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Original Research Article

TOBACCO FACTORIES IN LUBLIN: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

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Abstract

Despite the highly detrimental effects of tobacco on human health, the trade in tobacco products has historically been, and is likely to remain, a highly profitable venture. This article presents the complex history of the former Tobacco Factories in Lublin, which were part of the Polish Tobacco Monopoly. During the interwar period, this sector generated up to 16% of the state's revenue. The development of the facility was primarily driven by immense market demand, which fueled the rapid expansion of the Lublin factory. This expansion necessitated the acquisition of adjacent land and the construction of large buildings, reaching a peak area of approximately 100,000 square meters. The progression of the enterprise was not halted by the actions of War, rather production ceased due to a lack of raw materials for processing, not due to damage or looting of equipment. Development was ultimately arrested only after systemic changes occurred, rendering production unprofitable and leading the underfunded facility to declare bankruptcy. This paper also discusses the transformations that have taken place in recent years following the conclusion of the facility's liquidation process. A new company acquired the property and gradually began investing in and attempting to revitalize this degraded area of the city, which possesses significant potential despite its limited opportunities. The article addresses the historical context of the site, its current state, and possible directions for the future development of this somewhat forgotten and greatly undervalued location on the map of Lublin.

Keywords: Polish Tobacco Monopoly, Lublin, Wrotków, interwar architecture, modernism, concrete brick

1. HISTORY OF THE TOBACCO MONOPOLY IN LUBLIN

Until 1922, the tobacco industry in Poland was comprised of small private enterprises, which were consolidated under state control, leading to the establishment of a monopoly overseen by the Polish Tobacco Monopoly. After 11 years of operation, the enterprise generated 16% of the national revenue, resulting in exponential growth within the tobacco sector[1].

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In the early years, the Lublin facility focused solely on the procurement and production of industrial tobacco, which was sent to processing plants[2]. The Tobacco Monopoly commenced its activities in Lublin in 1927 by renting property No. 431 from Konstanty Jurkiewicz in the State Estate Dziesiąta[3]. This property, which included a storage building, a well, and a courtyard, was leased for three years at a cost of 10,500 zł. Shortly thereafter, the facility utilized properties located at Al. Raławickich 17, as well as an office on Krakowskie Przedmieście and others.

The exact moment of the decision to construct a factory in Lublin remains uncertain; however, the selection of a suitable site likely did not take long. The plot located at Wrotkowska 8-10 was advantageous due to its proximity to the railway line, appropriate size, and position within an industrial district (Fig. 1 – marked in red). Its drawbacks included an unusual shape and varied height, which posed challenges for the organization of a coherent urban layout for the factory.

