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FROM COTTON AND SMOKE

Łódź – Industrial City
and Discourses of *Asynchronous Modernity*
1897–1994



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INTRODUCTION

The city greeted newcomers with a mysterious “characteristic, dirty fog on the horizon, which constantly hangs above the capital of chimneys.”¹ Directly on arrival “the smoke wrapped [newcomers] in some impenetrable, sulfurous atmosphere.” Gradually, through this “gigantic cloud of smoke” “a forest of brick chimneys stretched to the sky”, and with “a proud hatred belched smoke, fire and ashes up into the sky”, creating “an impression that a legion of blazing volcanoes was embracing the proletarian city.”² Entry into this urban area from its rural surroundings generated fascination and repulsion. It triggered a state of shock.

“Every age has its shock city.”³ This city can be a window which enables us to understand the contemporary world, its greatest achievements and its darkest horrors. Manchester was a shock city of 19th century industrial England—a theater of horror and fascination, a place that prefigured and indirectly shaped the path of industrial giants around the world. Not without a reason were many urban habitats baptized French or Finnish Manchesters. Rather than take Paris to be the capital of the 19th century, as did Walter Benjamin, Janet Wolff considers the paradigm of new ways of working and living to have been Manchester.⁴ The fates of industrial cities in the 20th century differed. Most of them were hotbeds of urban contention where powerful ideologies stirred up mass political constituencies. Some of these cities enjoyed new prominence in socialist states as flagships of forceful industrialization, while others were exposed to the vagaries of transforming capitalism. Finally, all of them faced deindustrialization, crisis and attempts to reinvent their futures anew.

This book is about a place that epitomizes the experience of the rise and fall of industrial modernity in Eastern Europe, “the Polish Manchester.” Łódź, in present-day central Poland, was a rapidly growing textile center, one of the few

¹ Artur Gliszczyński, “Łódź po zaburzeniach” [*Kurier Warszawski*, 1905] in: Piotr Boczkowski, *Łódź, która przeminęła w publicystyce i prozie: (antologia)* (Łódź: eConn, 2008), 495.

² Iwan Timkowskij-Kostin, *Miasto proletariuszów* (Łódź: Tygiel Kultury, 2001).

³ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 56.

⁴ Janet Wolff, “Manchester, Capital of the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 13, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 69–86, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X12461413>.

places which paved a way to industrial, capitalist modernization outside of the so-called West. Its history is a tale of struggle with modern social change in Eastern Europe. It is also a tale of modernity arising in a multinational empire, later redeployed within the borders of an emerging nation state, passing through state socialism, tormented by structural transformations and finally thrown into the whirlwind of the late-capitalist global economy.

This path exposed local populations to difficult challenges. Incoming rural migrants, people whose state-affiliation suddenly changed, postwar refugees and sacked female workers for over a century looked for means to find their way in the changing urban reality. They sought to become not only objects of modernization but also subjects actively envisioning their futures. One late 19th century newcomer of rural origin remembered how he came to the city which overwhelmed him with its pace of life and the power of machine production. Soon he bought a shared subscription to a “bourgeois” daily and started to discover the world around: “the fresh newsprint excited my mind and filled it with undefined longings for knowledge and its beauty. I was enriched by the scent of the newsprint itself.”⁵ The local press was a useful companion in making sense of modern life, and an outlet that nurtured numerous visions of improving urban reality.

The book examines local press debates at four pivotal periods of social and political dislocation that stimulated debate and self-reflection on the modern city. We construct an unusual multi-temporal case study with four cross-sections in order to historicize local struggle with urban modernity. These four moments are: (I) Rapid industrial growth in the framework of the tsarist borderlands; (II) State crafting in a highly antagonistic ideological setting after the First World War; (III) Socialist rebuilding of a structured city after 1945; and (IV) Hopes and disappointment of the transition and turbulent “Westernization” after 1989.

These four moments of the “urban question” epitomize broader debates in Eastern Europe about the city, the nation and the polity. Spanning over a century yet rooted in a down-to-the-ground analysis of primary sources in the provincial context, this book revisits the landscapes of intellectual means mobilized to interpret social reality and change it. Whereas cultural and intellectual histories paint a broad-brush picture of urban modernity, we chose prismatic perspectives zooming in on fragmentary rationalities, localized attempts to make sense of urban experience but also to actively transform it. Second-hand idea dealers and rank-and-file journalists were looking for peace of mind in describing, understanding and sometimes changing the modern reality around them. Thus, we decided to study those voices as an empirically traceable inscription of the confrontation with asynchronous modernity. These insights add up to a multi-faceted portrait of the 20th century urban experience in Łódź.

⁵ Lucjan Rudnicki, *Stare i nowe* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1979), 176.

There Is a City in Europe

Arising from scratch, Łódź grew to prominence as a factory-town in the 1820s. It swiftly became one of Europe's fastest-developing industrial centers, reaching 300,000 inhabitants by 1900 and 850,000 in 1989. The "city of cotton", as it was soon baptized, was a "shock city"—a great urban center with all the problems that rapid capitalist urbanization triggered. German artisans, Polish peasants and Jewish small traders flocked to the growing city founding textile enterprises and tiny workshops, adding to a multi-ethnic industrial patchwork subsumed under a profit-seeking imperative.⁶ Łódź took up the baton as the most significant industrial hub, simultaneously the biggest urban center between Moscow and Berlin, besides Warsaw.

As a result, Łódź used to have an ambivalent public image. It was soon christened "the Polish Manchester", and like the "original" it had a tarnished reputation as a "shock city" if not, even less ambiguously, as "a bad city." One should not be misled by the title of a renowned novel about the city, written by the Nobel Prize winner Władysław S. Reymont – "The Promised Land." This was an ironic slogan coined by the author to intrigue the audience before presenting what was actually an anti-urban and anti-cosmopolitan story lurking behind a realist facade.⁷ After all, both the Victorian and Polish publics were equally immersed in similar anti-urban sentiments.⁸ Industrial hubs were everywhere mercilessly criticized as aberrations of progress rather than its justified outcomes. The "shock cities", where dynamic development was accompanied by raging class conflict and social disorder, were spaces typical of 19th century capitalism, with its rapid urbanization and the industrialization of Europe. In Eastern Europe, however, this ambiguous position was further reinforced by the contrasts produced by asynchronous modernization.

In areas exposed to external impulses and encroaching global capitalism, economic change had an unequal and combined character.⁹ Various social processes had their own pace, being differently integrated in transregional circulations and penetrated to a different degree by market relations. Furthermore,

⁶ Jan Fijałek et al., eds., *Łódź: dzieje miasta do 1918 r.* (Łódź; Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988); Julian Janczak, "The National Structure of the Population in Łódź in the Years 1820–1938," *Polin*, no. 6 (1991): 20–26.

⁷ Karolina Kołodziej, *Obraz Łodzi w piśmiennictwie pozytywistyczno-młodopolskim* (Łódź: Piktór, 2009).

⁸ Jerzy Jedlicki, *Świat zwyrodniały: lęki i wyroki krytyków nowoczesności* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2000).

⁹ Leo Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution & Results and Prospects*, trans. L. Nichol (Seattle: Red Letter Press, 2010).

technologies, radical ideas, cultural trends, consumption patterns and material aspirations were transferred selectively, not always in accord with each other or with extant realities. For instance, the higher social strata proselytized imported ideas and conspicuously consumed goods complicit with cutting edge “foreign” fashion. Exposed to such attractive examples, popular classes wanted to follow, but any broader demand for industrial goods could not be easily satisfied within an agrarian economy. This provided fertile ground for various, home-brewed, or imported, projects of radical social change, which promised universal prosperity but above all a reshuffling of global hierarchies.¹⁰ Such a contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous¹¹ augmented modern desires whilst simultaneously diminishing their possible satisfaction. It was in such a situation defined by asynchronous modernity that the modern debate in Łódź unfolded.

Łódź many times found itself a city on the edge of tomorrow, a vanguard and a victim of progress. Its history is a series of struggles to become modern, to be “just on time.” When time sped up unprecedentedly for a sleepy rural backwater, when two world wars reshuffled the social order, and finally when the late 20th century brought “the end of history”, the city and its polity were once again re-imagined anew. In Łódź, modernity forced its champions and victims alike to face its uneasy form, scattered, rapid and ruthless. At the same time, it offered the paradoxical promise of leaving itself behind. As Marshall Berman noted, modernity brought about a self-perpetuating dislocation, but simultaneously urged its objects to become subjects of the historical process.¹² In Łódź it triggered a constant will to become modern without asynchronous distortions, to achieve the harmony of a city that would finally meet the demands of the day. Thus, one journalist from the turn of the century believed that “a moment when meeting the basic requirements for a ‘decent, healthy and harmonious personal and public life’ will be possible, does not belong to the very distant future.”¹³ This longing, in its various renditions, fueled the mission of local journalists for the next hundred years and did not allow them to lay their pens, typewriters or PCs to rest.

¹⁰ Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism*, Nachdr. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

¹¹ Ernst Bloch, “Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics,” trans. Mark Ritter, *New German Critique*, no. 11 (1977): 22–38.

¹² Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983).

¹³ “Z dnia na dzień,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 78 (1900).

Translocal Modernity

What was their modernity really about? The question here is also, so to speak, a topographical one. How did modernity happen in the world? The question is usually answered either by concentration on a very few flagship sites of modernity or on almost abstract global processes. The vast majority of writings on urban modernity offer studies of the cutting edge metropolises: Paris, London, or New York.¹⁴ Its counterpart is an examination of global and transnational shifts, exchanges and flows.¹⁵ These paradigms of thinking signify the outermost poles of debate, and they easily overlook how modern experience was actively constructed when transnational processes and metropolitan voices hit urban debate at ground level.¹⁶ Where did modernity take shape day to day?

As paradoxical as it may seem, the answer is: it was happening elsewhere. Focus on abstract processes gives us an understanding of the complex system that the global world would become. Earlier, the agenda of the day was a sociological analysis of a general process, allegedly happening in different places at a different pace, but essentially homogenous despite its variance. Modern metropolises were considered trailblazers on a world scale. The capitalist West and its experience of rapid development, inaugurated by the Industrial Revolution, became a classic paradigm of modernization and the dominant path to follow for many societies in forthcoming decades. The second half of the 19th century and (at least) the first half of the 20th were marked by undifferentiated and unambiguous concepts

¹⁴ Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012); David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Hagen Schulz-Forberg, *London–Berlin: Authenticity, Modernity, and the Metropolis in Urban Travel Writing from 1851 to 1939* (Brussels; New York: Peter Lang, 2006); Alan J. Kidd and Terry Wyke, *Manchester: Making the Modern City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016); Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

¹⁵ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Stefano Bianchini, *Eastern Europe and the Challenges of Modernity, 1800–2000* (London; New York: Routledge, 2015).

¹⁶ Notable exceptions breaking away from this binary framework are Jennifer Jenkins, *Provincial Modernity: Local Culture & Liberal Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Hamburg* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); Paul Manning, *Strangers in a Strange Land: Occidental Publics and Orientalist Geographies in Nineteenth-Century Georgian Imaginaries* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2012).

of social development. Later, a growing awareness of global entanglements rendered the dependencies and differentials more visible, showing that metropolitan modernity had an evil twin in the seemingly backwater realities of slave-holding plantations.¹⁷ All those entangled places, peripheral, but globally connected industrial centers among them, reveal more about global modernity than the centers of the popular imagination such as London, Paris or New York. They *were* the global history.

Such industrial hubs, embodying global modernity in an exceptional, yet typical way, may be grasped by the notion of the “ordinary city.”¹⁸ They are not, however, places only embodying the modern struggle on the ground. There transnational trends struggled with local traditions and premodern patterns, revealing tensions between different time paces. Modernity is generally a translocal phenomenon—not only does it move between places and contexts, but it is also always conceptualized as being somewhere else, stimulating movement for those who debate it.¹⁹ The will to keep up with such imagined centers of modernity was particularly powerful in Eastern Europe, where local power brokers struggled to fulfill their European aspirations²⁰ or launched radical projects of social reconstruction capable of reversing global hierarchies, be they fascism or communism.²¹ But the alleged center is actually constructed through the margins as the polycentric model of multi-directional rather than linear flows of modernity demonstrates.

From Chana Kronfeld’s argument about “minor literature”²² or postcolonial studies to the multiple modernities approach,²³ many scholars have criticized

¹⁷ Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London: Verso, 1999); Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx’s Temporalities* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 2012).

¹⁸ Ash Amin and Stephen Graham, “The Ordinary City,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 22, no. 4 (December 1, 1997): 411–29, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0020-2754.1997.00411.x>; Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁹ Tomasz Majewski, ed., *Rekonfiguracje modernizmu: nowoczesność i kultura popularna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2009); Tomasz Majewski, Wiktor Marzec, and Agnieszka Rejniak-Majewska, *Migracje modernizmu. Nowoczesność i uchodźcy* (Łódź; Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Topografie; Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2014).

²⁰ Jan C. Behrends and Martin Kohlrausch, eds., *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890–1940* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014).

²¹ Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*.

²² Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1996).

²³ Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002).

the unilineal idea of progress as well as a model and transmission or diffusion from center to peripheries. For instance, Susan Stanford Friedman introduced the “circulation model” which aims at contesting the Europocentric and reductionist model of modernization. She aimed at examining connections, links and conjunctures, in general, what is nowadays the focus of so much global academic attention: transnational networks. The resulting sensitivity underlines the interactivity as well as multiple agencies and centers across the globe.²⁴ Building on this, Harsha Ram tried to combine Friedman’s perspective and the center/periphery model in order to tackle actually existing peripheral modernity in Tiflis/Tbilisi, a place plugged into the global cultural flows in a way not dissimilar to Łódź. However, the aim of this move is not to disavow “the dramatic asymmetries of power.” While Kronfeld tries to understand regional articulations through the center, Ram proposes constructing the center through the margins. He concludes with a remark that should be kept in mind while examining Łódź.

