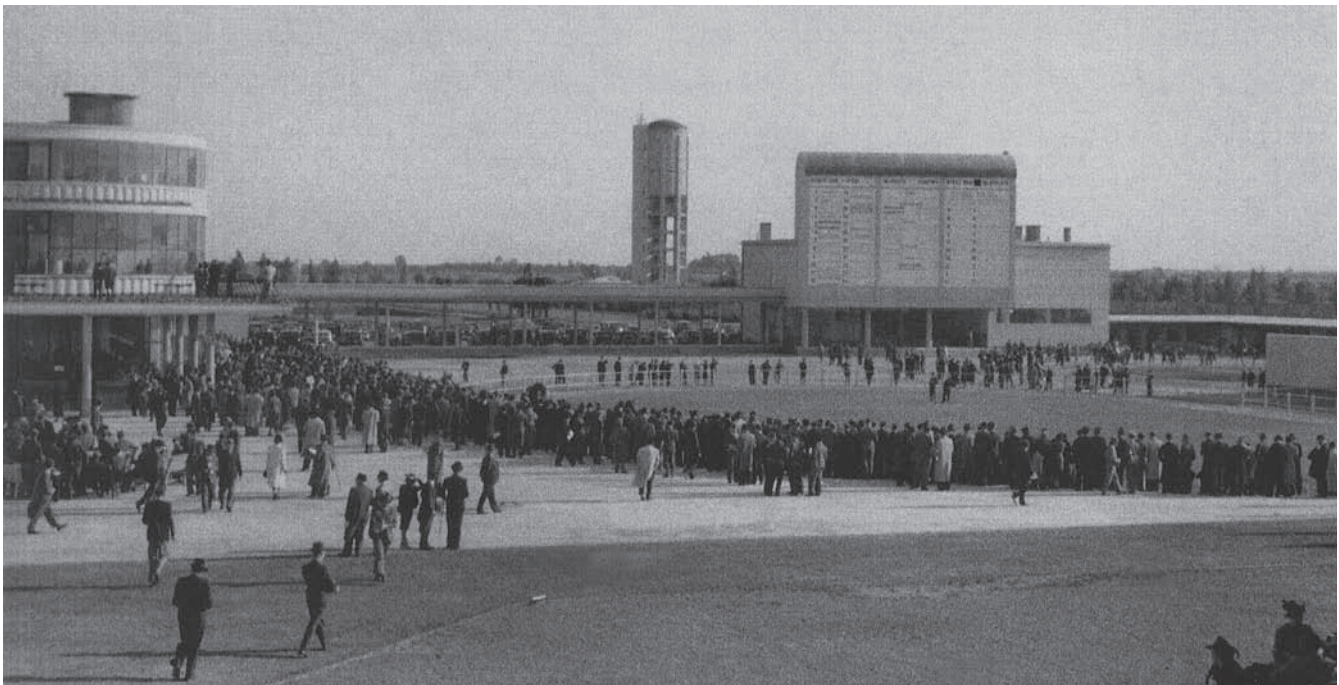
Another comprehensive solution planned for the site of the Racecourse was the introduction – behind the tramway depot, close to the training track – of a broad-gauge railway siding, connected with a fodder store and silo, as well as with a normal-gauge passenger railway depot. On the one hand, such a solution facilitated the transport of all the materials necessary for the correct functioning of the Racecourse into its site, while, on the other hand, it supported the tramway depot in the collective transport of non-motorised visitors to the Racecourse.

The vegetal cover system was an integral element of the development of the site. The whole area was surrounded by lines of high hedgerow trees. As mentioned before, the concept also provided for the design of two smaller parks. The first park in the English style, at the pond, was to serve the personnel and residents of Służewiec, while it was envisioned that the other, situated exactly on the opposite side of the site (at Stand I), would primarily play a representational role and would, therefore, have a formal, geometrical shape. At the edge of the racetrack, in the northern and southern parts, loose groups of tree-stands were designed. Together with semicircular roads, they created a place for horse riding for recreation purposes. All the vegetation plantations were based on simple or expanded alley systems which came out best in the strip between the stands, in the closest vicinity of the residential and stable units and at regularly laid out hedgerows of different height.