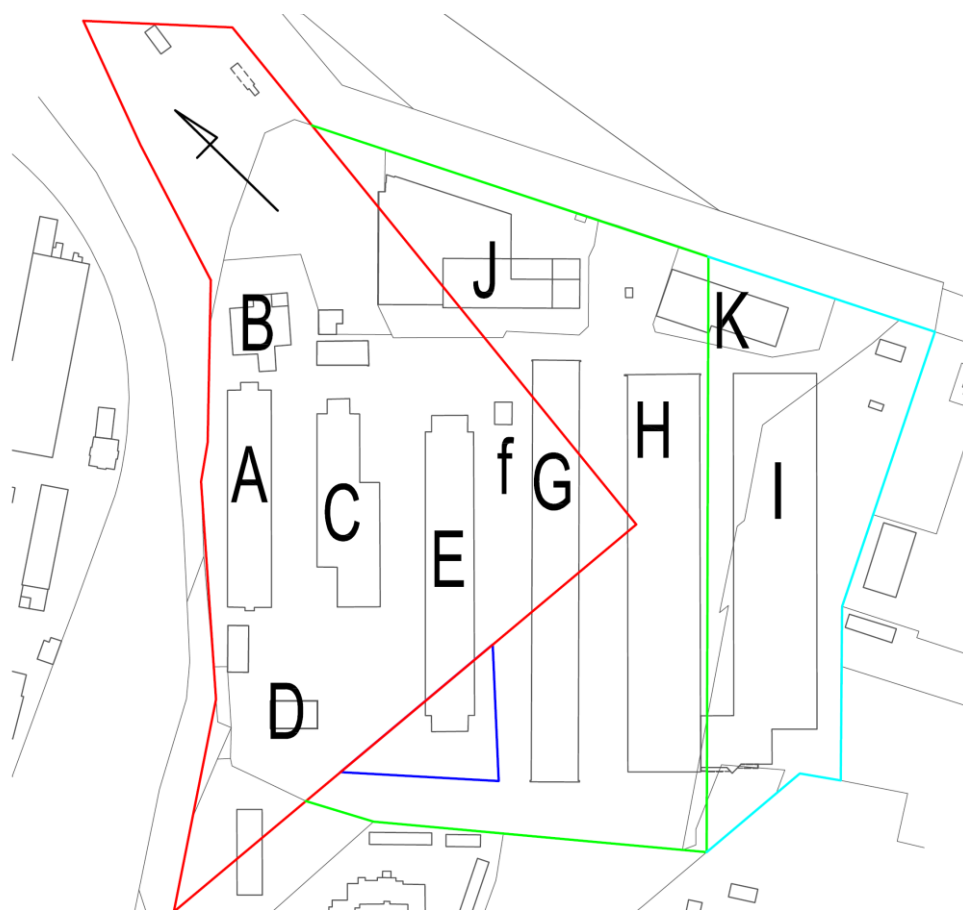


Fig. 1. Changes in the plot size and the period of construction of the tobacco factory buildings (red – 1933, dark blue – 1934/49, green – before 1958, blue – before 1973). A - Fermentation Plant 1, 1934; B – Boiler House, 1934/1940/1943/1958; C – Fermentation Plant 2, 1937; D – Administrative Building, 1937; E – Fermentation Plant 3, 1941/44; F – Fire Station, post-1945; G – Building, before 1973; H – Building, before 1973; I – Building, before 1997; J – Building, before 1983/2009; K – Building, before 1997. K. Janus, 2023 r.

In the 1933/34 season, the Lublin facility processed 1,294 tons of raw material, increasing to 1,905 tons in 1935/36. Initially, due to the lack of a rail siding, goods were collected from the

station and transported to the factory using horse-drawn carts. At that time, the facility employed a total of 235 skilled workers and 101 "semi-skilled" workers [3]. In the campaign 1937/38, the workforce had expanded to 900 employees, who had access to dining facilities in fermentation building No. 1, a laundry, a bakery, meal heating areas, and showers separated by rubberized[2] canvas in fermentation building No. 2. Each floor contained separate bathrooms for men and women. From March to October, the factory employed approximately 200 workers, but during the campaign from October to March, this number could increase fivefold, necessitating an expansion of social facilities. The number of restrooms and showers was gradually increased, and additional items, such as "electric heaters for warming breakfast," were procured for the campaign[3].

In 1937, administrative staff were relocated from a rented space on Krakowskie Przedmieście to a newly constructed building on Wrotkowska Street, centralizing all departments at the Wrotków site. The buildings A-D (Fig. 1) were completed this year, and the appearance of the factory is shown in Fig. 2. A workers' library was established in 1938, containing 470 titles, including „Chłopi”, „King Matt the First”, „Janka”, „The History of Sin,” and „Kaśka Kariatyda”[3]

The plot on Wrotków was purchased in 1932. The first construction concept for the facility was developed a year later, in 1933, featuring a logical layout on flat terrain (excluding the ravine), which included three large fermentation and storage buildings, an administrative building, a tobacco warehouse, a boiler room, and a guardhouse. This concept was not realized; instead, the first building was erected in the ravine. In the 1937, most of the yards were paved with fieldstone, and concrete, granite, or clinker bricks were used for the buildings. Beyond utilitarian considerations, a landscaping project was developed, boldly proposing a garden that would occupy a significant portion of the plot. Ultimately, 42 holes for trees, 701 holes for shrubs, and 275 meters of ditch for a hedge were created. While the specific vegetation selected remains unclear, the budget included maples, ashes, oaks, and poplars. Additionally, sports fields, tennis courts, and a fountain were established. In 1937, every building was connected to the gas network, and there were 787 meters of railways tracks on the premises, with "Fordson"[3] tractors used for shunting wagons. The railways tracks were constructed by the company of engineer Cz. Podlecki[4].

In the 1943, there were 28 various buildings on the discussed site. The facility did not suffer damage during wartime activities, nor were any devices looted. However, after the front passed in 1945, production did not resume due to a lack of available raw materials. This information indicates that during the German occupation, the factory not only continued to operate but was gradually expanded at a pace comparable to that of the pre-war period. In 1941, construction of fermentation building No. 3 began, and prior to 1943, the boiler room was expanded, the area was paved, and about 20 various buildings were constructed. It appears that the Germans prioritized both production and architecture. The newly constructed fermentation building, connecting structures, and boiler room were made of concrete bricks, clearly referencing the character of the existing structures. The factory grounds also featured sports fields, tennis courts, and a fountain, with plans for residential buildings (which were not realized). The buildings were equipped with water, electrical, fire protection, gas, and telephone installations, including a switchboard for 22 lines (Siemens and Enesona), as well as lightning protection and drainage systems. While precise data on resource usage is lacking, in February 1951 alone, the factory consumed approximately 20 MWh of electricity, 500 tons of hard coal, 1 ton of coke, 1 ton of wood, 6 tons of gasoline, 200 kg of kerosene, and 1,500 m³ of illuminating gas[3].