If modernism reflected not the triumph of modernization but rather its uneven, impeded and locally inflected geographical spread, then might not modernism have been most sharply and vividly expressed precisely where the process of modernization was only belatedly or patchily successful?²⁵

In the case of Tiflis researched by Ram, and similarly in Berman’s analysis of the Russian Empire, the modern public sphere, and the field of literature and art became a part of a worldwide network. They were substitutes for barely existing “material” modernization, simultaneously reflecting and shaping global tendencies. Łódź is an opposite case—it is its infrastructure, economic position, pace and insensitivity of development that follow Manchester or New York, but almost nothing more. Its public and intellectual sphere were only germinating, and many expressions in local debate rejected what was new, fluid and “modern” from the perspective of the core-cities. Neither type of modernism fits neatly into the rigid scheme of unilineal progress and thus they beg for a far-reaching reconceptualization of our spatialized teleologies.

One of these types has led to the history of Eastern Europe often being written in a way which underlines differences between the East and the West. This strategy of “differencing” the history of the eastern peripheries of Europe from its western core-centers may be helpful in tackling the general trajectories of vast arrays of dissimilar territories stretching longitudinally from Helsinki to Istanbul. However, it

²⁴ Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

²⁵ Harsha Ram, *City of Crossroads. Tiflis Modernism and the Russian–Georgian Encounter*, forthcoming book.

may prove a dubious strategy when analyzing the more detailed, spatialized social history of modernity. Multiple differentials embedded in the capitalist transformation of the world triggered uneven developmental processes on different spatial scales, often entangled within connections not necessarily deployed in their direct vicinity.²⁶ Consequently, rigid geopolitical frameworks and imagined geographies may reveal their limited explanatory capacity in more zoomed-in research.

This concerns, for instance, those places fixed in the “spaces of capital”²⁷ in a way that enmeshes them in transregional commercial networks (while drawing extensively from local resources such as land, water, laborers), yet simultaneously isolates them socially from their direct surroundings. In a word, Łódź was one of the huge industrial centers which mushroomed in the 19th century across the globe, as it was positioned on the increasingly porous borderland between the Russian world-empire and European networks of knowledge and technology transfer. Thus, it used to have much more in common with its far away industrial counterparts than with places it directly neighbored.

Whilst a typical modern city, it stood out from the local context. Exploiting local resources and attracting surrounding rural populations, it was a foreign body against the backdrop of local social and cultural ties. With its embeddings in transregional commercial borderland networks consisting of external capital perpetuating accumulation on the one hand (and in one direction) and export-driven production on the other (and on a different vector), Łódź epitomized a form of exceptional normality. Hence, such a theoretical decision about the understanding of modernity has its reasons in actual, asynchronous and entangled modernization processes.

Printed Modernity

The starting points for discourse of the modern on and within industrial cities were similar. The debate on the urban question established a considerably stable set of meanings and images, which was later developed, reused and changed.²⁸

²⁶ On differentials in surplus extraction connecting distant places see Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*. On global conjunctures of uneven development of production in localized outcomes see Kacper Pobłocki, “Learning from Manchester. Uneven Development, Class and the City,” *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, no. 3(19) (2013): 237–67; Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, *How the West came to rule: the geopolitical origins of capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

²⁷ David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

²⁸ About the importance of thinking in terms of questions, see Holly Case, *The Age of Questions Or, A First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, Ame-*

Beginning with the rise of the textile hub, local debates mirrored the main bones of contention and narratives of their respective times—from the hygienist movement and an orientaling gaze on the urban poor in the late 19th century, to the ideologically saturated urban community of nation or class in the interwar period, to a socialist city and postwar infrastructural development, and last but not least, to re-emerging market society, foreign investments and technocratic management of the city in 1990s. Visions of modernity were important coordinates for multiple agendas of critique and reform. Zooming in, we capture moments of reflection about modernization, urbanization and what a modern city is and should be, writing an urban intellectual history of sorts.

Discourse research and intellectual history started to attract historical sociologists just after the humanities as a whole had been changed by the linguistic turn.²⁹ Text-oriented historical research is grounded in a general awareness of the indirect and language-mediated status of primary sources. Researchers turned to discourse as the missing link between the materiality of production (so stressed in Marxist approaches) and modern experience.³⁰ Just as the harbinger of this trend—labor history—incorporated language and discourse in its entire methodological edifice, designed to scrutinize modern class subjectivities, so do we, also aiming at text-oriented historical research. Along the lines drawn by discourse theory, we believe that all existing objects and actions are meaningful due to a historically constituted set of rules.³¹ All human cultural activity is symbolically deployed and meaningful due to its being patterned like a language. Therefore, we analyze entire cultures (and pluralized modernities) as language-like sign systems. We see discourse as a generalized matrix of social practice, perpetuated by attempts to stabilize meaning, limit uncertainty and conceal the very fact of its ultimate unavailability. That is why urban visions of modernity are always projected upon the screen of purported time sequences. Teleology brings peace of mind.

rican, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

²⁹ Peter Wagner, “As Intellectual History Meets Historical Sociology,” in: *Handbook of Historical Sociology* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 2003); Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009); Elías José Palti, “The ‘Theoretical Revolution’ in Intellectual History: From The History of Political Ideas to The History of Political Languages,” *History and Theory* 53, no. 3 (2014): 387–405, <https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.10719>.

³⁰ Joan W. Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 773–97.

³¹ David Howarth, *Discourse, Concepts in the Social Sciences* (Buckingham [England]; Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2000); Jason Glynos and David Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory*, Routledge Innovations in Political Theory 26 (London; New York: Routledge, 2007).

The transfer of such comforting narratives between modern visionaries, second-hand idea dealers and local populations tightened when the modern press connected all these groups into a single feedback loop. Discourses of the modern exercised increasing influence on the social imaginary when readership numbers grew. The press accompanied the birth of the modern city and for its inhabitants this was one of the core means of their making sense of the city. This role was intensified in industrial hubs, growing rapidly and attracting new populations, who also found their way in urban life through the press.³² As a truly modern form, the press evolved alongside the city and its inhabitants.

While the late 19th press catered to the barely politicized common sense of the urban dweller, there emerged in the interwar period more partisan visions of organizing urban polity which pitted them against each other in a highly polemical mode.³³ Later the press became the vehicle of the more ordered ideological transfer of an emerging postwar socialism, just to enter the 1990s as an unconfident soothsayer trying to make sense of a pivotal social transformation and find a new language in a plural political setting. Thus, it is the press which offers unparalleled lenses through which to follow vernacular modern critique and modernization dreams from almost the beginning of Łódź's modern history.

The role of newspapers is not limited to creating the "imagined communities" of assumed readers. There is a widely-shared consensus among scholars of the social role of the press that "newspapers have always created readers, not news, as their primary function."³⁴ Newspaper language can be seen very much as a "social semiotic" which, in its generic range, draws particular social groups into particular styles of presentation.³⁵ Such coagulated forms of discourse have the capacity to reproduce social relationships with considerable power. Local intellectuals' efforts to make sense of a changing world, to describe it, and to harmonize with assumed benchmarks and multiplying expectations produced situated

³² Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*, chap. 3.

³³ Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

³⁴ Martin Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers: Socio-Historical Perspectives*, *Advances in Sociolinguistics* (London: Continuum, 2010), 8. On imagined communities, see Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006).

³⁵ Michael A. K. Halliday, *Language as a Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (Baltimore: University Park Press, 1977); See also Allan Bell, *The Language of News Media*, *Language in Society* (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991).

modernity projects with their own agency to forge urban policies.³⁶ What follows is an attempt to scrutinize such modernity projects enmeshed in the local press discourse.

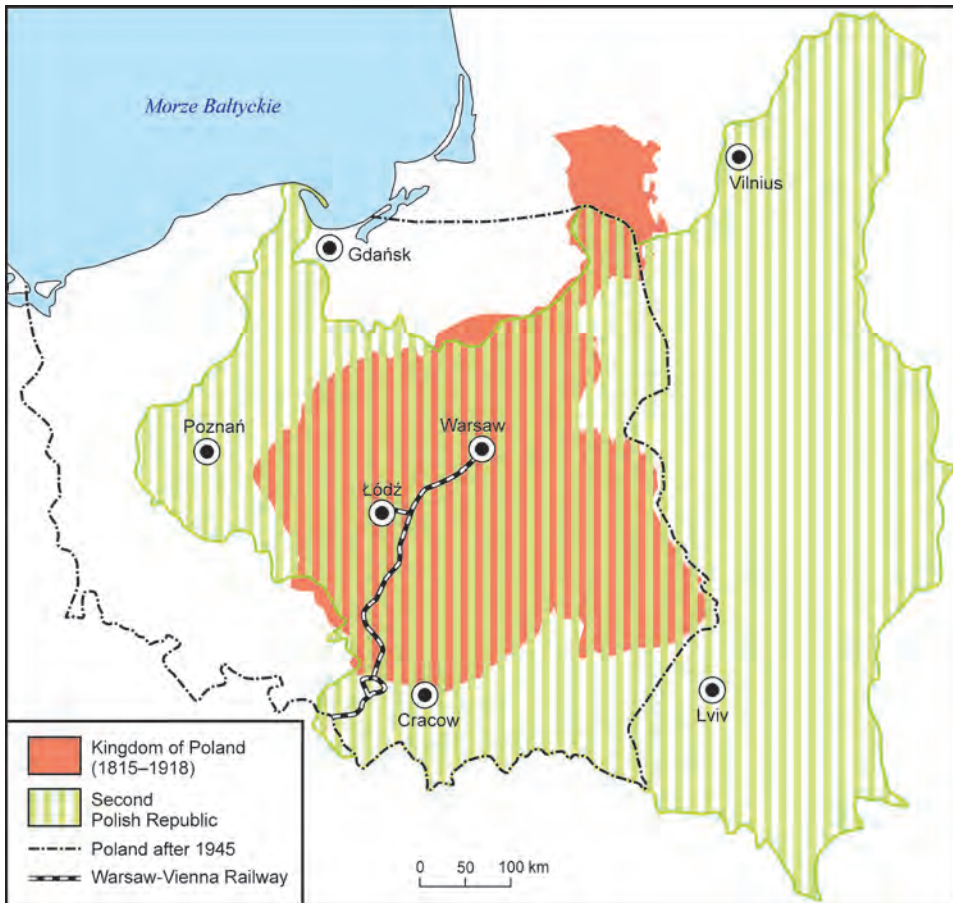


Figure 1. Łódź and its shifting position regarding state borders.

Journey Through a Century

In **Chapter 1** we examine the “shock city” at the turn of the century and the foundations of Łódź’s urban discourse. This period witnessed an anti-positivist turn in Polish intellectual culture; there was a rethinking of the rural lower class-

³⁶ Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic*.

es' political agency and nation-building capacities. Correspondingly, the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie and an urban lifestyle began to arouse suspicion rather than evoke occidental dreams. In the era of accelerated class formation and modern politicization in the Kingdom of Poland before and during the 1905 Revolution, Łódź took up the baton as the most significant industrial center in the country.³⁷ It was the ground zero of modern Polish nationalism and class-oriented mass movements. Łódź, largely populated by economically influential Germans and Jews, posed the Polish public an overriding challenge. Likewise, the local Polish intelligentsia had a hard time finding a relevant springboard for its own vision of the city.³⁸ It had to acknowledge actually existing predicaments including the weakness of the local cultural elites, distance between local reality and the dominant Polish culture, class tension, exploitation and the acute underdevelopment of the urban infrastructure. No wonder that the chief questions of modern life were ardently debated.

Journalists actively re-conceptualized the social bond, moving from a moralized critique of the poor, to philanthropic projects supplementing deficient institutions, to explicit ideas of welfare provision organized by the state in the common interest. Urban citizenship was considered an important factor of a functional polity. Various groups were invited to actively participate in urban life—in a way more inclusive than envisioned in the ethno-nationalism that already held sway in Warsaw-based debate. The local press shaped provincial public opinion by issuing the first complex analyses of the city's condition and forging visions of its future.³⁹ Once broadcast, these soon became a bone of contention in the evermore polarized public sphere.

Seeking to explore this polarization, in **Chapter 2** we study the early years of the interwar period, marked by the nation-state building project. The chapter characterizes the years of the First World War as a period of economic crisis and also of simultaneous political activation. It was a hard time for the city, which rapidly lost the base of its economic development—open access to the Russian market. Local polity had to struggle with economic decline and polit-

³⁷ Robert Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904–1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

³⁸ Winson Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 117–18; Wiktor Marzec and Agata Zysiak, "Journalists Discovered Łódź like Columbus." *Orientalizing Capitalism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Polish Modernization Debates*, *Canadian–American Slavic Studies* 50 (2016): 235–65, <https://doi.org/10.1163/22102396-05002007>.

³⁹ Kamil Śmiechowski, *Łódzka wizja postępu. Oblicze społeczno-ideowe "Gońca Łódzkiego", "Kuriera Łódzkiego" i "Nowego Kuriera Łódzkiego" w latach 1898–1914* (Łódź: Dom Wydawniczy Księży Młyn, 2014).

ical conflict. In the uncertain conditions of the nascent post-Versailles Polish state, notions of the urban community and the place of the city in the nation were to be radically redrawn.⁴⁰ In this context, we shed light on how the process of democratization affected the dynamics of political disputes and changed the discourse of the Łódź press.

Two competing visions of a desired social order developed in the 1920s: “national capitalism” and “municipal socialism.” The former ideal propelled the arguments of the political right. This was displayed in a gradual dying down of Polish-German conflict and its replacement by Polish-Jewish antagonism, strengthening in 1930s after the Great Depression. The proposed remedy was a rebirth of the national community through economic cooperation and ethnic solidarity. In turn, the idea of “municipal socialism” marked the thinking of the Polish Socialist Party, who governed the city during the first postwar years. In this milieu the city was envisaged as a battlefield for a better future. The working class and its needs became the main determiners of urban policies. Nationalists’ and socialists’ visions of the “good city” were grounded in different political philosophies and concepts of society—a disciplined, organic and ethnically homogeneous community struggling with its outer enemies vs. present class antagonism, struggle for the future emancipation of the workers and active social policy in real time, respectively. Aside from the reconstruction of their logic and applied argumentation, the unexpected resemblances in their rhetoric have also been explored. The last sections discuss the main stages of rivalry between socialism and capitalism in Łódź in the second half of the 1920s and in the 1930s. The dynamics of this conflict mirrored the wider history of the “European civil war” of 1914–1945.

Chapter 3 focuses on the period following this war. We study the postwar reconstruction from 1945 to 1948 and the accompanying press debate envisioning socialist modernity. Because the Jewish population of the city had mostly perished, and the German inhabitants were expelled, at the end of the war Łódź appeared to be the biggest, and simultaneously least destroyed, Polish city. The working-class city of a newly constituted state, the future People’s Republic of Poland, seemed to be the perfect imaginary, if not institutional, capital.

