

## Ennoblement or Deterioration of the Contemporary Cultural Achievements of Łódź in the 1960s

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Łódź is a relatively young city. The basis of its urbanization is owed to years of development during the era of the steam engine (the so called promised land), and later the inter and postwar period (two decades), when the city was promoted to the rank of the province capital. It is a city with a short but turbulent history of shaping urban space.

The first visage - The promised land period (construction of the industry, 1835 - Ludwik Geyer brings the first steam engine from England);

The second visage - The Second Polish Republic (construction of the provincial capital);

The third visage - The Polish People's Republic (construction of the workers' Łódź);

The fourth visage - The Third Polish Republic (degradation of the industry, a new place in the EU).

Similar to the dawn of the Second Republic, we face the fact of the rebirth of the Polish nationality and the need for the transformation of the city in the new socio-economic conditions. The current situation of Łódź is surprisingly similar to the 1918-1939 industrial central period. The most important factor, which inspired the city building process, was the development of the textile industry. However, during the stagnation period, brought on by the geopolitical changes in Europe after the World War I, the administrative promotion of the city became a very important factor. The development of Łódź in the Second Republic was influenced by two factors: the atmosphere of the rebirth of the Polish Nationality, and the elevation of the city to the rank of the provincial capital. In February 1920 the city becomes the capital of the region; in December the Pope Benedict XV erects the Łódź diocese; a garrison is built as well. The slowdown of the industrial development and at the same time the increase in municipal, military and ecclesiastical rank provided an unique opportunity to make up for urban delays. An opportunity through which the province centre could earn the name of the modern city, which, despite the impressive demographic, economic and spatial development at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries it did not deserve. In the new political-economical conditions, the newly created Urban Planning Branch (near the Magistrate), designed the regulation of the main streets and began to plan the regulation of the selected city districts.

It was decided that properly understood matter of regulation construction was to become an important factor in economical, health related and cultural city development. Diagram of a Modern City - Communication Plan (1919); Iron Rail Way Design in the Łódź Region (1919); Train Station Surroundings Shaping Design (1920) - these designs show a serious approach to the development of modern city as well as commitment to this most important industrial-factory city in Poland - Łódź.

Polish authorities have accepted the increase of the city area (instituted by the German occupant in 1915) but reduced the number of city police districts from 18 to 14 (1919). Despite strenuous efforts of the local government to change this territory (58.75km<sup>2</sup>), it remained unchanged. The plan of Łódź Urban Planning, designed by the German occupant in 1917, which was based on outdated ideas of economy, administration and nationality, proved to be largely useless. Only one part was instituted - the disinfection of the Łódka River, from Nowomiejska to Wschodnia Street, which was a source of infectious diseases and fumes in the most populated area of the city. This situation proved a need for a city urban design plan with a deep study of all important aspects: history, demography, nature, law, economy, infrastructure and function. In 1926, an architect from Warsaw, Władysław Michalski, was commissioned by the city council for the job. In 1927 he presented the city of Łódź Urban Regulation Draft. Unfortunately, this enlightened plan, perfectly suited to the ideas of wider development of cities in the region was not approved. Due to the proposed dispossession, it became the subject of harsh criticism from the industrialists and real estate owners association - the city council had to give ground and hired Tadeusz Tołwiński<sup>1</sup>, the largest Polish authority on urban planning to draft a new plan. The first design, developed under the direction of Professor Tadeusz Tołwiński in the Department of Town Regulation, was approved and adopted by the city council in June 1930. It was far less radical than what Władysław Michalski had in mind. The plan encompassed the outer train loop, expanding only the western city boundaries in

1. Waclaw Ostrowski, *Urbanistyka współczesna*, Warszawa 1975, p. 82.

1. The EC-2 Heat Power Plant Complex. Photo by the author, 2012





2. The first (in Łódź) "School of the Millennium". Photo by the author, 2012

Polesie Konstantynowskie and Karolew area. The General Urbanization Plan (from 1930) included the current area of the city and had a largely conservative character - amending the area for the current needs - urban, industrial and natural areas, as well as the street network. However, just as before, despite many concessions taken into account, industrialists and property owners protested a number of goals in the design. Neither the authority of Professor Tołwiński, nor the approval of the city council mattered. Therefore, the Department of Town Regulation began to work on a revised version of the design, which took new negotiation arrangements into account. In 1929 professor Tołwiński's group was joined by two other architects - Waław Ostrowski (Leyberg) and Brunon Hein. The new variant, completed in 1934, finally met the expectations and was approved a year later and became the first formal document (for 25 years; another was approved in 1961) in the history of the Second Polish Republic, Łódź to allow legal changes in planned city development. Undoubtedly, this plan was far less radical than the concept of the Functional Warsaw by Jan Chmielewski and Szymon Syrkus. However, it applied the rules of functional segregation, which were promoted by progressive artistic European circles (represented in CIAM). The administrative promotion of Łódź (government, church and military) required much planning in the urban, technical and public city areas. Beginning with state services buildings, municipal offices, public institutions, through various facilities such as education, science, culture, health, social services, recreation, religious monuments and facilities, and finally for commercial and urban infrastructure. The quantitative analysis of program-function relation indicates, that most buildings constructed in Łódź during the interwar period served functions such as: education, science and culture, they were, to a large extent, built as a result of the need to fulfill the constitutional obligation to provide general school education for all children and the need for teaching in the spirit of the reborn Polish State. At the end of 1937, the city had a total of 17 new schools. There was also the need to