In 1956, a transition to a proctor-chamber fermentation technology began, aimed at eliminating the need to re-sort dry and moist tobacco exiting the chambers. This technology also

reduced the amount of waste generated during the process, necessitating an expansion of the boiler room, which was completed only two years later. Attempts at privatization were made in 1995, 2002, and 2003, but these efforts were unsuccessful. The size and shape of the plot were determined around 1973, and its transformations are illustrated using colors in Fig. 1. In 2011, after many failed attempts, a French company, Biosyntec, acquired 70% of the company's shares, promising multimillion-dollar investments and growth for the enterprise. In 2014, production was halted, and the company's debt grew to 58 million zł. At the final stage of its operation, 150 employees were on staff. The facility specialized in the production of tobacco, cigarettes, cigarette tubes, and papers, as well as the distribution of cigars, cigarillos, and tobacco accessories. The company held approximately 20% of the domestic tobacco market and around 0.5% of the cigarette market. It also operated its own chain of tobacco shops under the name "Cygaleria." On October 30, 2017, a bankruptcy petition was filed in court, as the Bank of Polish Cooperative demanded repayment of debts.

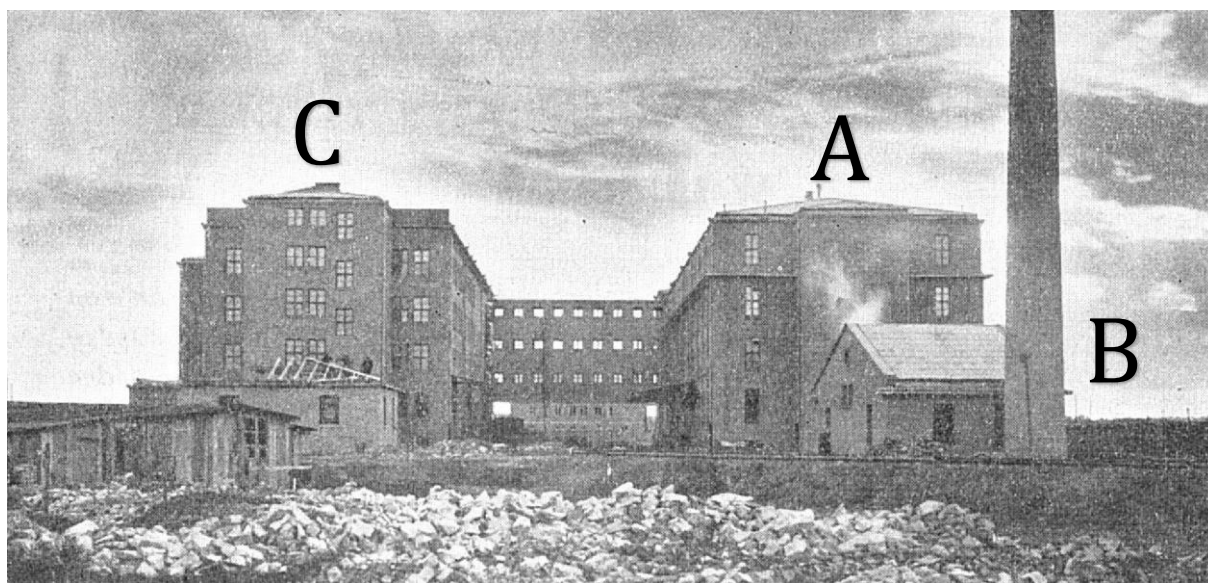


Fig. 2. View of the factory from the boiler house, 1937[5]