This was the time of the so-called Gentle Revolution, when space for debate was relatively broad, only later tightly grasped by Stalinization. We examine briefly the situation of Poland and Eastern Europe within the postwar order, which was the context for emerging visions of modernization. Łódź was without doubt an industrial city. It was not, however, a socialist city like Magnitogorsk⁴¹

⁴⁰ Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland*.

⁴¹ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

or Nowa Huta.⁴² As an industrial center with a 19th century genesis and a strong working-class ethos it offers a slightly different insight into socialist urban reality. We propose the term “modest modernization” in contrast to a later rise of a “gigantomania” in investment. Paradoxically, the possibility of a working-class capital in a working-class state meant the city’s marginalization. Politically, workers appeared too defiant for the new government and major investment skirted the textile hub to focus on heavy industry instead. At the same time, local debates still nurtured a specific language of postwar modernization. This encompassed productivist mobilization and legitimization of the new regime, with a rhetoric of appeasement as well.

Quite elaborate strategies were developed to make sense of sewage pipe leaks and supply shortages. The core concept of a socialist city was developed in the press, but this was accompanied by more daring visions of a functionalist city proposed by the Łódź-based artist—Władysław Strzemiński. Dreams of becoming a metropolis reappeared in one of the most important urban centers of the nascent People’s Republic of Poland. Thus, we later on examine what being a metropolitan center meant to contemporaries. The final part focuses on the breakdown of the first postwar discourse from 1948 onwards and the emotions triggered when it became clear that Łódź would not be a flagship urban center of socialism. What seemed to be the perfect historical moment for the proletarian city, turned out to be a yet another disappointment.

This would not be the last disappointment in the history of Łódź. In **Chapter 4** we examine discourses about Łódź that emerged following the 1989 implosion of state socialism and the industrial form of life. The situation was particularly dramatic not only because it came in the wake of years of negligence, but also because of a lack of any supportive programs for either the textile industry or former textile workers. Here the highest feminized workforce in the country intersected with low levels of education and traditional Catholic values. These kept female textile workers in their homes, while miners or shipbuilders were out fighting for their rights on the streets of Warsaw. The poverty, frustration and social derailment that ensued were framed as the unavoidable costs of modernization.

The economic situation fueled an identity crisis that was proclaimed in press discourses. Once the socialist era had come to an end, working-class heritage was denied legitimacy. Thus, a desperate struggle to build a new identity began. This involved the shibboleths of Łódź the fashion city; Łódź the trading city; and Łódź the center for international fairs. The rejection of working-class lore was the common ground of two opposing narratives: that of the creative city—resilient, enterprising and open to investors and also that of the fallen city—blighted, poor

⁴² Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949–56* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

and devastated. As in most of the former “Manchesters”, the neoliberalization of the economy brought deindustrialization and social decline—the vicious circle of history revived the ideology that had made the industrial centers grow, but this time its return brought about their ruin.

Despite changing social circumstances and abrupt geopolitical shifts, these discourses that circulated for over a century are marked by common elements. All these projects would often have a patterned shape, characteristic for a form typical of the modern discourse.

The Structure and Content of the Modern Discourse

Across time, all four cross-temporal case studies of the modern urban discourse, reveal common features. argumentation in the press was often structured in a similar manner. Starting with a statement describing reality, it subsequently points out current deficits and problems, as well as the reasons for the undesirable situation, just to conclude with recommendations or appeals for change. This recurrent form of perception is a scaffolding which allowed social actors, in this case mainly journalists, to make sense of the rapidly changing reality around them, describe imperfections of this reality and propose meaningful pathways to change it. The thread leading from diagnosis, to critique, to prospective vision, represents the basic timeline of modern thinking oriented toward self-assertion and reflexive reform.⁴³ This pattern is much more than a construction of text; it is a particular paradigm of action, expressed in thinking, writing and practice.

Exploring this logic, one can observe that many modern discourses promise a harmonious modernity—a state of fulfilled and integrated being keeping up with the promise of the modern challenge. At the same time, they clearly picture what prevents this fullness appearing as a sworn political enemy, foreign yoke or long-term negligence. This addition is necessary, as a harmonious modernity will forever remain an unfulfilled promise; the experience of reality always denies the illusion of its possible full realization.⁴⁴ The modern condition, as a self-perpetuating movement, is exactly grounded in this paradoxical experience.

Correspondingly, modern discourses are grounded in an implicit utopian horizon. This may not be very perceptible but without it the modern form of thinking would be impossible. The utopia—an idealized scenario—is a promise of achieving that harmonious modernity, which is denied by the virtually created,

⁴³ Reinhart Koselleck, “Einleitung,” in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), xiii–xxvii; Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988).

⁴⁴ Agnes Heller, *A Theory of Modernity* (London: Wiley, 1999).

fantasmatic enemy. The latter ultimately brings into the field of vision the threat of dystopia—a disaster scenario.⁴⁵ While the diagnoses, obstacles and visions differed for different political options, the logics of modern discourse still remained similar. The clue lies in the obstacle itself, which is, at the very same time, the foundation enabling the appearance of any utopian project at all.⁴⁶

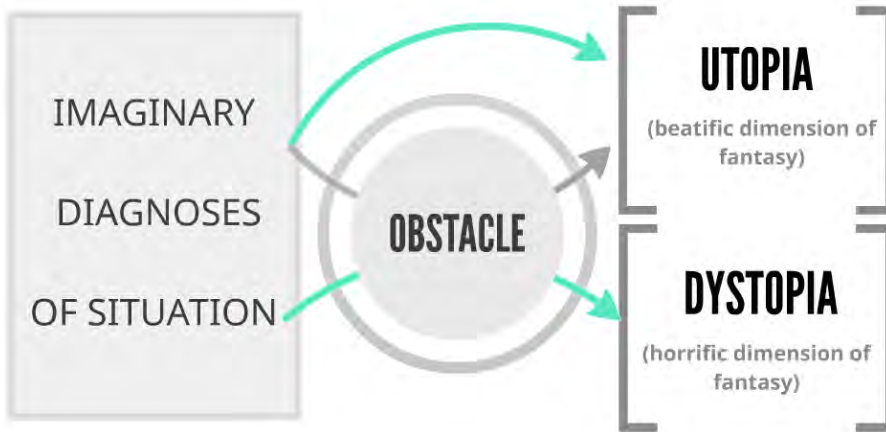


Figure 2. Structure of discourse of the modern (author: Agata Zysiak).

This underlying structure could lead to different, often contradictory, projects of modern change. Moments of social and political dislocation, such as the threshold periods studied in this book, stimulated such modern visions and pitted against each other polemicists advocating differing senses of the future. As Reinhart Koselleck noted, modern times are marked by a separation of the space of experience and the horizon of expectations.⁴⁷ What is envisioned as to come is no longer directly embedded in knowledge of the past. This change challenged the sense of the obviousness of presence and stimulated various concepts of movement, dynamic ideas of time and imaginings of the future. Correspondingly, we see the specific discourses of urban modernity as complex figurations expressing

⁴⁵ Glynos and Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory*.

⁴⁶ This issue is described in detail in Agata Zysiak, “The Desire for Fullness. The Fantasmatic Logic of Modernization Discourses at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Century in Łódź,” *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, no. 3(13) (2014): 41–69, <https://doi.org/10.14746/pt.2014.3.3>.

⁴⁷ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

assumptions about time, space, community and order, and simultaneously envisioning their movement in history. Thus, in subsequent chapters we trace changing attitudes regarding these dimensions.

Various attempts to build a convincing narrative about the modern urban challenge may also be seen as historically changing imaginings of the future, or to use Koselleck's phrase, futures pasts.⁴⁸ As longings not always realized, they nevertheless shaped the actions of historical actors in real time, as they were past futures true and meaningful at the time of utterance.⁴⁹ The question of time also encompasses the "regimes of historicity" present in particular modern discourses.⁵⁰ In particular, we mean the varieties of the assumed timelines and self-ascribed place within them pushed by local actors. We ask how these regimes of historicity were negotiated on the ground in the press, as well as who populated the assumed timelines—what benchmarks of progress were used and what modern places stimulated local aspirations.

As was widely documented, such prospective discourses very often had a direct spatial reference, most aptly expressed in the very notion of utopia.⁵¹ Urban imaginations from the very beginning of utopian thinking contained detailed visions of space which would foster the harmonious life of the moderns. In actually

⁴⁸ Koselleck.

⁴⁹ Georges Minois, *Geschichte der Zukunft: Orakel, Prophezeiungen, Utopien, Prognosen* (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 1998); Lucian Hölscher, *Weltgericht oder Revolution: protestantische und sozialistische Zukunftsvorstellungen im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1989); Lucian Hölscher, *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1999); Peter S. Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland 1918–1933* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008).

⁵⁰ Alexander Escudier, "Temporalities and Political Modernity," in: *Political Concepts and Time: New Approaches to Conceptual History*, ed. Javier Fernández Sebastián (Santander: Cantabria University Press; McGraw-Hill Interamericana de España, 2011); Diana Mishkova, Balazs Trencsenyi, and Marja Jalava, eds., "Regimes of Historicity" in *Southeastern and Northern Europe, 1890–1945 Discourses of Identity and Temporality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁵¹ Richard Dennis, *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space, 1840–1930* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Behrends and Kohlrausch, *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890–1940*; Daria Bocharnikova and Steven E. Harris, "Second World Urbanity: Infrastructures of Utopia and Really Existing Socialism," *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 1 (2018): 3–8, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144217710227>; Stephen J. Collier, *Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

existing spaces of modernity that visibly questioned such ideals, the urge to order space remained at the core of urban discourse. The late Victorian city was in the eyes of social reformers the infrastructural grid modeling modern liberal citizenship.⁵² Similarly, industrial Łódź was a place where various spatialized imaginations were forged. A tangible lack of infrastructure urged journalists to propose various visions of reconstructed urban space. This spatial sensitivity reemerged after the Second World War when the paradigm of the socialist city spurred on bold ideas of reconstruction. Space was to be shaped in a way capable of keeping up with the new times and modeling a new human.⁵³ We investigate these in order to reveal tacit assumptions about space in the urban discourse.

Projected spaces were closely related to envisioned forms of community. The press was an important factor in forging modern subjectivities, and also as a body of collective actors acting on the historical scene. The role of newspapers is not limited to creating “imagined communities” of assumed readers in terms of national belonging.⁵⁴ In addition to that, the early press catered to the general metropolitan audience, thus creating a sense of new social cohabitation—the modern industrial city.⁵⁵ We study this sense of citizenship promoted in the local context. This task was willingly continued after the creation of the Polish nation state. It is worth asking how the highly polarized ideological projects bid for the support of new working class readers, and what kind of affiliations they offered. In the post-Second World War context, attempts to construct the unity of the rebuilding Poland was rivaled by the socialist incentive to construct a new popular identity of the working citizens. The shape of this fragile balance is also our object of scrutiny. Similarly, we want to check how after 1989 general optimism that turned into disappointment fostered an emergency sense of community. During the same period, however, the new capitalist order required the construction of new social hierarchies and urged the elite milieux to distance themselves from the popular classes. All these dimensions contain two recurring elements: the modern will to improve and the resurfacing of narratives of order.

The press in Łódź was an agent of urban improvement. Journalists were restless in diagnosing problems and devising interventions, not always considering

⁵² Chris Otter, “Making Liberalism Durable: Vision and Civility in the Late Victorian City,” *Social History* 27, no. 1 (2002): 1–15; Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London; New York: Verso, 2003).

⁵³ Michael Ellman, *Socialist Planning* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Slavomíra Ferenčuhová and Michael Gentile, “Introduction: Post-Socialist Cities and Urban Theory,” *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 57, no. 4–5 (2016): 483–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2016.1270615>.

⁵⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers*, 8.

⁵⁵ Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*.

the agency of people whose conduct was targeted for reform. Self-appointed specialists in urban planning, infrastructure and civil society left their imprint on local authorities and the civility of urban dwellers, trying to remake society from the bottom up. This “will to improve” has had a long and troubled history.⁵⁶ We ask about enduring continuities from the imperial period to the 1989 transition. In detail, we explore areas of intervention, benchmarks against which the pursued improvements were measured, and the desired state of affairs. Profound social and political transformations fanned the fear of uncertainty. The corresponding negative pole of signification is anarchy and chaos: unpredictability vis-à-vis time, urban disarray vis-à-vis space, and the dissolution of ranks vis-à-vis society. We trace how the will to order migrated through these domains, signifying the specificity of urban modern visions in different periods of European history, finding its embodiment in Łódź press debate.

The result is a landscape of visions and attempts to improve urban living, always confronted with unintended consequences and external constraints. In this way the book provides insight into the situated intellectual history of Eastern European modernity. A summary of subsequent strivings in all four periods may be found in the concluding section of the book. Chapters in the book are presented in approximate chronological order, narrating dislocations in turn, posing milestones in our common struggle to be modern. As we are perfectly aware, such a strategy is a yet another truly modern attempt to narrate contingency in a way which makes it intelligible to us, modern subjects.

⁵⁶ Tania Li, *The Will to Improve. Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

Wiktor Marzec, Kamil Śmiechowski, Agata Zysiak

THE BEGINNINGS: ENTRANCE TO THE INDUSTRIAL WORLD 1897–1914

*One has to get acquainted with a force which
may be hostile and dangerous but is tremendous.¹*

The Promised Land in the Mud

All European “Manchesters”, be they Finnish or Italian, developed along patterns embedded in their respective national or imperial policies, which made their cases site-specific, and so did the “Polish Manchester.” In Russian Poland economic, social and cultural modernization, which loomed large in the late 19th and the 20th centuries, was tightly enmeshed in the context of the country’s previous backwardness, a tangible yet intransigent legacy of an earlier epoch of a peculiar manorial mode of agricultural production. During the 16th century, the European economy, hitherto developing in a relatively parallel fashion, bifurcated into two distinct subsystems. The first dominated in the strictly capitalistic and well urbanized West, which began to grow rapidly as a center of international trade. The second established itself in Eastern Europe, which became Europe’s granary, and it came to participate in international trade solely as an exporter of agricultural crops.² Consequently, it experienced significant re-feudalization under the tight bondage of the interests of the local landed gentry, which profited immensely from agrarian surplus extraction.