The Służewiec Racecourse is one of the most interesting and, at the same time, hardly known examples of the architecture of the Modernist period in Warsaw. Solutions of moderate Functionalism are most conspicuous in the form of Stands II and III, where the construction used and the internal organisation of space were directly adapted to their function. In a unique manner, the stable and residential functions were combined in the stables adjacent to the track. In the VIP part, one can also discern a clear reference to the "ship style", which was one of the varieties of the *Streamline Moderne* in the 1930s.

All the technical solutions applied in Służewiec were carried out on the basis of a design prepared by reputable staff of the Capital Building Society and the Warsaw University of Technology by the best construction companies of those times⁴. The enormous scale of the works to build a new racecourse directly drew substantial attention of the residents of not only the capital, but also other cities in the country. One of its manifestations was the erection of the Służewiec House in Katowice, at the present 73 Kościuszk Street. The single-storey pavilion, still in existence today, which was finished when the works were completed at the Racecourse, was the place where until recently Silesian bettors and lovers of horse racing could place bets on all the

4. The details related to the implementation of design and construction works which are known today were provided on a current basis in 1929-1939 in the sectoral periodical "Jeździec i Hodowca".



3. View of the paddock, grandstand I and the numerator in 1939. In the background visible the water-tower. Picture from the collection of the Sports Lottery

planned races, without having to go to Warsaw.

The solemn inauguration and the first horse races took place on 3 June 1939. Unfortunately, until that moment the Służewiec Racecourse had not been fully completed. Stand II had only been half-built. The transport system had not been implemented as a whole, while the construction of the English park at the pond had not started at all.

The outbreak of the war drastically interrupted the first racing season just three months after the first racing day. Already in September, the Nazis occupied the whole site and turned it into the quarters of the units of the reserve SS horse squadron and a Luftwaffe detachment.

The contemporary challenges and the heritage management

The spatial system of architectural and urban planning scheme has largely remained the same and has been preserved in a fairly good, legible state. Apart from few exceptions, such as the water tower which was destroyed in 1943, the whole system has remained intact since 1939.

The first racing season after the war started on 7 July 1946, when some of the horses which had been taken to Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia were recovered. In 1950, the Racecourse was nationalised and given the name of the State Horse Racecourse.

In parallel, the post-war years saw an enormous development of sports and recreation areas in the capital. The main idea of the then authorities was to ensure at least 5 m² of a rest area per 1 resident of Warsaw. For this reason the site of the Racecourse, the role of which had been reduced from that of the most important horse breeding and selection centre in Poland to, primarily, the show functions, was converted to sports and recreation areas which served as the venue for the weekend rest of the residents of the capital. However, due to numerous financial problems related to the privatisation of racing stables in 1994 and the shift of the obligation to maintain such an extensive site, along with the financing of prizes, onto the new owners, in 1999 – 2001 it was transferred to the State Agricultural Property Agency.

In 2006 – 2007, the Company State Stallion Stud from Łąck undertook to organise the horse races in Służewiec. However, they resigned soon; mostly because of the huge costs of maintaining the whole site. Another manager of the site, which has remained until today, is the Company Totalizator Sportowy. For the new manager, the survival of the Racecourse is conditional on the development of commercial functions related to the provision of recreation and tourism services in compliance with the rigours of

conservation protection. In accordance with a new vision of the protection and development of this site, in addition to its maintenance of the function of supporting horse races, sports and recreation, it should also be a functional structure, using the unique landscape, cultural and natural values as tourist and educational attractions and as a inimitable backdrop for contemporary forms of entertainment and recreation - cultural, sports, catering and many other events. At the same time, it should be a commercial institution, which would ultimately become a self-financing economic operator of importance for the local economic strategy – also by stimulating the development of catering, hotel and commercial services, and, as a result, job creation, in the external areas.

The key to reconciling the investment needs with the requirements of conservation protection is a search for a formula which would allow for a systemic management of the historic resource. There is no doubt that the ever widening spectrum of factors taken into account in the process of managing architectural heritage affects the increasingly complicated procedures for the assessment of the changes unfolding in it. Usually, this is not a zero-one process where only arguments for or against appear. More and more often, in addition to the concern for the historic resource, the arguments put forth in professional reviews and discussions concerning the assessment of the planned transformation of the monument also include, social, economic and environmental considerations. This means that in the field of the protection of monuments there is a number of objectives which need to be defined and arranged in a hierarchy. They relate to the commitment to ensure as long duration as possible of a site of architectural heritage (and thereby its long social utility) and the values represented by this site which are defined on a case by case basis for each protected site. This imposes an obligation to seek tools which would enable an objective assessment of an intervention into historic structures, also taking these factors into account – tools which would have their effect beforehand and make it possible to halt adverse processes before their first negative impacts appear and which are elements of the deliberate management of cultural heritage.