1.1. Fermentation Building (A)

In 1933, a construction permit was issued by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, bypassing local authorities. The intended structure was designed to measure 19,7 by 96,7 meters, featuring four stories (five in the stairwell area) built with masonry walls and an open interior supported by a grid of pilars spaced every 6 meters. The ceilings were constructed on a system of steel I-beams. Each side of the building included a stairwell, and a central elevator shaft was incorporated into the design, facilitating flexible interior arrangements for various functions. The basement was illuminated through below-ground windows positioned in moats. Each floor contained employee restrooms (for men and women) and social room near the stairwell. The side elevations were three axes wide, while the front and rear elevations comprised sixteen bays, separated by pilasters extending to the eaves, with two axes in each bay. A concrete eave divided the third and fourth stories. The ground-floor entrances featured canopies, likely supported by a steel structure. The external walls were made of concrete bricks with a profiled joint, which have remarkably

preserved their condition. Initially, the project did not include a drainage system; however, one was later implemented using stoneware pipes that drained underground to a drainage ditch (some of these pipes remain intact). The building that was created (Fig. 2 – A) and has remained virtually unchanged in appearance to this day. By 1935, the basement and second floor housed fermentation chambers equipped with Mertz air conditioning units[3]. Following the conclusion of each production campaign, standard renovations were conducted; for instance, in 1935, 700 m² of wooden flooring was replaced due to mold damage. In 1936, fans were replaced with electric motors rated at 220/380 V and 0.34 HP. Due to high humidity levels, Beryman pipes, which housed electrical cables, were replaced with moisture-resistant "Antygrom" cables, while the renovation of the goods and passenger elevator. A fermentation chamber for oriental tobacco was constructed in 1936[3]. In 1937, the chemical laboratory was relocated to the ground floor, where water, sewage, and gas lines were installed. This marked the first documented renovation project, which involved demolishing a partition wall and filling the space between the structural columns, installing ventilation, and connecting water, gas, and electricity. The laboratory and five restrooms on the ground floor were outfitted with electrical installations. The building underwent numerous changes, making it nearly impossible to list them all. However, these changes primarily involved maintenance work, alterations in usage, or modifications to the production process. In 1953, repairs were made to the ceiling above the basement, which had developed significant cracks[3].

1.2. Boiler House (B)

The second building constructed on the site was the boiler house, which began producing heat in October 1934. Like Fermentation Building 1, it was constructed using concrete bricks (Fig. 2 – B). The designer of the building was the DPMT Construction Office, and the project was approved by the Lublin Voivodeship Office. A two-flame boiler with a heating surface of 90 m² and a pressure of 6 atmospheres was installed, manufactured by W. Fitzner Sp. z o.o. from Siemianowice. The boiler had a jacket diameter of 2,1 m, a length of 9,6 m, and was equipped with two corrugated flame tubes of the FOX system, with a steam dome diameter of 300 mm, a height of 800 mm, and a jacket thickness of 14 mm. The longitudinal seams of the jacket were to be double-riveted in a lap joint, while the circumferential seams were single-riveted in a lap joint (a total of 4339 kg of rivets were utilized), and the seams of the steam dome and flame tubes were gas-welded in a lap joint. Additionally, a set of spare grates for coal dust and a three-phase 380 V fan were included. The boiler was capable of producing up to 2,000 kg of steam per hour, powered by coal with a fraction of 0-15 mm, and the chimney, with a diameter of 1,200 mm, was 32 m tall.

In 1937, plans were made to expand the production system, introducing a central heating system in warehouse 2 and the administration building, which necessitated the expansion of the boiler house and the installation of an additional furnace. This plan was implemented before 1940, when a second boiler, manufactured in the late 19th century, was installed. Another renovation occurred before 1943, coinciding with the completion of Fermentation Building 3 and an increased demand for heat in the facility, likely resulting in the addition of two more boilers. A further renovation was associated with the construction of two additional buildings in 1958, during which two additional coal-fired boilers were installed, and a new brick chimney was built[4].

Each of these renovations necessitated the demolition of nearly half the building's walls to facilitate the installation of new boilers and to cover them with an extended roof and a new brick wall. As a result, only about 20% of the original building remains, but concrete bricks were used for each expansion. The boiler house is the most extensively modified structure on the entire site.

1.3. Fermentation Building (C)

In 1935, a twin warehouse was designed, connected by a link to Warehouse 1. The project called for a building with the same parameters as Fermentation Building 1. It was realized the following year in a slightly altered form, taking the shape of the letter "Z." (Fig. 2 - C). The rationale for this design choice, which complicated subsequent functional changes, remains undetermined. The layout can be divided into three parts with an open structure supported by a grid of columns spaced 6 meters apart. The building featured two stairwells, each adjacent to restrooms equipped with sinks. The columns were designed using NP32 I-beams, tapering in size as they rose. The ceilings were constructed from NP24 I-beams. The elevations were designed without vertical or horizontal divisions, similar to the buildings from Radom. A band of unplastered brick wall was intended to be placed between window openings, while the remaining portions were to be plastered; ultimately, the entire elevation was left unplastered and built with concrete bricks featuring a profiled joint. Both the interior and exterior of the building were constructed according to the plans, and its interior and exterior layouts have undergone little change to this day. Thanks to the open design of the spaces, making any alterations has been straightforward and has not required modifications to the building's structure. At an unspecified time, an additional elevator was installed, and some openings in the elevations were bricked up. The project was signed by engineer E. Kowalski (head of the DPMT office), architect Stefan Zieliński, and engineer B. Dowbor.