¹ Artur Glisczyński and Antoni Mieszkowski, “Łódź—miasto i ludzie (1894),” in: *Łódź, która przeminęła w publicystyce i prozie (antologia)* (Łódź: Piktora, 2008), 9.

² Witold Kula, *An Economic Theory of the Feudal System; towards a Model of the Polish Economy, 1500–1800* (London; New York: Verso, 1987); Jacek Kochanowicz, *Backwardness and Modernization: Poland and Eastern Europe in the 16th–20th Centuries* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2006); Marian Małowist, *Western Europe, Eastern Europe and World Development, 13th–18th Centuries: Collection of Essays of Marian Małowist*, ed. Jean Batou and Henryk Szlajfer (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010).

As a result, at the same time as the French *petit bourgeoisie* were battling on the streets of Paris during the famous French Revolution of 1789, Polish towns were rather sad embodiments of ruin and despair. Adding insult to injury, it would have been a challenging task to find a Polish analogue of the bourgeoisie at all, as local artisans and traders were rather tiny mongers supplementing the countryside. At that moment Łódź for all intents and purposes did not exist, or at least not in any substantial way. Although founded in 1423, at the end of the 18th century it looked rather like a small village, not even like a burg;³ as one of many remote and fallen towns in the central part of ethnic Poland, in 1793 it numbered only 191 permanent inhabitants and forty-four wooden houses. The Prussian administration, which initially ruled this region after the partitions, considered demoting the town to its actual, agrarian status.⁴

But things turned out differently. The sudden collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth came as a shock to local intellectual elites. Between the mourners of the lost motherland and the ardent insurrectionists, there were also circles cognizant of the huge changes taking place in industrializing Europe and who tried to envision and stimulate social change on Polish lands. In the 19th century many wondered what model of civilization and development was appropriate for Poland.⁵ Some economists and philosophers considered industrialization a historical necessity. It was believed that it was possible to frog-leap forward toward the industrial prosperity of the West and bring forth the awaited restoration of the Polish state's independence. Although the ideas of the Enlightenment had already been influential in the final decades of the Commonwealth's existence,⁶ their political and economic impact reached its peak during periods of the Duchy of Warsaw (1807–1815) and the “Congress” Kingdom of Poland (1815–1830), the latter incorporating Łódź into the Russian Empire.⁷ If considered through the lenses of economic theory, the policy of the Kingdom's government main-

³ Or so-called “miasteczko”—a term taken directly from Polish in the area of Jewish and Polish studies, used to describe a particular type of a sleepy town in the eastern areas of Poland with a considerable Jewish population, most of which served as trade centers for completely rural areas.

⁴ Fijałek et al., *Łódź: dzieje miasta do 1918 r.*, 135.

⁵ Jerzy Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe: Nineteenth-Century Polish Approaches to Western Civilization* (Budapest, Hungary; New York: Central European University Press, 1999); Tomasz Kizwalter, *“Nowatorstwo i rutyny”: społeczeństwo Królestwa Polskiego wobec procesów modernizacji, 1840–1863* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1991).

⁶ See Piotr Żbikowski, *Mit zachodu po rozbiorach: recepcja kultury zachodnioeuropejskiej na ziemiach polskich w okresie późnego oświecenia* (Kraków: Collegium Columbinum, 2011).

⁷ Tomasz Kizwalter, *Ludzie i idee Oświecenia w Polsce porozbiorowej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne, 1987).

tained the spirit of protectionism and *étatisme*. The main task was an increase of domestic consumption and the export-based economy's transition from the grain trade to the production and sale of industrial goods. The *idée fixe* of Ksawery Drucki-Lubecki,⁸ the powerful minister of the treasury, was an ambitious industrial program designed to implement a state-licensed industrial capitalism in the agrarian landscape of Poland.⁹

Beginning in 1816 many privileges were offered to all qualified artisans who were interested in moving to the Kingdom of Poland for work. Settlers rushed from the West: from Saxony, Prussia, the Czech countries and Silesia, and even France and Portugal. Four years later, the government launched a developmental scheme and established several industrial districts in the western part of the Masovian Voivodship. The location was carefully chosen: the area was close to the new border between the Russian Empire and the West, and already popular among immigrants from the West, who had been transforming its virgin forests into their farms for fifty years.¹⁰ Łódź, designated as a cotton weaving center, was the largest of the new industrial settlements. Soon it was to become the most prosperous as well, due to the low price of raw cotton and the popularity of finished products on the internal market.¹¹ This created an advantageous situation, and initially the development of the city was supported by government-sponsored loans and direct investments. As a result, foreign weavers coming to Łódź with their families encountered preferable conditions for work and economic activity.¹²

Spatial and social changes followed. However, while the process of creating the city was substantially completed by 1860, it remained just an industrial hub. It lacked all the attributes of an urban lifestyle—from theaters and schools to pavements and sewerage, things which usually made a city worthy of its name in the European social

⁸ See Jerzy Szczepański, *Książę Ksawery Drucki-Lubecki (1778–1846)* (Warszawa: DiG, 2008).

⁹ Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe*, 81–83.

¹⁰ See Krzysztof Paweł Woźniak, *Niemieckie osadnictwo wiejskie między Prosną a Pilicą i Wisłą od lat 70. XVIII wieku do 1866 roku: proces i jego interpretacje* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2013).

¹¹ Wiesław Puś, *Dzieje Łodzi przemysłowej: zarys historii* (Łódź: Muzeum Historii Miasta Łodzi, Centrum Informacji Kulturalnej, 1987), 23–24.

¹² A wide literature about the origins of industrial Łódź is available in Polish: Anna Rynkowska, *Działalność gospodarcza władz Królestwa Polskiego na terenie Łodzi przemysłowej w latach 1821–1831* (Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1951); Marek Koter, *Geneza układu przestrzennego Łodzi przemysłowej* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1969); Krzysztof Stefański, *Jak zbudowano przemysłową Łódź: architektura i urbanistyka miasta w latach 1821–1914* (Łódź: Regionalny Ośrodek Studiów i Ochrony Środowiska Kulturowego, 2001).

imagination (albeit quite typically absent in colonial worlds, like India or the area dubbed the ‘Wild West’). But from the 1860s onward the pace of growth escalated. For the second time Łódź’s success was based on a favorable economic and political conjuncture. After the collapse of the tragic and reckless January Uprising in 1863, the Kingdom of Poland was compulsorily unified with Russia and lost its last remnants of autonomy. While Russification was a national tragedy for Poles, from the economic point of view this integration boosted industrial growth.¹³

Inasmuch as the Kingdom of Poland was to become just a part of the Russian Empire, the expansive Russian market was opened to its products, which now could reach glamorous Petersburg, fast-developing Ufa, or newly-fortified Vladivostok. Furthermore, in 1877 Russian trade policies changed from mercantilism to protectionism. As a result, between 1879 and 1900 three-quarters of all products manufactured by Łódź’s factories were exported to Russia.¹⁴ Łódź’s relational position in broader commercial networks shifted. While the transfer of technology maintained its West-East vector, the European economy was no longer the addressee of Łódź’s booming production. From its place on the agrarian fringes of the modern world, Russian Poland was suddenly transformed into the industrial spearhead of the Russian Empire, albeit still relatively isolated from the increasingly global trade networks. On the one hand the transfer of knowledge, professionals and equipment built a system of circulation with the West, while on the other markets and raw materials were located in the East. Plugged in this fashion into the uneven global economy, Łódź’s textile production experienced significant boosts in output and revenue. In consequence, the city’s industries were transformed into large, modern, mechanized mills, employing hundreds and even thousands of workers. In panoramic views of Łódź over the next century, hundreds of factory chimneys came to dominate the skyline.¹⁵

The hidden abode of this industrial triumph was the availability of cheap labor. The abolition of serfdom and enfranchisement of peasants in 1864 was indeed a form of tsarist revenge over Polish landowners, who were considered the social base of an insurgent “Polishness” and simultaneously an obstacle to further modernization. Although the reform had a clear political backdrop, it finally ushered Polish agriculture into capitalism, pushing most of the indebted, inefficient “follwarks” to bankruptcy.¹⁶ On the other hand, however, the liberated peasants were unable to make a living from the tiny plots of land they cultivated. As a result, thousands of starving and uneducated people had to abandon their overpopulated vil-

¹³ Blobaum, *Rewolucja*.

¹⁴ Fijałek et al., *Łódź: dzieje miasta do 1918 r.*, 248–49.

¹⁵ Puś, *Dzieje Łodzi przemysłowej: zarys historii*, 49–60.

¹⁶ Jarosław Kita, “Dwór po powstaniu. Zmierzch dominacji ziemiaństwa,” *Powstanie styczniowe 1863. Klęska i chwala*, „Polityka. Pomocnik Historyczny”, no. 1 2013, 72–75.

lages and move to the cities in search of a better life as workers or domestic servants.¹⁷ While places like Łódź may have appeared the “Promised Land” to them, in fact what awaited them was usually no more than the plight of factory toil.

While the agrarian reforms triggered migration from rural areas to urban centers, thus increasing the ratio of ethnic Poles among the urban dwellers, the rise of the Jewish community was made possible by other circumstances. After all legal restrictions against Jews in Russian Poland were practically abolished in the early 1860s, they could live and invest their capital outside the traditional ghettos. At a rapidly accelerating pace many blazed their trails to commercial or artisan careers, the traditional occupations of Jews in Poland at the time. Others, however, invested in residential property or succeeded as industrial tycoons. Izrael Kalmanowicz Poznański, the leader of local Jewish community, became nearly as rich as Karl Scheibler, the most powerful of Łódź’s German bourgeoisie. In the 1880s a large number of Jews from Russia’s interior also began to settle in the Polish Kingdom, as refugees from the *pogroms* in the tsarist empire.¹⁸

As a result of these waves of migration, between 1860 and 1913 the overall population of Łódź increased by fifteen times, from 32,500 to nearly half a million. By the end of this period, Poles accounted for almost 50% of all Łódź inhabitants, while 36.4% were Jews and only 11.5% Germans.¹⁹ The scale of the population increase was so fast that journalists found it difficult to estimate. A Warsaw weekly magazine noted:

Warsaw is expanding fast, but Łódź is just growing like a weed. However, Łódź’s people consider this rate too slow and have decided to reach 500,000 inhabitants. (...) But when will Łódź reach half a million? Probably in a short time, because now it already has 314,000 [residents]... As a comment we can only add that in 1820 it had less than “eight hundred” inhabitants.²⁰

¹⁷ See Maria Nietyksza, *Rozwój miast i aglomeracji miejsko-przemysłowych w Królestwie Polskim: 1865–1914* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1986).

¹⁸ On national policies of the tsarist empire in the West see Theodore R. Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier; 1863–1914* (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008). On the settlement policies concerning Jews see Theodore R. Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism: The “Jewish Question” in Poland, 1850–1914* (DeKalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006). On pogroms and their aftermaths see for instance John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, eds., *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Jonathan L. Dekel-Chen et al., eds., *Anti-Jewish Violence. Rethinking the Pogrom in East European History* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2010).

¹⁹ Puś, *Dzieje Łodzi przemysłowej: zarys historii*.

²⁰ *Echa warszawskie*, “Przegląd Tygodniowy” 1896, no. 9, p. 106.

Although the process of “Polonization” completely changed ethnic relations in Łódź, economic stratification remained dependent on national divisions. While German and Jewish capitalists were still the wealthiest group of the city’s population,²¹ most Poles remained uneducated workers. Ethnic and social conflict loomed large and intermingled in a specific way. Laura Crago noted that “neither Jewish nor peasant emancipation altered the preponderant role German culture played within these settlements.”²² Conflict between Polish workers and their German foremen was tense and reached its apogee in 1892, when the working class rebelled against ethnic and economic exploitation.²³

Regardless of these ethnic contexts, everyday life was part and parcel of actually existing early industrial capitalism, albeit spiced with the autocratic policies of the tsarist empire. The permanent surplus supply of labor perpetuated low production costs, in accordance with Ricardo’s Law of Rent. Factories offered extremely low salaries, sufficient only for a minimum subsistence. In order to cut wages further, local industry employed a large proportion of women and children, comprising up to 55–60% of the labor force. They were paid from 30 to 70% less than male workers. They nevertheless had to work, as men’s wages were insufficient to make ends meet in a working-class household.

And there were no social forces capable of challenging this status quo. Every form of worker resistance was nipped in the bud by virtue of the close cooperation between the industrialists and the Russian police and military services. As a result, mills were a place where a rigorous control system could be strengthened by the secret police and *Cossacks* with guns and sabers any time class conflict showed sign of breaking out. Moreover, the blend of capital and the tsarist regime determined the shape of urban life. The regime in power did not respond to the changes with any serious welfare provisions. The tsarist variant of capitalism, despite seemingly strong monarchical power, also included state abdication from many public roles. Functions usually undertaken by a state government or city council were taken over by private enterprises, which to some extent attempted

²¹ Stefan Pytlas, *Łódzka burżuazja przemysłowa w latach 1864–1914* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1994).

²² Laura Crago, “The ‘Polishness’ of Production: Factory Politics and the Reinvention of Working-Class National and Political Identities in Russian Poland’s Textile Industry, 1880–1910,” *Slavic Review* 59, no. 1 (2000): 21.