The thus conceived dynamic protection of monuments seems to be directly consistent with the definition of the preventive protection of monuments and the planning based on scientific research and the predictions of the long-term effects of the measures launched⁵. Hence, based on the

5. Kobyliński Zbigniew, *Konserwacja zapobiegawcza dziedzictwa archeologicznego: wprowadzenie do problematyki (Preventive conservation of archaeological heritage: Introduction to the issues – in Polish)*, "Ochrona Zabytków" 2009, No. 3, p. 98.



4. The grandstand III with characteristic chimneys in 1939. Picture from the collection of the Sports Lottery

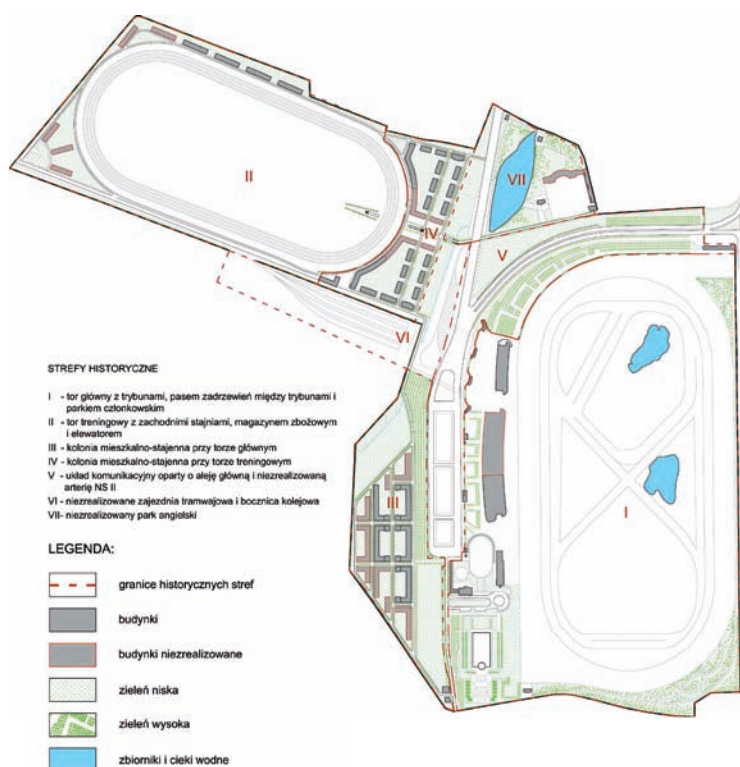
proposals of Prof. Andrzej Tomaszewski⁶, also recognising the importance of the relations between an architectural monument and its surroundings, the formula for managing heritage resources becomes a true reflection of the rules of the preventive conservation of the environment.

The new, holistic definition contained in the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society,⁷ signed in Faro in 2005, encompasses all the environmental aspects ensuing from an interaction between man and the place over its history. Since the requirement for wide public participation clearly indicates that an empowered beneficiary of the heritage is society, particularly the local community, the Convention thus confers a moral and economic value to the heritage to be used for

6. Tomaszewski Andrzej, *Konserwacja zapobiegawcza środowiska (Preventive conservation of the environment)* [in:] Sałaciński K. (ed.) *Bezpieczeństwo dóbr kultury. Nowe idee i technologie (Safety of Cultural Assets. New Ideas and Technologies – in Polish)*, Warsaw: Ministry of Culture, Office of Defence Matters 2001, p. 69.

7. *The Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, signed on 27 October 2005 in Faro (Portugal), Council of Europe Treaty Series (CETS) No. 199.

5. Graphic reconstruction of the historical development concept of the Horse Racecourse in Warsaw based on the original drawings of the author Zygmunt Zyberk-Plater and aerial photo from 1945. Prepared by festgrupa



the benefit of local communities.