3. Shopping center "The Hat of Anatol". Photo by the author, 2012



spread general and higher education. Many years of effort on the local government part led to the start of the construction (1938) of two large buildings - Marshal Józef Piłsudski Public Library (brought into existence as early as 1917) and the Warsaw branch of the Polish Free University (created in 1928), which received the rights of state university (1937). The importance of this institution in the city of Łódź is best shown by the increase of students - from 189 in the first opening year to over a thousand in 1939. The first efforts to construct the building took place between 1932 and 1933. In the October of 1936, the Łódź branch of the Polish architects association announced the general competition No. 66 to design a sketch project of the Polish Free University in Łódź. The contest was finally settled in March 1937. Of the 45 works the first prize was awarded to the Warsaw team, composed of three people: Waław Kłyszewski, Jerzy Mokrzyński and Eugeniusz Wierzbicki. According to the design, it was a three-storey building made of brick, able to hold a thousand students, with a library, auditoriums, research laboratories and guest rooms for visiting scientists. The foundation stone laying ceremony took place in December of 1937. In late August of 1939, construction was stopped due to tense political situation and eventually abandoned when the war broke out. It was completed in the post-war period, in a form which was only partially in accordance with original and innovative project designs.

The analysis of local conditions, in terms of the history of the post-war transformation of the spatial structure of Łódź points to the need to protect buildings that have been constructed in accordance with the interwar architecture. As mentioned before, Łódź is a city with a relatively short history of shaping urban space. The first, turbulent and spontaneous, development period was associated with the industrial revolution. The second stage, which was planned this time, took place during the interwar period, when Łódź was elevated to the rank of the province capital. The third time (1945-1961), which combined both factors - the development of industry in the new Polish People's Republic and the expansion of the administrative functions of the province capital. It is an interesting fact, that until 1961, the only document which provided the legal permission to construct buildings in Łódź, was the General Urban Planning Design of Łódź (approved in 1935), which was created under the guidance of Tadeusz Tołwiński. Did this fact have any influence on the design of building shape? Did their architectural expression oscillate in the direction of social realism or allude to the style of interwar modernism? Or was it suspended between these currents, contributing to the flow, which we define as social modernism?

4. Technical University of Łódź building complex (dorm, canteen and cinema performance hall). Photo by the author, 2012





5. "Fonica" Electronic Equipment Factory in Łódź. Photo by the author, 2012

In search of an answer let us take a look at selected buildings, representative (according to the author) of the post-war period of shaping the urban space, as well as determining circumstantial factors contributing to their creation. It should be noted, that outside of the ghetto in the northern area of the city, Łódź came out relatively unscathed. At the same time, "The Great Łódź" borders, which were introduced by the Nazis in 1940 (incorporation of suburban municipalities), were accepted. Therefore, it is not surprising, that at the beginning of the post-war period, the city continued the unfinished interwar period constructions (which maintained the high quality of stylish modernistic conventions), which were located mainly downtown, and new buildings were designed to complement the style of the existing urban area. However, the Bałuty District, which was razed along with the Ghetto, was being shaped according to the contemporary doctrine - socialist in content (pseudo) national in form. A number of new constructions, according to professor Tołwiński's plan, were started in the southern city area (which was underfinanced during the interwar period) along with the areas outside of the outer city train loop.

There are three examples of cultural goods (generally consistent with the original designs from the interwar period) which are modernist in nature: Marshal Józef Piłsudski Municipal Public Library at the intersection of Gdańska and M. Copernicus streets, Roman Catholic Church of The Sacred Heart of Jesus and Saint Margaret Alacoque at Zgierska Street and Roman Catholic Church of St. Anthony of Padua in św. Antoniego Padewskiego Street. There are other goods of contemporary culture which are suited to the stylistic trends of the socialist realism era, such as: Textile Faculty, Main Library of the Łódź Technical University, The Textile Center skyscraper, the headquarters of the Łódź TV Station or the EC-2 Heat Power Plant Complex, built between 1955-1958 and equipped with a hiperboloid cooler (Fig. 1). This is an interesting construction (architecture and colour), devoid of the original function, which may yet find a culturally applicable place in the urban space.

Communing with the interwar modernism, ubiquitous in Łódź (mostly undamaged in the war) had two effects: the first - easing the implications of new architectural forms of the era of socialist realism; the second - instant taking up of the stylistic challenges of modernism of 1960s by designers. It should be noted, that certain designs, which were being realized almost simultaneously with the ones in

the spirit of social realism, heralded the imminent rebirth of creative, modernist thinking of the form of architecture containing elements of functionalism. Among the latter, it is worth mentioning the new commuter tram station on the old town scarp. A new trend in urban shaping emerged. This trend is perfectly corresponding with the international achievements of the second half of the 1950s. It resulted in valuable buildings, such as the University library, or the first (in Łódź) "School of the Millenium" in Pojezierska 45 Street, built between 1951-1960, designed by Tadeusz Herburt and opened by Władysław Gomułka<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 2).