²³ Adam Próchnik, *Bunt łódzki w roku 1892. Studium historyczne* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1950); Paweł Samuś, ed., *“Bunt łódzki” 1892 roku: (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1993)*; Laura Crago, “Nationalism, Religion, Citizenship, and Work in the Development of the Polish Working Class and the Polish Trade Union Movement, 1815–1929. A Comparative Study of Russian Poland’s Textile Workers and Upper Silesian Miners and Metalworkers” (New Haven: Yale University, 1993).

to supplement basic bio-political safety measures such as the ordering and separating of space, sanitary reform or counter-epidemic healthcare.²⁴

Flats were small and overcrowded, hence uncomfortable and often dirty. Many one-room apartments were inhabited by over a dozen people²⁵ and such rooms lacked even the most elementary facilities. The almost half a million city inhabitants had neither sewerage nor reasonable access to hospitals. As a result, the city became a hotbed of infectious disease, including tuberculosis and cholera. The death-toll was high—epidemics raged often and the mortality rate was one of the highest in Europe. This state of misery was accompanied by other social problems arising from chronic urban poverty, such as wide-spread alcoholism, nefarious swindling, and prostitution.²⁶ This miserable situation seemed destined to remain in place. Active urban policies were out of the question within the then prevailing form of urban administration. Following the suppressed 1863 Uprising, *Magistrats* replaced municipal governments. They were strictly subordinate to the government and their powers were limited to collecting taxes and current administration.²⁷ Adding insult to injury, these powerless bodies were usually corrupt and unwilling to act even within the available narrow limits. The well-known lawyer and economist Stanisław Koszutski compared Łódź to “something like an orphan, a real grimy, dusty, muddy and smelly Cinderella.”²⁸ In his view, Łódź’s situation made it one of the most neglected towns in the world “where municipal government remained indifferent to local matters, showing so little initiative and so very much idleness.”²⁹

This particular form of urban life epitomized the rapid modernization on the peripheries. Rampant economic development notwithstanding, Russian Poland during the Industrial Revolution had feet made of clay. It was totally dependent on the Eastern market and vulnerable to crises.³⁰ Łódź, “the capital of Polish in-

²⁴ Marzec and Zysiak, “Journalists Discovered Łódź like Columbus.” *Orientalizing Capitalism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Polish Modernization Debates.*”

²⁵ Puś, *Dzieje Łodzi przemysłowej: zarys historii*, 72.

²⁶ See Jan Fijałek, *Opieka zdrowotna w Łodzi do roku 1945: studium organizacyjno-historyczne* (Łódź: Instytut Medycyny Pracy im. prof. dra med. Jerzego Nofera, 1990).

²⁷ Theodore R. Weeks, “Nationality and Municipality: Reforming City Government in the Kingdom of Poland, 1904–1915,” *Russian History*, no. 1 (1994): 23–47; Kamil Śmiechowski, “Searching for the Better City: Urban Discourse during the Revolution of 1905 in the Kingdom of Poland,” *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 13, no. 3 (2014): 71–96.

²⁸ Stanisław Koszutski, *Nasze miasta a samorząd (życie miast w Królestwie Polskim i reforma samorządowa)* (Warszawa; Lwów: E. Wende i Spółka, 1915), 35.

²⁹ Koszutski, 36.

³⁰ Andrzej Jezierski, “Problemy wzrostu gospodarczego Polski w XIX wieku,” in *Polska XIX wieku. Państwo społeczeństwo kultura* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1982), 116.

dustry”, was indeed just an island of new industrial civilization in an agrarian and backward country. As Jerzy Jedlicki noted, “protectionism was a determining factor in putting industrialization in the Kingdom onto a quasi-colonial track. This course was to only a slight extent dependent on local sources of accumulation and had little effect on the petrified social structures.”³¹ At the same time, displaying all these features, Łódź was also a perfect illustration of all the problematic aspects of rapacious 19th century capitalism and the social attitudes which it evoked, topped up by their peripheral intensification.

All in all, the Polish Kingdom was a region of peripheral capitalist development. The local context was marked by belated modernization driven by an untypical combination of state intervention (with tensions between the Polish government and the Russian administration, and later only Russian rule) and a neglect of the regulatory functions of the state in the later period (which may be dubbed a tsarist *laissez-faire*).³² The backwardness of the region was an outcome of earlier historical trajectories heavily dependent upon the world economy (Polish manorial production as a “first periphery” of Europe during the “Dutch hegemony”).³³ Nonetheless, within the Russian Empire, the Polish Kingdom was then one of the most industrially developed areas. The empire itself, only recently starting to become part of world-system economy, still remained to a large extent a separate world-empire.³⁴ Therefore, the status of the Kingdom of Poland, both in terms of spatial and temporal transitions in the 20th century, has been highly ambiguous. Its placement on the fringes together with the general semi-peripheral status of the region made local industry highly dependent on world economic fluctuations and unexpectedly shifting market opportunities. Moreover, local political realities changed abruptly according to how the pendulum of geopolitical prosperity swung in neighboring large macro regions. As a result, the prospects of the city within the country, and country within the broader geopolitical configuration, were highly unstable.

³¹ Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe*, 275.

³² Peter Gatrell, *The Tsarist Economy 1850–1917* (London: Batsford, 1986).

³³ This approach to Polish economic history was introduced by Polish Marxist economic historians Kula, *An Economic Theory of the Feudal System; towards a Model of the Polish Economy, 1500–1800*; Małowist, *Western Europe, Eastern Europe and World Development, 13th–18th Centuries*; Anna Sosnowska, *Zrozumieć zacołanie: spory historyków o Europę Wschodnią, 1947–1994* (Warszawa: Trio, 2004). It was later developed theoretically by Wallerstein, and in a different way by Arrighi: Immanuel Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (London; New York: Verso, 1994).

³⁴ Boris Kagarlitsky, *Empire of the Periphery: Russia and the World System* (London; Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2008).

Being embedded in a transregional commercial borderland network consisting of external capital perpetuating accumulation on the one hand (one vector), and export-driven production on the other (a different vector), Łódź epitomized a form of exceptional normality. While exploiting local resources, it was a foreign body operating against a backdrop of local social and cultural ties. It was a typical industrial center which had much in common with other cities of its type, yet it stemmed from its surroundings and Russian Poland's social, cultural and spatial landscape. Therefore, it simultaneously profited from its exceptional position and was well plugged in to broader commercial networks, while at the same time it fell victim to various forms of exclusion and "othering."³⁵ These non-convergent tendencies on various "scales" of interconnectedness might be described as "decoupling reintegration." It produced a particular form of discourse about the city from both outside and within, which to a large extent framed its appearance as both the object and subject of modernity.

From Othering to Condemnation

Early Polish observers of mid-19th century Łódź, which suddenly popped up out of nowhere on the rural landscape of central Poland, were rather shocked by its existence. For instance, in a journalist's report from Kalisz (by Polish standards a mid-size city of relatively old origin, west of Łódź), the author was so astonished by the city he was looking at that he could not believe that it was really a Polish city:

A town with a population of 30,000, but no church tower dominating the landscape will greet you from a distance, no rumble of living people will take your attention from the low houses, built to run in the direction appointed by a piece of string and a pair of compasses; only black and red chimneys dot the sky, asking about the rate of return from the outlay made within high walls, only a murmur and drone present you with this prayer, which the city repeats from dawn till dusk. Immediately, you notice that it is not a Polish city which is in front of you, and if you enter its main street, more than a mile long, you are anxious, [because] everywhere it is so numb, empty and silent, while at the same time extremely industrious.³⁶

Although shocking because of its otherness, Łódź was not at first considered a threat. It was somewhat absent from the debate on Poland's chances for industrial modernization, which initially focused more on manufacturing in existing

³⁵ This argument was unfolded in full in Marzec and Zysiak, "Journalists Discovered Łódź like Columbus. Orientalizing Capitalism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Polish Modernization Debates."

³⁶ *Korespondencja Kroniki. Z Kalisza*, "Kronika Wiadomości Krajowych i Zagranicznych" 1857, no. 192, p. 3.

urban centers and rural industries such as sugar mills.³⁷ However, there were also more perceptive, and supportive, observers. Oskar Flatt, an early, open-eyed reporter, was actually impressed by the city. He noted in 1853:

There is no city in a whole country which owes as much to industry as Łódź; a city which arose from complete oblivion and nothingness and has achieved such a level of wealth and urban development. It is a city where industrial life is so prominently displayed—in brief, a typically industrial city.³⁸

The initial shock, spiced with some fascination, turned into persistent aversion during the era of Warsaw positivism. This liberal movement, dominant in Polish public discourse for about thirty years after the January Uprising, was actually the first complete program of modernization in Poland.³⁹ The most talented of the positivists, such as Aleksander Świętochowski and Bolesław Prus, became the real opinion molders and were widely regarded as authorities. From the political point of view, the positivists, influenced simultaneously by the philosophy of Herbert Spencer and August Comte, were liberals interested in the development of capitalism. They envisioned the future Kingdom of Poland as urbanized and secular and believed that the enhancement of its economic potential was the only viable strategy for the national survival of Poles under Russian rule.⁴⁰

³⁷ To assess the scale of this omission and striking absence of Łódź, even as a negative point of reference, in most of the early-phase modernization debates see Kizwalter, “Nowatorstwo i rutyny”: społeczeństwo Królestwa Polskiego wobec procesów modernizacji, 1840–1863.

³⁸ Oskar Flatt, *Opis miasta Łodzi pod względem historycznym, statystycznym i przemysłowym* (Warszawa: w drukarni Gazety Codziennej, 1853), VI.

³⁹ Positivism as an intellectual movement in the Polish context used to have particular features. Although referring to the Comtean positive philosophy it was more a socio-cultural program following the suppression of the 1863 January Uprising. Instead of inducing insurrectionist tendencies, positivists called for “organic work”, bringing mundane civilizational progress through progressive and liberal measures in culture and economy, as a means of contesting the partitions and lack of nation state, see Positivism, in: Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Stanislaus A. Blejwas, *Realism in Polish Politics: Warsaw Positivism and National Survival in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New Haven: Yale Concilium on International and Area Studies, 1984); Brian Porter, “The Social Nation and Its Futures: English Liberalism and Polish Nationalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Warsaw,” *American Historical Review* 101, no. 5 (1996): 1470–92; Maciej Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought before 1918* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ Andrzej Jaszczuk, *Spór pozytywistów z konserwatystami o przyszłość Polski 1870–1903* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1986), 147–49. Polish positivism, however, was by no means a verbatim copy of Spencerian liberalism, being tainted with a more social agenda and local nationalism, see Porter, “The Social Nation and Its Futures: English Liberalism and Polish Nationalism in Late Nineteenth–Century Warsaw.”



Figure 3. Łódź seen from the suburbs, postcard from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

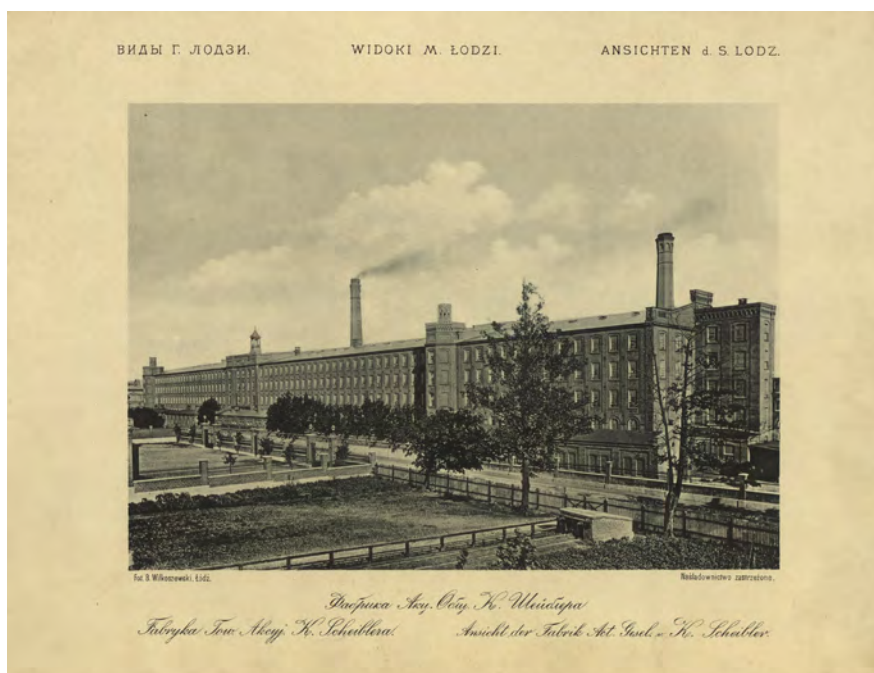


Figure 4. Karol Scheibler Factory, author: Bronisław Wilkoszewski, 1896, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, PL 39 607 A-7 14 (Wikimedia Commons).

Ironically, it was the positivists, aspiring to lead the imagined Polish middle class, who initiated a large press campaign against Łódź and its ‘foreignness.’⁴¹ Backed by the authority of leading writers and journalists, some of their opinions forged representations of the city that would endure in Polish culture for many years. Their logic of reasoning followed well-known patterns. As Jerzy Jedlicki argued, “the unexpectedly rapid infusion of foreign capital produced a defensive nationalist reaction in Polish society.”⁴² Anti-German feeling increasingly supplemented by aggressive antisemitic outbursts fanned the flames of militant nationalism, grounded in a blend of psychological, cultural and economic reasons. In spite of being the only actual island of industrial modernity and capitalism in Poland, Łódź was deprecated because it was too different from both the tradition of (mostly rural) “Polishness” and envisioned national-directed economic growth. A notable Warsaw weekly described the city as follows:

Łódź is a habitat of Germandom in our country, which draws its strength thence. The smothering of Germandom in Łódź means the deprivation of its power in the whole country. Cut the Hydra’s head there and certainly no other will grow back, neither in Tomaszów nor in other voivodships. (...) Therefore, Łódź is the place upon which all our attention should be focused.⁴³

The perception of Łódź as an “alien city” was accompanied by a very dark image of its inhabitants and social relations. There was a special word for a new type of ‘Łódź man’: “... it is worth mentioning, that Łódź, even if it is neither a country nor a state, has its own nationality—these people are, in German style, so-called “Lodzermensches.”⁴⁴ This discursive construct was not entirely built on ethnic or national components; rather, it was founded on a special type of mentality and morality attributed to this new group.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Kamil Śmiechowski, *Z perspektywy stolicy. Łódź okiem warszawskich tygodników społeczno-kulturalnych (1881–1905)* (Łódź: Ibidem, 2012).

⁴² Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe*, 275–76.

⁴³ Antoni Wiśniewski, “Łódź i Łodzianie”, part 3, *Przegląd Tygodniowy* 1889, nr 28, 362.

⁴⁴ Stefan Gorski, *Łódź społeczna: Obrazki i szkice publicystyczne* (Warszawa: Nakładem Rychlińskiego i Wegnera, 1904). In Polish writings the German word “Lodzermensch” is often written without a capital letter and declined along Polish rules, which is why in translation we keep this ambiguity by applying the English plural.