With reference the Warsaw Racecourse in Służewiec, the problem should be formulated in a slightly deferent way and instead of the question: "How will this affect a monument?", the following question should be asked: "How will this affect the heritage of the Służewiec Racecourse?" Indeed, it is then that we begin to search as well for the historical, social and emotional context in which a monument functions⁸. In such an approach, we can consider four main assessment criteria:

- How will this affect the previously defined historic values of the site?
- How will this affect society, particularly the local community, as the main beneficiary of the heritage?
- How will this affect the degree of integrity and authenticity of the asset as the main carrier of historic values?
- How will this affect the technical condition of the asset?

The order in which these questions should be asked ought to be adapted on a case by case basis to the situation of a specific site or a selected heritage resource, creating a hierarchy constituting the backbone of the system for managing this heritage.

The conservation study on the site availability for development as an element of the heritage management system

Today, the Racecourse, which was moved from Mokotów to an area outside of Warsaw in the interwar period, finds itself again in an area of strict urbanisation. Housing estates and industrial plants have emerged round it. Changes in the habits of the residents of the capital and growing development pressures are some of special challenges which the site manager has to face.

In consideration of the changing external circumstances, an assessment of the possibility of developing the site of the Racecourse under the requirements of conservation protection was carried out on the basis of an analysis of its cultural values⁹. As a result of the assessment, the principles were drawn up for functional and spatial transformations of the area, taking into account the preservation, consolidation and highlighting of historic, landscape and natural values of the area - allowing for the implementation of new developments in selected zones.

The purpose of the study was to create a tool for achieving the abovementioned objective by formulating provisions defining the subject matter and rigours of the protection of historic and landscape values, based on historical and identification research and conservation valorisation. They would also set the principles of site development and adaptation of historic structures to contemporary functions, which would be determined by these rigours, taking into account the didactic functions of the monument. The complex was assessed in three interrelated problem areas of: the urban planning composition, the architectural composition and the elements of the vegetal cover.

8. In September 2009, at the international workshop organised by the ICOMOS in Paris, the Guidance on Heritage Impact Assessments for Cultural World Heritage Properties was elaborated. It was a publication of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, January 2011, the source: <http://openarchive.icomos.org/266/>). It is interesting to note that the idea of the heritage impact assessment originates from the procedures implemented all over the world in relation to the environmental impact assessment (EIA). It is an interesting attempt to create a tool for an objective assessment of planned transformations of places and sites with historic values. It is well-advised to use these experiences for other monuments as well, establishing a platform for an understanding among all the stakeholders of the measures on historic sites, based on sustainable heritage management.

9. M. Górski, M. Haftarczyk, M. Prędota (in cooperation with O. Bożek, T. Kowalik, D. Pędrakowski, A. Wojtyńska, M. Wolski, R. Głowacz, R. Mikliński, P. Molski) *Dokumentacja konserwatorska Torów Wyścigów Konnych Służewiec w Warszawie (Conservation documentation for the Służewiec Horse Racecourse in Warsaw - in Polish)*, Warsaw 2012. Manuscript kept at the office of the site manager: Totalizator Sportowy Sp. z o.o., Division of the Horse Racecourse in Warsaw-Służewiec.

The presence of the spatial values¹⁰ of the Racecourse scheme ensues from a large number of factors, with the most important ones including:

- the relief and natural values of the area and its cover, which have emerged in a space shaped by man;
- single valuable architectural sites, irrespective of the values to be found around them;
- buildings with little unit value, but creating together a harmonious architectural complex with features of individuality (e.g. the residential and stable units);
- the ultimate urban planning unit or urban planning scheme, consisting of buildings composed as "architecture in a complex" (e.g. the water tower);
- spatial complexes of architectural elements and greenery (park compositions), composed of interior schemes and crowned with a characteristic silhouette;
- the rationally implemented, correctly executed and maintained urban engineering facilities which the user can see; specifically, roads, bridges, lighting items, etc.

On the basis of the valorisation carried out, the following factors were recognised to be essential ones determining the Modernist character of the spatial composition:

- a holistic and comprehensive approach to the design and its implementation;
- a legible and simple division of the site into the representational and service parts (the Modernists promoted a division of the individual functions in the area of the scheme);
- the main composition axis which integrates the whole site in terms of composition, transport and landscape;
- the use of the terrace arrangement of the land to emphasise the gradation of the functions of the site;
- cultivated greenery playing the role of a buffer to separate the individual functional zones of the site;
- the characteristically Modernist concept of space, manifested in the simplicity and clarity of the spatial and functional system;
- the highlighting of the "autopark"- most Modernists, particularly in the initial development stage of modern architecture, shared the fascination with motorisation and the advantages of individual car transport;
- the situation of buildings amidst greenery along the North-South axis, ensuring the optimum additional lighting and aeration of urban planning sub-complexes.