The tender for construction was announced on May 22, 1936[3], and was won by the engineering and construction enterprise of engineer Cz. Podlecki, W. Słobodziński and Co. in Warsaw in 1936. The construction manager was engineer Bronisław Dowbor. In October 1937, the building was commissioned[5].

In the early years of operation, the ground floor housed a raw material warehouse, while the second and third floors contained six fermentation chambers. The entire building was equipped with central heating and ventilation. The basement was designated for employee social purposes. In 1937, an elevator produced by "Bracia Jenike" (Jenike Brothers) Lift Factory S.A. in Warsaw was installed. During the inspection, 22 defects were noted, ranging from "gaps in doors" to unsecured electrical cables. In 1938, a heating system was installed for the building and the link. The contractor was "Technika Zdrowotna" from Warsaw[3].

1.4. Administration Building (D)

In 1936, a project was developed for the administration building, where the basement was designated for laundry facilities, a boiler room, three cellars, a storage room, and a restroom. The ground floor was intended for the administration of the facility and included waiting rooms, locker rooms, a bathroom with a toilet, a cash office, an accounting room, an archive, and offices for the manager and instructors, as well as a guest room comprising two rooms, an entrance hall, a bathroom with a tub, and a toilet. The largest accounting room featured a ceiling with NP20 beams supported by a steel beam resting on a column. The upper floor contained two apartments, each consisting of a corridor, two rooms, a kitchen, a pantry, a bathroom, and a toilet. The elevations were eight axes wide with regularly spaced windows and smaller basement windows set in the moats. Although the finishing of the elevations was not described, it is known that the building was constructed of concrete bricks with a profiled joint. Externally, the building remains unchanged from the original design. The surface surrounding the building was made of cobblestones and clinker bricks. Following the installation of gas, the apartments were equipped with gas stoves and bathroom heaters (Junkers VA 32) in the guest rooms. The rooms were

equipped with vacuum cleaners for both direct current and alternating current (220V), as well as electric Mokka coffee makers[3].

1.5. Fermentation Building (E)

The project for this building could not be located; however, it is known to have been completed in December 1940, with construction work commencing the following year. The elevations were designed without vertical or horizontal divisions, featuring slightly more intricate detailing compared to Buildings 1 and 2. The façade maintained the use of concrete bricks, supplemented by additional concrete elements (such as brackets for the roof over the ramp). Due to significant shortages of steel, most of it was eliminated from the construction. The building was completed before 1944, and its layout, structure, and functional divisions reference Fermentation Buildings 1 and 2, remaining largely unchanged to this day.

2. EXISTING CONDITION

The current urban layout of the former Tobacco Factories has undergone significant transformations since its inception. Following the closure of the factories, the property was gradually divided and sold over several years. Several independent firms emerged, engaging in production and trade activities. Due to the complex structure of the buildings and the specific location, the spaces have been, and continue to be, adapted for a wide variety of functions, which often change. The five largest "tobacco" buildings serve combined office, storage, and production purposes, yet remain under the ownership of a single entity. Rental spaces range from 36 m² to entire floors, with many areas still awaiting tenants.



Fig. 3. View of wild grapes growing on the southeast facade of Building A, 2022, K. Filichkin



Fig. 4. View of wild grapes growing on the southeast facade of Building A, 2022, K. Filichkin

The entire property is covered by a Study of Conditions and Directions for Spatial Development, which designates the area for storage, service, and production functions. Buildings A, C, D (marked in Fig. 1), and the boiler house (B), constructed during the interwar period, are protected by inclusion in the Municipal Register of Historical Monuments (Miejska Ewidencja Zabytków).