⁴⁵ Zysiak, “The Desire for Fullness. The Fantasmatic Logic of Modernization Discourses at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Century in Łódź,” 50–51. On the concept of “Lodzermensch” and its social background, see as well Frank Schuster, “Die Stadt Der Vielen Kulturen – Die Stadt Der ‚Lodzermenschen‘: Komplexe Lokale Identitäten Bei Den Bewohnern Der Industriestadt Lodz 1820–1939/1945,” in: *Intercultural Europe: Arenas of Difference, Communication and Mediation* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2010);

What is a Lodzermensch? This foreign word means, in direct translation, “a man from Łódź”, and it has gained status as a citizenship, as depicting a typical Łódź careerist (...) The main feature of a Lodzermensch is a lack of any ethical principles. The end justifies the means, and this end is the making of the biggest possible amount of money. Work from dawn till late at night, exploitation of men and women, and a ruthless indifference toward anything which is not profit. That is all. When Victor Hugo died, one Lodzermensch asked: “How much did he leave in his will?” That is the truth.⁴⁶

The figure of a Lodzermensch was a symbol of ruthless careerism, indifferent to any cultural or social issues. It was believed that the capitalistic and predatory city, characterized by a tremendous economic exploitation of workers and huge social contrasts, was an authentic “Promised Land” for such individuals. As a result, both the richest and the poorest groups of Łódź’s inhabitants were considered uncultured, almost uncivilized. As a Polish version of Dickens’s Coketown, the city’s name was dragged through the muck and mire from different angles; nationalistic, economic, humanitarian and ecological. In an era of a pan-European esthetics of anti-urbanity,⁴⁷ Łódź was the best candidate to play a predestined role: modern and industrial, unwanted reverse of an agrarian society. This situation caused one socialist journal’s columnist to point out that:

For a long time Łódź has been known as the purest type of capitalist city in our country. We have to add that capitalism in this “Polish Manchester” has still not got over the tradition of the primitive accumulation epoch. In less scientific lan-

Alexander Kossert, “‘Promised Land?’ Urban Myth and the Shaping of Modernity in Industrial Cities: Manchester and Lodz,” in: *Imagining the City*, ed. Christian Emden, Catherine Keen, and David R. Midgley (Frankfurt am Main; New York: Peter Lang, 2006); Winson Chu, “The ‘Lodzermensch’: From Cultural Contamination to Marketable Multiculturalism,” in: *Germany, Poland, and Postmemorial Relations in Search of a Livable Past*, ed. Kristin Leigh Kopp and Joanna Niżyńska (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

⁴⁶ Antoni Mogilnicki, *Z ognisk polskiego przemysłu*, “Przegląd Tygodniowy” 1902, no 15, p. 197. “Przegląd” was a positivist weekly published in Warsaw, and the author was a lawyer and poet. It is interesting, however, how images were re-circulated and petrified into stable items, regardless of their origin. Here a fictitious dialogue from the famous Reymont novel *Promised Land* is rendered as a constitutive element of the “sociological” observation of the journalist. The final passage is perhaps not a hidden reference to a quote from the *Promised Land* as a deliberate literary creation of a journalist but just a documentary account. It is nevertheless very informative with respect to image-creation, which is pertinent here.

⁴⁷ Jedlicki, *Świat zwyrodniał: lęki i wyroki krytyków nowoczesności*, 112–279.

guage, this means that the face of a typical Łódź capitalist has many of the features of a ... usurer. Really, Łódź is the "Promised Land" for "knights of industry." The history of industry in Łódź is an epic of stock market swindles, fraudulent transactions, devious bankruptcies (...). Exploitation is especially rough here. (...) Employers and their deputies treat workers (especially workwomen) in a barbarous way. (...) Łódź industry chews in its jaws the masses of healthy human resources like the Moloch and fills workers' districts with a crowd of cripples, beggars and prostitutes...⁴⁸

The enormous challenge of making sense of rising industrial capitalism, which fully revealed its predicaments, often led local commentators to condemn modernity as such. This was done through constant, implicit references to the notion of civilization, a fair share of which was denied to Łódź and its inhabitants. The method for doing this was to redefine all capitalist modernity as built solely on vices, and the places where it appeared as foreign and uncivilized, if not exotic, regions. The city, as a capitalist space *par excellence*, was virtually orientalized. Moreover, an entire sub-genre of journalistic literature emerged.⁴⁹ Travel writing was no longer dedicated to distant journeys and exotic countries but included a presentation of the internal savagery of capitalist modernity, alien enough to become a topic of reportage.

In this way, what was "yesterday a village, and today one of the largest cities of Europe",⁵⁰ was "a caricature of a proper urban built environment",⁵¹ and finally baptized as:

A bad city, two-faced, because albeit covered with a mourning veil, it sneers at death. Thousands of summits have risen to the sky, but the bottom is paddling in blood. It draws unbending power from flabby cotton flowers, and from dead gold it draws life. It owes its merits to its misdemeanors.⁵²

All the time, dread and horror coincided with curiosity. Although "interesting for studies and unknown to us, due to its inhabitants' ability, with their multi-lingualness,

⁴⁸ "Dni czerwcowe w Łodzi," *Przedświt*, no. 6–8 (1905), p. 253–54.

⁴⁹ Marzec and Zysiak, "Journalists Discovered Łódź like Columbus." *Orientalizing Capitalism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Polish Modernization Debates.*

⁵⁰ Henryk Vimard, *Łódź, Manszester polski* (Łódź: Tygiel Kultury, 2001), 28. This is a collection of correspondence articles from Poland written by a French journalist, visiting Łódź in 1910.

⁵¹ Edward Rosset, *Łódź miasto pracy* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Magistrat miasta Łodzi, 1929), 12. A scientific study of the city by a Polish demographer born and living in Łódź.

⁵² Zygmunt Bartkiewicz, *Złe miasto: obrazy z 1907 roku* (Warszawa: Gebethner i Wolff, 1911), 5.

Table 1. Modern discourse about Łódź with obstacles, utopian and dystopian dimensions, 1897–1914

| Imaginary diagnosis of situation | Obstacle | | |
|--|---|--|-----------------|
| Different national structure – German threat The problem of communication in terms of language Different religious structure – Jews, Catholics, and Protestants Urban, immoral set of values Different lifestyles and ways of spending time Grid plan of the city | Germans Jews Workers Lack of patriotism | The Polish city. Modern Polish public sphere | Utopia |
| | | The parasite on Polish lands – German city, further dangerous national divisions | Dystopia |
| Imaginary diagnosis of situation | Obstacle | | |
| Aggressive, wild capitalism Debauchery and greed The rule of profit and money Moral decline | Lodzermen-schen, factory owners, illiterate masses | Noble capitalism Catholic with Catholic values and a code of honor | Utopia |
| | | Moral decline – bestiality | Dystopia |
| Imaginary diagnosis of situation | Obstacle | | |
| Chaotic and obscure city structure Lack of public infrastructure Extreme poverty alongside extreme wealth, Ugliness and lack of esthetic standards Lack of monuments, museums etc. | Selfish factory owners, malevolent administration, rapid development and uncontrolled changes | An ordered city ruled by Poles, boasting an enlightened society led by a Polish intelligentsia living in an ordered city space | Utopia |
| | | Nightmare city – further chaos The wild city of barbarians and illiterates Semi-rural chaos | Dystopia |
| Imaginary diagnosis of situation | Obstacle | | |
| Strangeness: national, ethnic, cultural No rules: immorality, instability, profit motive Abnormal development, social imbalance No tradition, no history: popular culture Rurality/pseudo-urbanity | Germans/Jews Inefficient administration Masses Capitalism, rapid development | Order and management, Morality and tradition of Polishness | Utopia |
| | | Chaos and moral decline Foreignness Barbarity | Dystopia |

to build another Tower of Babel, with its separate world of social habits and different life”, the city is not “a nice city for the same reasons which give it its interesting charm.”⁵³ This ambiguous attitude to Łódź may probably be seen as a synecdoche of Polish—or even more generally of Eastern European—struggles with modernity. It resembles a tragic dilemma, a contradiction between condemnation and fascination, but even more it is an example of the moral power of evaluation being undermined by the consciousness of the ongoing, undeniable course of history. The figure of Łódź as a woman, and of modernity as an irresistible, fatal force which one has to become familiar with and rule over in order to survive, uncannily reminds us of the famous passage about fortune as a woman in Machiavelli:⁵⁴

(Łódź) is seemingly the ugliest woman, with her freckled face and cosmopolitan views, [she] is an unsightly Miss with a reasonable dowry, and in addition a wise one. One cannot, and should not, condemn her, but it is indeed difficult to love her and get used to her physiognomy, which is fully tailored to current needs, to her heart, which long ago gave place to sheer interest, to her character, having so many negative elements, that every time it could lead to misdeeds. But one has to overcome repulsion to this city and say to oneself that knowing it is not a pleasure but an obligation, because one has to get acquainted with a force which may be hostile and dangerous, but which is tremendous.⁵⁵

Re-imagining the City

Even as journalists and writers were describing Łódź as an alien city with no rules, the city itself became more and more “urban” of its own accord. For instance, due to its rapid development many openings for professionals such as lawyers, physicians and factory clerks were created in Łódź in last decades of the 19th century. In consequence, the local job market offered better chances for professional development than elsewhere.⁵⁶ Most of these posts were filled by Poles or assimilated Jews, often in imitation of the intellectual life of Warsaw. Consequently, the “lodgment” of intelligentsia in Łódź grew in both number and range of activity. Some educated professionals, choosing to work in Łódź for financial reasons, believed that the so-called “bad city” was not after all the worst place for

⁵³ Gliszczyński and Mieszkowski, “Łódź – miasto i ludzie (1894),” 9.

⁵⁴ Nicollo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chap. XXV.

⁵⁵ Gliszczyński and Mieszkowski, “Łódź – miasto i ludzie (1894),” 9.

⁵⁶ Marzena Iwańska, “Garść refleksji i postulatów badawczych w związku ze stanem badań nad inteligencją łódzką w dobie zaborów,” *Rocznik Łódzki* LIII (2006): 89–113.

spurring on cultural life and engaging in social activities, for example writing for newspapers or running theaters.⁵⁷ Ironically, the very shortage of such facilities created opportunities for their creation and operation.

The first attempt to change the discursive status of Łódź in Polish public opinion was undertaken by Henryk Elzenberg, the founder of the first Polish daily, the *Dziennik Łódzki* (The Łódź Daily), published between 1884 and 1892. Elzenberg, a liberal lawyer of Jewish descent, attempted to “Polonize” and “culturalize” the city by entering local German bourgeoisie circles. With the financial support of Edward Herbst, son-in-law of the biggest industrial mogul, Karol Scheibler, he coined a program for assimilating Łódź’s Germans and Jews into “Polishness.”⁵⁸ This idea was vehemently rejected by local industrialists and Warsaw positivists alike. The former remained loyal to the Russian authorities, while the latter regarded this as an act of betrayal of national interests.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, *Dziennik Łódzki* was able to acquire the status of the authentic voice of Łódź in country-wide public discourse, respected in Warsaw too.

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, despite its peripheral status, Łódź was no longer a city made up only of workers and industrialists. The positivist paradigm in Polish intellectual disputes entered a phase of decline in the 1890s.⁶⁰ Its fratricidal offspring, new modern social and political movements spearheaded by socialism and nationalism, came to perceive this “alien” and “bad” city as a challenge. Simultaneously, many individuals struggling to get by in such an uneasy city began to blaze paths of social activism. They wanted to improve the workers’ terrible living conditions, alleviate the lot of the poor, eliminate illiteracy, and prevent cultural exclusion. These strivings were accompanied and perpetuated by political visions, impulses of solidarity, and the evolving ethos of the urban bourgeoisie. These people considered Łódź to be their “own” city, thus they ardently

⁵⁷ German culture was developed in Łódź beginning in the 1830s, but it had a closed character, typical of a diaspora. The German press, represented by *Lodzer Zeitung*, had existed in Łódź since 1863, but it changed into a modern source of opinion at the same time as *Dziennik Łódzki* was launched.

⁵⁸ Zygmunt Gostkowski, *Dziennik Łódzki w latach 1884–1892: studium nad powstawaniem polskiej opinii publicznej w wielonarodowym mieście fabrycznym* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Finansów i Informatyki, 2008).

⁵⁹ Waclaw Piotrowski, “Łódź w „Prawdzie” Aleksandra Świętochowskiego (1881–1886),” *Przegląd Nauk Historycznych i Społecznych* IV (1954): 236–67; Śmiechowski, *Z perspektywy stolicy. Łódź okiem warszawskich tygodników społeczno-kulturalnych (1881–1905)*, 104–14.

⁶⁰ Tomasz Weiss, *Przełom antypozytywistyczny w Polsce w latach 1880–1890. Przemiany postaw światopoglądowych i teorii artystycznych* (Kraków: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1966).

strove to make it acceptable in the face of the harsh tribunal of Polish nationalism and general humanitarian sentiments.⁶¹

Their program was presented in two daily newspapers, both of them established in winter 1897/1898. The first, *Rozwój*, initially catering to the “respectable” urban public, was incrementally becoming a right-wing daily supporting the Polish nationalism of the National Democracy party, and focused on the idea of the Polonization of the city.⁶² The second, *Goniec Łódzki* (which from 1906 to 1911 became *Kurier Łódzki* and from 1911 to WWI—*Nowy Kurier Łódzki*), had an undeniably liberal character, in many respects similar to the agenda of Warsaw’s liberal elites.⁶³ The emerging Polish-speaking public opinion expressed in these dailies was formed against a backdrop of a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual urban community.

For years, the rapid growth of the city hardly allowed the commercial press system to keep pace. Initially, the German-speaking population was more outspoken in forming local opinion, and the first newspapers were printed in German.⁶⁴ After Polish-speaking dailies had been launched, a Yiddish-speaking press also started to have a wider presence on the local press market. This grew especially after 1905, when more permission was given to publish titles in a language not easy controllable by the local censors.⁶⁵ This multilingualism of the press system did not mean intensive exchange between the titles, however.