Before starting to determine the site availability for development, four priority conservation objectives were specified, consisting in:

1. Maintaining the function related to the organisation of horse racing and the organisation of horse sports and recreation as the dominant one for the whole scheme;
2. Emphasising the unique combination of the racing function with the training and stable support facilities (with a residential function);
3. Underlining high-quality landscape-related spatial solutions connecting architectural forms with the designed park greenery;
4. Stressing the coherence of architectural solutions in the style of functional Modernism, applied consistently from the urban planning complex to the architectural detail.

The elements of the historical spatial structure, as distinguished in the study, their condition, the contemporary functional and spatial solutions, as well as the development intentions of the site owner made it necessary to introduce areas subjected to differentiated principles of protection and development, which could, at the same time, provide the basis for drawing up a local land use plan:

Zone A - it covers areas under conservation protection, with a fully preserved spatial structure and a legible utility programme, preserved until today, in

10. The elements of the spatial composition of the complex were identified using the method for the assessment of an urban planning composition which was proposed by K. Wejchert in his publication "Elementy kompozycji urbanistycznej" ("Elements of Urban Planning Composition" - in Polish), Warsaw: Arkady 1984.



6. Model 3D of the historical development concept of the Horse Racecourse in Warsaw based on the original drawings and aerial photo from 1945. Prepared by festgrupa

respect of both urban planning and natural units. The purpose of the leading types of conservation measures should be, first of all, to preserve the original functional and spatial structure.

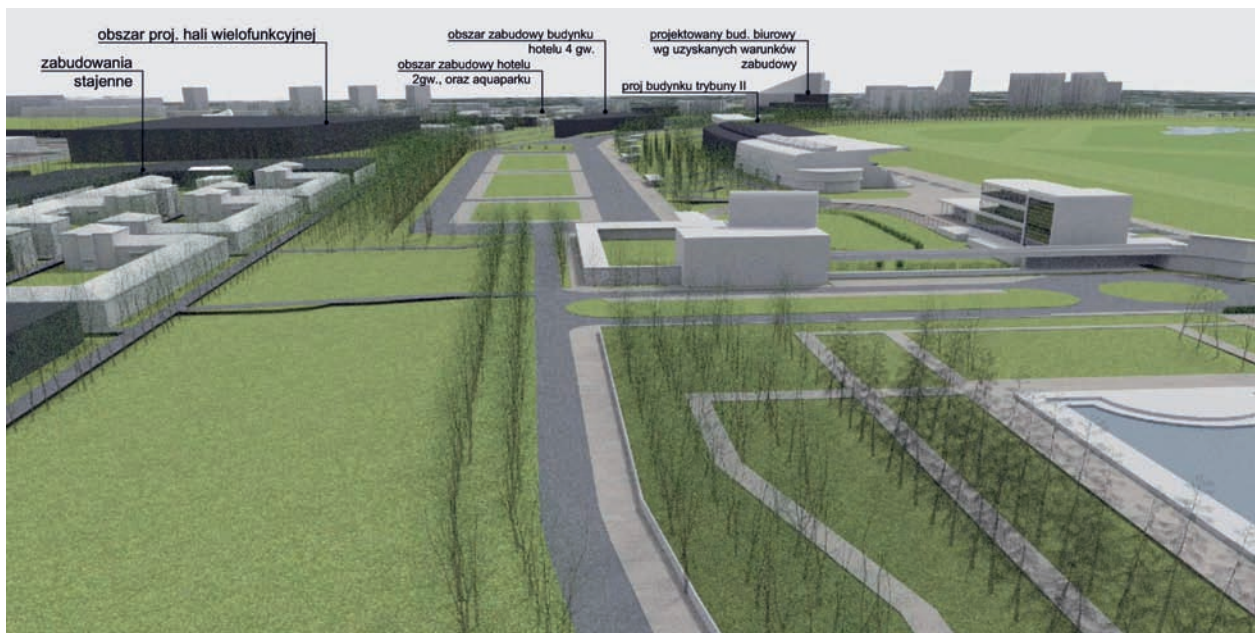
Zone B - it covers an area under conservation protection with a legible original spatial structure in respect of both urban planning and natural units. In contrast to Zone A, the composition units distinguished within Zone B are those that have been transformed in contemporary times or those that have not been fully implemented in relation to the original design, with an obliterated original functional structure. The purpose of the leading types of conservation measures should be, first of all, to make the original design idea legible.