The prolonged period both before and after the closure of the factories has led to significant neglect, affecting both the technical condition and ongoing maintenance, as well as unchecked vegetation growth, which is currently being gradually managed. Repairs are necessary for road surfaces, façade plastering, and the replacement of technical infrastructure, windows, and other elements. One of the most intriguing living features that contribute to the identity of the site is the vine that covers the facade nearly to its full height (Fig. 3, Fig. 4), creating a colorful contrast against the gray concrete. The condition of the interiors is generally satisfactory; while there are issues related to moisture, most spaces have been renovated, with their condition dependent on the manner of use and the character of the tenants' activities. Fig. 5 illustrates the condition of Building A before and after the completion of the interior renovation work. Staircases, railings, circulation paths, and elevators have mostly retained their original locations and many elements unchanged since their inception.



Fig. 5. Building A, first floor, before and after renovation, 2021-2022, K. Filichkin

3. CONCEPT

As part of an engineering thesis, a concept for the adaptation and extension of Building E and its immediate surroundings was developed[6]. The work highlighted the significant challenges associated with adapting such structures and the consequences thereof. Within a 500-meter radius of the discussed site, there are two apartment buildings, home to former employees of the tobacco factory. The rest of the surrounding area is industrial. A survey was conducted to assess the quality of life in the area, but only two responses were received, which indicated that the tobacco factory should return to its original function.

The primary design assumption was to preserve the original appearance of the building's façade while minimally intruding upon its layout with new glazed volumes. Changes to the surroundings involved organizing the area, enhancing green spaces, and improving the condition of circulation routes, among other aspects.

The main tasks and proposals for restoring and modifying the building's core functions include creating dining areas on the lower floors (marked in Fig. 6) and office spaces on the upper levels (marked in Fig. 7). To impart characteristics of new architecture while maintaining the original appearance, a glazed extension was designed to serve as an additional enclosed space for a restaurant, simultaneously acting as an inviting entrance to the building. Access to the higher floors of office space was facilitated by the existing elevator shafts and modernized staircases (white color on Fig. 6, Fig. 7). Office spaces, conference rooms, and open recreational areas were planned. The basement area was designated for technical and storage rooms, as well as parking for 45 vehicles.

The space surrounding the building was envisioned for revitalization and light enhancement with new functions (Fig. 8, Fig. 9). The intention is to highlight the beauty of the existing interwar modernist architecture while protecting it from vandalism and poorly executed renovations that compromise the aesthetic of the original design. The refreshment and development of green spaces, such as a small park, a green square with a fountain, and a modest amphitheater with a summer stage integrated into the slope, were also included in the plan. The building and its surroundings have been adapted for accessibility to individuals using wheelchairs.