Among the treasures of contemporary culture (in modernist functionalism) we should also include a number of house apartment buildings (with shops and services at the ground floor) in the area of Solidarność Traffic Circle, as well as a shopping center (known as the Hat of Anatol, (Fig. 3), erected as part of the Kurak housing estate (1960 - 1966), designed by C. Kazimierski, J. Pietrzyński and Sz. Walter. In turn, there are two more expressionism style buildings of note: The Łódź Art Printing Press (1965) at the corner of POW and Rewolucji 1905 Street, erected on pillars in the "V" letter shape (J. Brandysiewicz, J. Keńska and J. Sikorski design<sup>3</sup>), as well as recently ennobled building complex at Politechniki 3/3a, consisting of a dorm (Stefan Krygier, 1965), canteen and cinema - performance hall of the Technical University of Łódź (1973 [Fig. 4]).

In conclusion, it should be noted, that the aforementioned examples testify to the relatively high potential of creative designers of the post-war Łódź. First - honoring the general principles set out in Tołwiński's interwar design resulted in the continuation of urban development "to the inside" or wise investment strategies in the outer city areas. Second - the architecture of the time remained true to the trends of that time, beginning with the reminiscence of the interwar modernism, through incidentally present socialist realism, ending with socialist modernism with elements of functionalism or even neofunctionalism and (due to the aesthetic sense of the authors) individualism. Unfortunately, the next 25 years, especially in the housing areas, led to the urban and spatial decline of the downtown area. This phenomenon was not only limited to Łódź. However, even in this period, several buildings were constructed which,

2. *Łódź w latach 1945-1965*, Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Łodzi 1962, p. 194.  
3. Jerzy Brandysiewicz, *Trzy Zakłady Drukarskie*, [in:] *Architektura R. 1964*, Warszawa, z. 6, pp. 248-252.



6. Civil Engineering Faculty and the Architecture Department, Technical University in Łódź. Photo by the author, 2012



7. W. Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts in Łódź. Photo by the author, 2012

according to the author, deserve protection as contemporary culture goods. On the one hand they are representative of this urban shaping era, on the other, because of a relatively high artistic value have enriched its architectural and urban landscape. This collection includes the Primary School in S. Jaracza 44/46 Street, "Fonica" Electronic Equipment Factory in Wróblewskiego 16/18 Street (Fig. 5), the complex at Al. Politechniki 6/6a, consisting of the Civil Engineering Faculty and the Architecture Department of Technical University in Łódź (Fig. 6)<sup>4</sup>, erected between 1969-1975 (and now being refurbished) according to the designs by E. Bugajska, B. Krdaszewski and L. Mackiewicz. In a positive contrast, we can admire the newly renovated and modernized (designed by B. Kardaszewski and W. Nowakowski), constructed between 1971-1975, State School of Fine Arts<sup>5</sup> (presently known as W. Strzemiński Academy of Fine Arts)<sup>6</sup> in Wojska Polskiego 121 Street (Fig. 7). We can assess much less

4. Tadeusz P. Szafer, *Nowa architektura polska. Diariusz z lat 1971-1975*, Warszawa 1979, pp. 79, 84.

5. Jerzy Samujłło, *Realizacje i projekty budynków szkolnictwa wyższego w Łodzi*, [in:] *Architektura*, R. 1970, z. 8, pp. 259-275.

6. *Z pracowni architektów Bolesława Kardaszewskiego i Włodzimierza Nowakowskiego*, [in:] *Architektura*, R. 1973, No. 5-6, pp. 215-222.

positively important buildings awaiting renovation, such as: Association Trading House Central, built between 1972-1974 (design team under the direction of M. Gintowt) in the area of Piotrkowska 165/169 Street<sup>7</sup>; Hospital - the Center of the Polish Mother Health Memorial in the area of Rzgowska 281/289 Street, built between 1982-1988, according to the design team under the direction of J. Wyżnikiewicz (Fig. 8).

The remaining buildings from the 1970s, highly rated at their time - the warehouse of the Łódź Work Cooperative Association at S. Jaracza 72 Street, Palma Academic Clinic at Rewolucji 1905 37/39 Street, Próchnik Clothing Factory at Al. Śmigłego-Rydza 20 - could not be highlighted because of contemporary transformations drastically changing their originality and/or due to technical deterioration. For these specific reasons, the contemporary cultural goods selection lacked the industrial facilities (characteristic of the city identity), such as slowly decaying factories in the Dąbrowa District, or the completely restructured Transformer and Traction Network factory in the Teofilów District.

7. Bolesław Tatariewicz, *Konkurs na spółdzielczy dom handlowy w Łodzi*, [in:] *Architektura*, R. 1962, Warszawa, z. 7, pp. 280-281.

8. Hospital - the Center of the Polish Mother Health Memorial. Photo by the author, 2012