Zone C - it covers an area under conservation protection with an obliterated original functional and spatial structure in respect of both urban planning and natural units. The areas identified within the Zone are those that have been covered by the design, but have not been implemented and those that have been transformed to a large extent, making it impossible to read out the original design idea in both spatial and functional terms. The purpose of the leading types of conservation measures should be, first of all, to consolidate in terms of composition the discordant areas through their recomposition.

Zone D - it covers areas outside of those subjected to conservation protection. In Zone D, there are the areas of the railway siding planned before the war, which was expected to provide logistic services to the Służewiec Racecourse and former arable fields that are now an integral part of the Racecourse. The purpose of the leading types of conservation measures should be, first of all, to ensure the landscape-related protection of the monument.

The study on the conservation requirements for the Służewiec Racecourse, prepared by the method for determining the site availability for development, enables its attractive development using its cultural values as a development advantage. It is a tool which can, in good hands, be appropriately used for the benefit of the cultural landscape and its users. It does not impose a detailed development programme or restrict it unnecessarily, only excluding those functions that would be destructive for the monument or make its form illegible, or those that would, possibly, make it impossible to include the didactic functions.

Thus, the essence of the protection of the Modernist heritage on the site of the Służewiec Horse Racecourse is not only the conservation and restoration of the historic substance, but also the promotion of the idea of Modernism in new implementations and the introduction of the didactic



7. View from the water-tower in 1939 in combination with current plans of Sports Lottery

functions¹¹ related to the highlighting of the historic values of the scheme.

An important feature of the Warsaw Racecourse is the fact that it is not a historic architectural complex which has been bereaved of its past function, but a still functioning "living" site. On the one hand, it has to continuously develop and adapt to the surrounding environment; however, on the other hand, it is so sensitive that too aggressive interventions may suppress its "life" that is still there. Thus, using medical terms, what is needed is not only a sustainable development plan, taking the conservation requirements into account, but also an internal "immune" system which would respond to threats which would appear in the future.

In the light of these concepts, taking into account the cultural values, the features of the relief and cover of the land, and the natural and cultural structure of the site, the optimum category of protection of the complex may be, e.g. a cultural park. By definition, the formula of cultural park:¹² "enables the preservation of exceptional historical and cultural

values, simultaneously coupled with the protection of the natural environment in an area representing a characteristic cultural and natural type". The formula of cultural park is also supported by the proposed criteria which should be met by cultural landscapes that are eligible for being covered by this form of protection: "exceptional cultural values; the complexity of the structure; and the ability to self-regulate (a 'systemic' character of the landscape and the related need for the protection to involve the local communities, along with the whole sphere of social practices)". This formula may combine the four concepts:

- a cultural park understood to mean a form of legal protection afforded to an area and landscape;
- a cultural park understood in functional terms – as a comprehensive manner of site development, using landscape, cultural and natural values;
- a park as a commercial institution – which would ultimately become a self-financing organisational unit with the statutory objectives of current conservation of the monument and economic activity;
- a cultural park understood as an advertising and commercial slogan to attract tourism.

In conclusion, it can be said that a special feature of a cultural park as a form of protection and management of cultural heritage which is important in the context of the Służewiec Racecourse is its ability to self-regulate. Of course, in practice, it also needs external support.

11. Didactic functions adapted to the perception by different audience groups of the forms in which knowledge concerning the historic values (scientific, historic or artistic) and natural ones of a historic site is transferred, using diverse techniques (e.g. information boards, a mock-up, museum expositions, reconstructions, scenes using dummies, multimedia presentations, virtual simulations and interactive games). These functions derive directly from the essence of monuments and are the purpose of their protection (after: P. Molski, *Ochrona...*, op. cit.).

12. Michałowski A., Zwierzch T.; Kuryer Konserwatorski 6 – Bulletin of PSOZ, Warsaw 1995; p. 26.