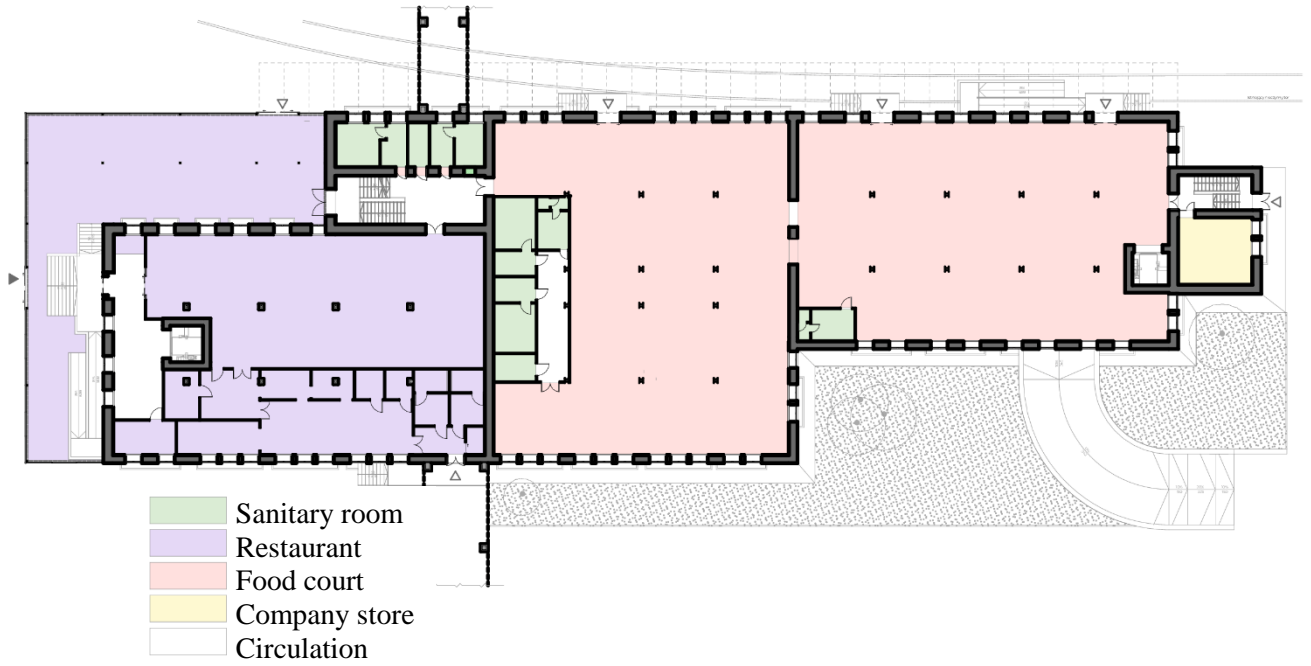


Fig. 6. Functional diagram of the ground floor, K. Filichkin [6]



Fig. 7. Functional diagram of the first floor, K. Filichkin [6]

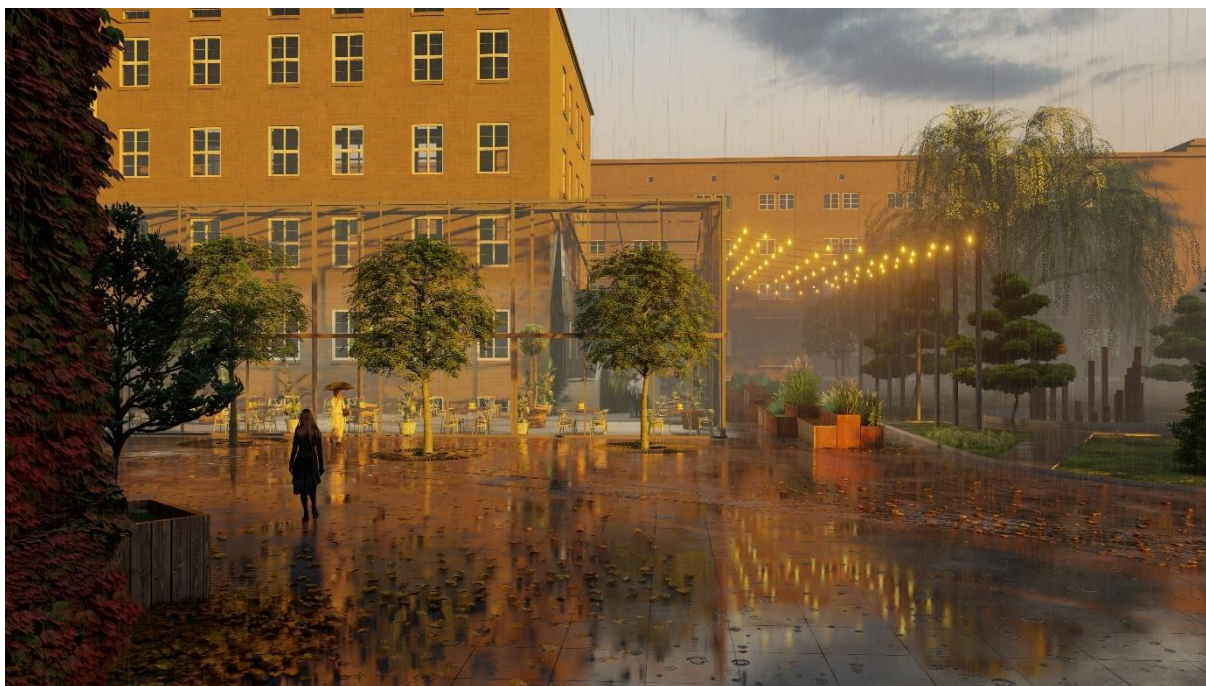


Fig. 8. View of the square and the extension to Building C – visualization, K. Filichkin [6]



Fig. 9. View of the square and the extension to Building C – visualization.[6]

4. POTENTIAL AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The most significant issue facing the discussed area is the lack of a clearly defined development path, which needs to be established. The region is still regarded as either industrial or post-industrial and degraded. In this area, virtually every type of economic activity exists, often changing over time. Despite its favorable location, vast plot size, and even larger usable space, these factors seem to be the primary constraints on the development of the site. Currently, there is no large and recognizable entity that could drive development and fully utilize the area's potential. This part of Lublin has served industrial functions for over 100 years, during which it continually evolved but also underwent processes of degradation. This situation changed in the 1990s, when most state-owned enterprises in the region collapsed. The site has had an owner for only a few years, who has begun investing in the facilities in an attempt to lift them from stagnation and adapt them to contemporary functional and usability needs, which requires significant financial and logistical resources.