Despite some personal ties, for instance Jewish journalists being fluent in all three languages, the cultural barrier remained an obstacle. Newspapers were vehicles of national identities and actively forged their readers’ attitudes to other ethnic and national groups. They were eager to accuse each other of propagating illegitimate national superiority. In the early period this mostly concerned

⁶¹ The intelligentsia living in Łódź were from the beginning much more social and active than Warsaw’s equivalent, which is considered more to have aspired to the upper-classes. Iwańska, “Garść refleksji i postulatów badawczych w związku ze stanem badań nad inteligencją łódzką w dobie zaborów.”

⁶² Jan Chańko, *Gazeta “Rozwój” (1897–1915): studium źródłoznawcze*, Acta Universitatis Lodziensis: Folia historica (Łódź: Uniwersytet Łódzki, 1982).

⁶³ The opening of new title with the same list of authors was a strategy used by editors after October 1905, when Russian censorship was officially abandoned, but journalists criticizing the government became victims of political court trials and long imprisonment. Śmiechowski, *Łódzka wizja postępu. Oblicze społeczno-ideowe “Gońca Łódzkiego”, “Kuriera Łódzkiego” i “Nowego Kuriera Łódzkiego” w latach 1898–1914.*

⁶⁴ Janina Jaworska, “Prasa,” in: *Łódź: dzieje miasta do 1918 r.*, ed. Jan Fijałek et al. (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988).

⁶⁵ Leszek Olejnik, “Z dziejów prasy żydowskiej w Łodzi,” in: *Dzieje Żydów w Łodzi 1820–1944*, ed. Wiesław Puś and Stanisław Liszewski (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1991).

the German titles and the Polish contenders.⁶⁶ Later, when the significance of the German population decreased, Polish-Jewish antagonism and unalloyed antisemitism came to the fore, both of which would become especially acute in the interwar period. Nonetheless, rarely did the Polish press directly address content from papers in other languages in a way which would form any direct inter-discourse. In articles concerning urban modernity references were made to the press abroad, and to Russian titles, but almost never any direct polemics with the German or the Yiddish press in Łódź. As a result, although a feeling of crisis in respect of capitalistic modernity was common to all groups of urban inhabitants in the Kingdom, whatever their nationality, each group considered the urban problem to be specific to them. This was the main reason why urban discourses in the Polish, Jewish and German press were very similar, even if interaction between them was fairly limited.⁶⁷ Inter-national animosities were censored, out of fear of any possible turmoil.

The tsarist censorship curbed the possibility of openly voicing any political agendas, of rousing support for the national idea or of undermining the existing social order. Censorship was harsh and up to 1905 preventive, so every issue had to pass the censor prior to publication. At the same time, the spectrum of debate and plurality of voices was considerable and journalists became quite skilled in analyzing profound social challenges in a way that did not trigger reaction from the censor. The very possibility of conducting such broadly designed research as is presented in this book, is sufficient evidence of this. The censorship was not simply repressive, particular officials instituted their own vision of state interest and aimed above all at maintaining order—which did not necessarily mean simply crossing out problematic content.⁶⁸ They were also actively shaping a positive agenda to mitigate national and social tensions. At the same time, editors were negotiating what it was possible to say in the press by writing and doing: interacting with the censors, gaining their trust, self-limiting problematic content to gain some long-term respite. The situation of the press in the imperial borderlands was much more complex than that of the simple repression of any independent

⁶⁶ Monika Kucner, “Prasa niemiecka w Łodzi 1863–1939,” in: *Niemcy w dziejach Łodzi do 1945 roku*, ed. Krzysztof Kuczyński and Barbara Ratecka (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2001).

⁶⁷ Scott Ury, *Barricades and Banners: The Revolution of 1905 and the Transformation of Warsaw Jewry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 47–48.

⁶⁸ Kamil Śmiechowski, “Strategie władz carskich wobec łódzkiej prasy codziennej do 1914 roku,” *Klio – Czasopismo Poświęcone Dziejom Polski i Powszechnym* 28, no. 1 (2014): 63–83, <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/KLIO.2014.004>; Henryk Bałabuch, *Nie tylko cenzura. Prasa prowincjonalna Królestwa Polskiego w rosyjskim systemie prasowym w latach 1865–1915* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2001).

thought.⁶⁹ Matters grew even more complicated after the substantial liberalization of the tsarist regime following the 1905 Revolution. After this, the censor's office policed out unwanted content by legal means applied only after publication—administering fines, arresting the editors or closing down editorial offices. Nonetheless, the space of debate was significantly broader. It stimulated freer debate but also enabled antagonism and more radical ideas to flourish.

Harmonious Modernity and Urban Self-assertion

Local writers, journalists and active citizens in many respects shared the general premises of Polish anti-urbanity. Simultaneously, however, they were genuinely interested in rebuilding their environment to make it more acceptable for themselves, less harmful to its toiling inhabitants, and more legitimized or recognized as a new urban center—finally appropriate for the *Zeitgeist*—in the Polish Kingdom. Thus, they produced a series of texts questioning the existing image of the city and attempting to make virtues out of its vices. They fervently tried to orchestrate public opinion, civil society, the industrial sphere and city administration so as to create a livable, “proper” city, worthy of its name, out of the peculiar urban bastard of capitalist modernization. Simultaneously, they tried to re-appropriate those elements which made themselves and their city modern, and to turn them into a launch pad for future developments. In the end, they also attempted to convince themselves that it was not as bad as it might have looked when seen from the outside.

At this juncture it is timely to cite a press article which captures this particular attitude and its underlying argumentative structure. The interplay between the looking-glass self of external press discourses and public opinion on the one hand, and the rising aspirations and feelings of modern inadequacy on the other, were pristinely expressed in passages which contrasted the imposed, alleged inadequacies with a desperately sought “will to improve.”⁷⁰ The external image of the city was recapitulated:

When talking about the industrial centers of our country, the author, Mr. St. Kozutski claims, among other things, that: “Łódź, commonly called the Polish Manchester, is a modern productive center, with all its negative features, the type of city about which Ruskin or Morris could not have thought without a shudder. It is a city without any cultural tradition and without any higher aspirations expressed

⁶⁹ Malte Rolf, *Imperiale Herrschaft im Weichselland: das Königreich Polen im russischen Imperium (1864–1915)* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015).

⁷⁰ Indeed, in some respects similar to this masterfully described in Li, *The Will to Improve. Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*.

by those who superficially set the tone for its social life. One won't find there any tradition or inspiration, in either the external side of life—in architecture, facilities and the comforts of public life, or in its content—Łódź does not have any developed intellectual and social life, it is, to use Hobson's words, only 'an abominable concentration of factory buildings and warehouses', a city that does not satisfy even the minimal requirements for a "decent, healthy and harmonious personal and public life."

Then the dark description is immediately contrasted with a re-appropriating gesture and strivings for much sought after improvement:

This picture, painted in black, is true only as concerns cultural traditions, which are desperately lacking in the city's short existence as an urban center. We nevertheless wish to believe that, as regards aspirations, one can find a lot of them. The constant influx of the intelligentsia, not dispossessed of these traditions and with most noble aspirations, which are also shared by natural born Łódź-people, means that in this "abominable concentration of factory buildings and warehouses" a moment when fulfillment of the basic requirements for a "decent, healthy and harmonious personal and public life" is possible in the not very distant future. Łódź has grown so much and matured, enriched and beautified itself, and now it is civilizing itself, and there is no doubt that it will also make enormous steps, as it certainly can, on this path. Culture will soon be a need and ambition of its inhabitants.⁷¹

It is easy to note the strong binary opposition: a certain undesired, "unharmonious" vision of urban life (industry without culture, etc.) is contrasted with benign attempts to change it and put in on the path of progress. This general opposition may be accompanied by a more detailed investigation of the respective desired and undesired states of affairs. The solutions offered, obstacles identified, and enemies challenged are fitted within similar argumentative structures. The logic perpetuating these discourses reveals the strong presence of counter-posed diagnostic and prospective statements.

Against the backdrop of the peculiar existing image of the city, a particular inter-discourse emerged. Its goals included at one and the same time a critique of the existing state of crisis and a positive affirmation of already acquired elements of its modern identity. This double layering also concerned time. A critical reference to the recent past stressed present zeal to get rid of the predicaments which it was not possible to erase with ease. This deployment of time helped to ground the legitimacy and viability of future strivings, by making it possible to establish a critical distance to the past. Such frog-leaping demonstrated that the "will to improve" was not an empty shibboleth but that it actually propels change. In the

⁷¹ "Z dnia na dzień," *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 78 (1900).



Figure 5. New Market: Town Hall and Evangelical Church, author: Bronisław Wilkoszewski, 1896, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, PL 39 607 A-7 06.

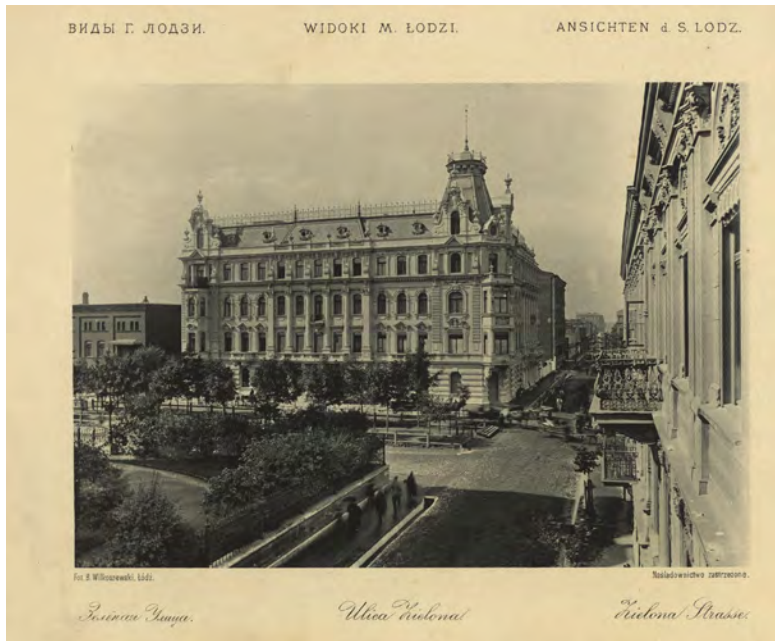


Figure 6. Pinkus apartment house, author: Bronisław Wilkoszewski, 1896, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, PL 39 607 A-7 35 (Wikimedia Commons).



Figure 7. Meyer Passage, author: Bronisław Wilkoszewski, 1896, Muzeum Miasta Łodzi, MHMŁ/I/2096 (Miastograf.pl – digital collection).



Figure 8. Piotrkowska Street, postcard from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

example below this structure is epitomized by the contrast between Łódź's weak intelligentsia (with an intelligentsia understood as a necessary element of a "proper city") and its "alien character", as well as the fact that it was being challenged from within:

However, life has its own demands, and maturing social demands have to be met. And thus it has been in Łódź for the last twenty years. The fact that in the middle of the country there was a city with tens of thousands of Polish workers, and alongside them an entirely dispersed and idle intelligentsia, feeling completely alien in Łódź, and that it was a rarity to meet a man in a frock-coat speaking Polish, could not have been taken as normal. [Not from Warsaw] was there a wake-up call played to the Łódź intelligentsia to arise from their slumber, and not from there were the winds blowing a reviving blast of air.⁷²

As has been described, local journalists often struggled with their own feelings of inadequacy and were somewhat reluctant to express pride in the place from where they worked. In order to convince external public opinion, local readers, and perhaps above all themselves, about Łódź's modern credentials and potential, they tried to build a form of local self-assertion.⁷³ In order to do this, real, stylized or even sometimes fictional characters were hauled onto the stage to testify to the existence of the much-desired accoutrements of progress. They were called upon to display the brighter side of the vagaries that threatened the desired state of affairs, while at the same time perpetuating the city's economic pursuits. This could even lead to a really gargantuan imagination:

Imagine, as mister Pruzanskij writes (a Russian journalist who allegedly published a journal containing material from a journey to Łódź), a phenomenon, a strong giant with a monstrous appetite and iron stomach, who grows not at a day-to-day pace but hour-by-hour. This giant, wrapped in the bondage of a child's swaddling, is fed by a one-hundred-year-old grandma with.... porridge. Imagine a similar picture, and you will have an idea of Łódź. Łódź impresses with its energy and well-developed spirit of entrepreneurship. With its heroic gestures and daring enterprises, and with its strong, clenched fist it severely threatens Muscovite commerce and industry.⁷⁴

⁷² "Łódź przed dwudziestu laty," *Rozwój*, no. 11 (1905).

⁷³ A form of estrangement or self-alienation was perhaps a common predicament of peripheral local elites, who were expected to be spearheads of occidentalism in circumstances not very receptive to their calls, be this because of cultural differentiation on the borderlands of European influences, or the class composition of the body politic, resistant to the paternalistic gaze and self-proclaimed leadership. See Manning, *Strangers in a Strange Land*; Wiktor Marzec and Kamil Śmiechowski, "Pathogenesis of the Polish Public Sphere. Intelligentsia and Popular Unrest in the 1905 Revolution and After," *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 4 (2016).

⁷⁴ "Prasa rosyjska o Łodzi," *Rozwój*, no. 287 (1898).

This depiction was originally intended as a form of intrigue, deliberately exaggerating the power of Łódź in Russian eyes. The city was presented as a threat to Russian businesses, and similar arguments were often used to undermine the position of the local textile industry within the imperial context. Nevertheless, it was vehemently re-appropriated in Łódź as a form of external validation of the city's potential.

Building on awareness of industrial power and a certain fragmentary modernity of urban infrastructure, subsequent campaigns were launched to also “modernize” the intellectual life of the city, often seen as destitute of proper cultural practices and lacking a decent body of local intellectuals.