For buildings constructed during the interwar period, their external appearance is protected through entry in the Municipal Register of Historic Buildings, which prevents substantial alterations. The most pressing functional issue is the degradation of bricks and low thermal insulation, resulting in high heating costs (the buildings can only be insulated from the inside). Contrary to appearances, the interior layout allows for non-invasive adaptation to various functions, provided that only renovations are undertaken. For other buildings, modifications are feasible, and functions can be industrial, commercial, or residential. In the entire vicinity of the former Wrotków area, new residential developments and shopping centers are emerging in post-industrial and military sites. The described facilities have the potential to connect and integrate the evolving neighborhood with cultural and service functions, offering the city an opportunity for overall district development.

5. SUMMARY

The Polish Tobacco Monopoly, as one of the most profitable enterprises in Poland, began its operations in Lublin in 1927. Initial attempts to construct a facility on the discussed site occurred before 1933, resulting in at least three designs (the least sensible option was ultimately chosen for implementation). The Lublin plant was intended solely for the processing of industrial tobacco, not the production of tobacco products, hence the initial structures were associated with storage and fermentation functions. Over 60 years of operation, the plant nearly doubled its footprint, creating five massive buildings with a total area of approximately 80,000 m², along with administrative offices and even a small residential neighborhood. In its early years, the plant employed 200 people, increasing that number to nearly 1,500 before declining to a few dozen in its final years. Employees had access to sports fields, a library, a cafeteria, a garden, and irrigated lawns as early as the interwar period. Throughout its operational history, the facility underwent continuous changes, primarily involving the construction of new buildings designed for easy modification without structural intervention. As a result, the buildings have undergone little alteration during their lifespan. The only exception is the boiler house, which has been rebuilt four times, with little of the original structure remaining. Approximately 40 structures existed on the site, none of which survive today. These included wooden barracks, pools, fountains, gardens, gazebos, as well as soccer and tennis courts.

To date, four buildings constructed before World War II (A, B, C, D) and one building (E) – marked on Fig. 1 erected during the German occupation have survived. All were built from concrete bricks, which were considered a modern material at the time, signaling the company's prestige and wealth. Although the use of concrete bricks was intended as a "relief for industrial buildings made of red brick," their aesthetic, functional qualities, and aging process did not fully meet expectations. Nonetheless, they have become an enduring part of the site's history, particularly when combined with the ivy that adorns the façades, giving the buildings a unique character. Currently, the original site has been partially subdivided. In the preserved factory buildings, small enterprises operate, including design offices, clothing wholesalers, home appliance stores, furniture shops, a footwear manufacturer, and a ceramics factory, among others. These functions unfortunately change frequently, ranging from popular children's clothing stores to construction firms. Fortunately, due to the original open-space layout, modifications are largely limited to the introduction of partition walls and new infrastructure. The original structural layout of the buildings has fundamentally remained unchanged.

The proposed adaptation concept for one of the facilities allows for the introduction of new functions with minimal intervention in the building's structure and its immediate surroundings. It demonstrates that such changes are feasible while minimizing structural impact, although the greatest challenge lies in attracting potential tenants or investors.

6. COCLUSIONS

The first buildings of the Tobacco Factory on Wrotkowska Street in Lublin were constructed in 1933. Over the next 60 years, despite the war and the severe economic crisis, the complex developed at a surprisingly rapid pace. The immense income generated by the industry allowed for the free expansion of the factory, the expropriation of neighboring land, and the use of the latest and most expensive materials in architecture. The decline and cessation of production occurred only with the political changes of the 1990s. The adaptation of such large post-industrial complexes may seem like a straightforward task, especially given the existing infrastructure, which should make it relatively achievable. However, the example of the former Tobacco Factory in Lublin shows that, despite the site's huge potential in terms of easily adaptable commercial spaces and ample parking, it is not attractive to potential tenants. Five buildings, constructed of concrete brick — a modern material in the interwar period — have not withstood the test of time. After years of use, they are aesthetically unappealing, and conservation efforts are costly, yielding only minor improvements. These buildings are listed in the Municipal Register of Monuments, which protects their external appearance but increases operating costs, particularly for heating. Years of neglect and the reputation of the site as a degraded, almost isolated area have ingrained in the public's consciousness that it is an unfriendly place, only visited out of necessity, and primarily by car. In recent years, the current owners have been working to improve the image of the entire site by maintaining the grounds, buildings, and conducting repairs, as well as organizing events and art exhibitions to attract new investors and revitalize the surrounding area. This process has gained momentum recently.

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