Our Łódź, despite the appearance of a big city, is so far rather an enormous township (*miasteczko*) with respect to the culture of its inhabitants. It is somehow like a concentration of small townships, a plethora of Garwolins or Pacanóws,⁷⁵ into one entity. It bears many resemblances to the intellectual and social life of many similar godforsaken places. Weird contrasts—the highest possible development of industrial technology, ranking in the first row regarding the gains of civilization—and a simultaneous insularity of tumbledown concepts, worldviews and forms of life! There are more and more people coming to Łódź and bringing broader views with them, but they have been unable to exert an extensive influence on the situation. In addition, our intellectuals accommodate themselves to the local environment with such striking ease that they often become a pillar of this insularity of concepts and views rather than refreshing the fusty atmosphere.⁷⁶

The broader framework of similar striving was the “will to improve”, here embodied in attempts to leave behind the “provincialism” of the city. Repeated calls to move forward in this process were often embedded in an implicit, benchmark time framework—imposing an imperative to keep up the pace of progress and consequently lay a path that purportedly kept to the proper timing. This, in turn, was supplemented with a strong feeling of longing, a desire to “finally” make what had for so long been expected: “Because it is already high time that Łódź finally stopped being considered a small provincial town, and not even a county town, in which simple, patriarchal relationships suffice.”⁷⁷ Needless to say this time-saturated expectation and the rhetoric of belatedness was also meant to express a critique of the social and political reality of Russian Poland, without interference from censorship. Once local journalists began to be more active in assessing the developments of the city and issuing calls to action in favor of change, several

⁷⁵ This is a form using pluralized, emblematic names epitomizing small, provincial Polish towns.

⁷⁶ “Nadczułość prowincjonalna,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 15 (1899).

⁷⁷ [untitled material], *Rozwój*, no. 108 (1899).

lines of critique developed. All of them tended to have a patterned construction, using similar metaphors to describe the modern condition, a customary diagnosis of the situation, and repeating targets or goals.

The Dream of a Proper Infrastructure

As described above, the city for long time constituted a slander for Polish intellectual elites, who generally looked rather unfavorably on urban modernity.⁷⁸ The peculiar social and urban structure of Łódź was indeed not a very pleasant environment, with the flamboyant palaces of its factory owners surrounded by slum-like dwellings of the working poor, and its predatory capitalism of skyrocketing careers standing in marked contrast to abysmal misery. Consequently, the most common topic of press coverage of urban issues at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries concerned policing the city, which bustled with unwanted phenomena and was haunted by various disruptive plagues (from smallpox to debauchery).

The main goals were to orchestrate the spatial chaos and introduce the institutions required in “a proper city.” The development of the city was presented as abnormal and its appearance did not fit into any known pattern. As journalists had for long reported with disgust: “In Łódź, there are businesses worth millions making a good profit, but there are no schools,”⁷⁹ or in a similar vein: “There is the power of millions, but there are no hospitals, there are many palaces—proudly protruding—but there are no hygienic flats for the hard-working masses, there are trimmed gardens, but no public parks.”⁸⁰ While Manchester and many other core-industrial towns were going through an intense suburbanization which influenced not only their spatial but their social relations,⁸¹ Łódź remained a highly mixed environment, as it does even nowadays.

The spatial anarchy of mixed neighborhoods with countless tiny workshops, factories, tenement houses and palaces was harshly criticized. Although the city’s street grid was consciously planned, it was literally the only factor taming the spatial practices of early capitalist urbanization. In addition, the bad quality of the buildings, esthetic disorder, and general unhealthy living conditions were the subject of scrutiny. The focal points were filthy and dark courtyards and above all the nev-

⁷⁸ Jedlicki, *A Suburb of Europe*; Jedlicki, *Świat zwyrodniały: lęki i wyroki krytyków nowoczesności*; Śmiechowski, “Searching for the Better City: Urban Discourse during the Revolution of 1905 in the Kingdom of Poland.”

⁷⁹ “Szkoły fabryczne,” *Rozwój*, no. 194 (1898).

⁸⁰ “W sprawie kąpieli,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 90 (1898).

⁸¹ Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise And Fall Of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Pobłocki, “Learning from Manchester. Uneven Development, Class and the City.”

er-ending attempts to build a sewerage system (Łódź was probably the largest European city lacking the means to drain away effluence apart from gutters and open ditches).⁸² In their descriptions Łódź journalists joined the pan-European choir of criticism targeting urban squalor and unhealthy conditions, often framed in the sanitary postulates of the social hygiene movement.⁸³ A somehow expressive style seemed the most accurate way to present fears about sanitary conditions:

Today gutters running with sewage cross backyards with long ditches filled with swill and other filthy slugs which during the hot summer turn into a real breeding ground for disease-spreading bacteria. If on top of this we add improvised cesspools, carelessly maintained privies, badly washed and swept backyards, we can easily see that these are not comfortable conditions to create an esthetic built environment in Łódź.⁸⁴

This longing for a proper, “modern” infrastructure which was said to already exist in Berlin, Budapest, Dresden and most often Warsaw⁸⁵ was profound, if not obsessive. For instance, the construction of a municipal hospital was seen as a condition to save Łódź from its undesired status as an “ungraspable anomaly.”⁸⁶

⁸² Waldemar Bieżanowski, *Z dziejów kanalizacji i wodociągów łódzkich: horror z happy endem* (Łódź: Towarzystwo Opieki nad Zabytkami: “Zora,” 2005).

⁸³ Some remarks on the hygienist postulates in Poland see Elżbieta Kaczynska, “A Century of Social and Economic Change – Its Impact on Health and Welfare (Poland between 1815 and 1914),” *Hygiea Internationalis: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the History of Public Health* 9, no. 1 (November 24, 2010): 199–221, <https://doi.org/10.3384/hygiea.1403-8668.1091199>. For more detailed historical studies, see Jan Fijałek, *Instytucje pomocy materialno-zdrowotnej w Łodzi i okręgu łódzkim; wiek XIX do roku 1870* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1962); Jan Fijałek, *Tradycje zdrowia publicznego w historii medycyny powszechnej i polskiej: wybrane zagadnienia organizacyjne i naukowe* (Łódź: Akademia Medyczna. Katedra i Zakład Historii Medycyny i Farmacji, 1998). For comparative contexts of the hygienist movement on peripheries of Europe see Pedro L. Moreno Martínez, “The Hygienist Movement and the Modernization of Education in Spain,” *Paedagogica Historica* 42, no. 6 (December 2006): 793–815, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00309230600929542>; Christian Promitzer, Sevastē Troumpeta, and Marius Turda, *Health, Hygiene, and Eugenics in Southeastern Europe to 1945* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2010); Harold L. Platt, “From Hygeia To the Garden City Bodies, Houses, and the Rediscovery of the Slum in Manchester, 1875–1910,” *Journal of Urban History* 33, no. 5 (July 1, 2007): 756–72, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144207301419>.

⁸⁴ “Budownictwo łódzkie,” *Rozwój*, no. 50 (1899).

⁸⁵ See, respectively, “W sprawie kąpieli,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 90 (1898); “Nasza filantropia,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 6b (1906); “Uspołecznienie robotników,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 196 (1912); “Budownictwo łódzkie,” *Rozwój*, no. 50 (1899); “Z chwili,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 96b (1906).

⁸⁶ “Luźne uwagi,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 60 (1902).

This expensive investment could mitigate the shameful inadequacy toward the demands of the day and improve the city's pitiful sanitary conditions. The misery was continuously contrasted to the West, whose realities were idealized, ignoring the downside of capitalist conditions. For instance, some housing projects for the working class in Germany, built by state-supported housing cooperatives, were described as nothing short of paradise:

While visiting Ostheim you would not even guess that it is a settlement for the poorest of the working class, when everything is so neat, clean and elegant, as it is provided with little houses with fruit and flower gardens, verandas, and balconies.⁸⁷

A lack of infrastructure and resulting perils were directly connected with moral degeneration. The filthiness of a gutter was metaphorically associated with moral decay, and contagious epidemics linked to moral decline: "starvation and plague will spread, poverty will grow, common despondency will grow, and against the backdrop of hunger and despair—immorality and crime blossom with the most exuberant flowers."⁸⁸

At some point, the seemingly futile calls for change became so repetitive that even those issuing them felt obliged to express an ironic distance. Apparently, they felt that repeating them yet again in the same mode of normative obligation was becoming tiresome. Consequently, more complex rhetorical strategies were introduced, such as irony. The journalist's voice would be mediated by, for instance, publishing a rhyming poem (whose features are lost in translation) on the dreams of an inhabitant of Łódź announced to the world in a tavern, which was light-hearted but no the less serious for that:

The citizen of Łódź talks double Dutch when drinking in the tavern, that Łódź will soon overtake Warsaw regarding its urban infrastructure, that soon the city of cotton will be the second metropolis of Europe. Let only the hard times pass, and even horse-drawn cabs will be electric. A summer theater, baths and market halls, even street kiosks are soon to be ready. And if the big moguls don't skimp on philanthropy, hospitals too will pop up like mushrooms, so that soon wherever you go, to the center or into any dark corner, you will come across a hospital or an asylum. The sewer system, if we do not slow down, will be ready in the year 2000, so this city, this township, still so young, will be able to drink filtrated water. So, we go further and in two hundred years there will be no smoke or dust in the city, and we will not burn in the sun as Łódź will have attractive parks and alleys. And an almost Italian-like air will fill our lungs, and there will no longer be any knee-deep mud.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ "Mieszkania dla robotników w Wirtembergii," *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 135 (1898).

⁸⁸ "Zarys sytuacji w Łodzi," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 7 (1907).

⁸⁹ "Marzenia łodzianina," *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 118a (1905).



Figure 9. Łódź Fabryczna railway station, postcard from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

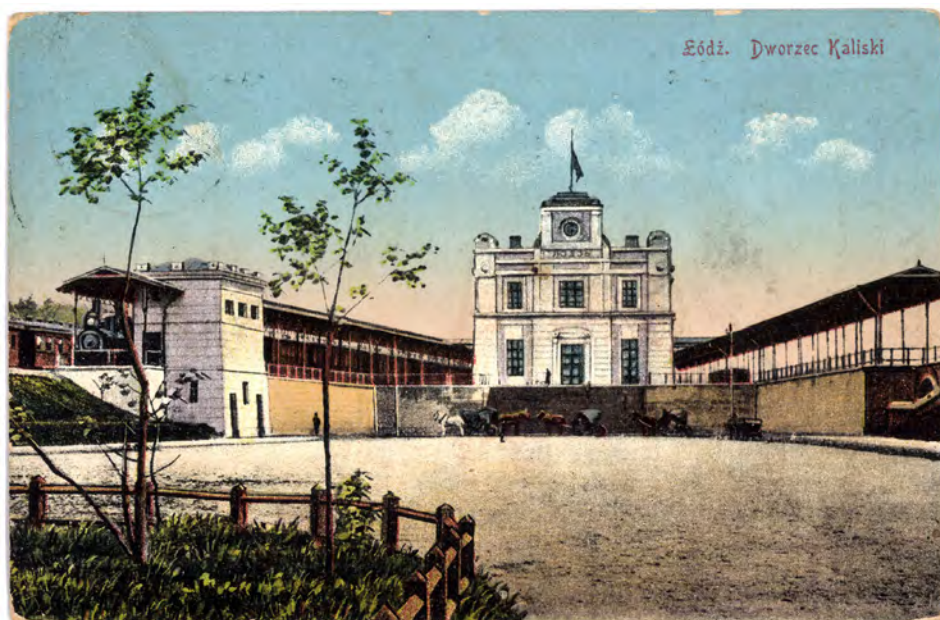


Figure 10. Łódź Kaliska railway station, postcard from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

The poem plays with time expectations, presenting even moderate improvements as almost ready, to be finished in ... two centuries. Thus, it tellingly mocks the never-ending process of modernization, the constantly postponed improvements, and the simple demands for simple things, made in vain. Ironically enough, by the year 2000 most of those dreams had come true, not because of modern improvement but instead due to the almost total collapse of industry ten years earlier. When first issued, however, those demands were intended not only to improve the built environment of the city, but also to forge a legal and institutional framework enabling it to function properly and to populate it with decent, cultured, Polish citizens.

This reformist approach can be seen as a broad shift from moral critique toward social environmentalism, well-described for instance in the case of Victorian society.⁹⁰ Local versions of progressivism in places like Łódź and Manchester were greatly inspired by developments in medicine and urban planning. The intersection of these two fast-developing fields of modern knowledge resulted in the emergence of more sophisticated discourses about the urban poor—it was no longer the morality of the savage masses that was responsible for the miserable conditions of their dwellings—but rather a matter of deficient infrastructure. The aim was now to improve the conditions of daily life in the city, for instance by fostering civic activity and governing bodies up for the transformative challenge.

Calling for Institutions

The second important mark of modern disorder in Łódź was its asynchronicity, painfully felt in the underdevelopment of various public institutions, ranging from civil society organizations to municipal council establishments and offices for providing social welfare. This feeling of institutional underdevelopment marked most debates between the 1863 January Uprising and the 1905 Revolution. The soaring urbanization brought into full view the scale of the deficit of institutional framework in the Kingdom of Poland under the reign of the Tsar. Not surprisingly, the tsarist administration was generally uninterested in developing an independent Polish public sphere.⁹¹ As Theodore R. Weeks noted:

⁹⁰ For a brief literature review check Platt, “From Hygeia to the Garden City Bodies, Houses, and the Rediscovery of the Slum in Manchester, 1875–1910,” 760.

⁹¹ On the tsarist apparatus of power and its imperatives see Richard G. Robbins, *The Tsar's Viceroys: Russian Provincial Governors in the Last Years of the Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987); Peter Waldron, *Governing Tsarist Russia, European History in Perspective* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Jörg Baberowski, ed., *Imperiale Herrschaft in Der Provinz: Repräsentationen Politischer Macht Im Späten Zarenreich* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus-Verlag, 2008).

The reasons for this were many, but the most important was a general bureaucratic lethargy, exacerbated by the lingering suspicion that Polish-dominated city governments would complicate the lives of Russian administrators in the region. Furthermore, the general conditions in Warsaw were superior to those of nearly any city in the interior of the Empire, so local Russian officials failed to perceive any pressing need for reform. Then as later, Russian administrators compared the Polish situation favorably with conditions at home in the central Russian provinces, while Poles in turn compared the situation unfavorably with conditions in Vienna, Berlin or Paris.⁹²

However, the latter were mobilized to demand the enhancement of institutional autonomy, including within Warsaw's positivist program, putting emphasis on the nation's self-development.⁹³ In this situation, every social or cultural institution, be it a local theater or philanthropic society, were considered to be important centers of Polishness, re-balancing the asymmetrical relationship between Polish public life and the Russian administration. (It should be noted that some existing cultural and philanthropic societies were more religious than national. For instance, Łódź's Christian Charity Association was controlled by Germans and the German Protestants worked there alongside Catholics; the same was true of the local fire brigade).⁹⁴ Rising expectations put provincial institutions in the crossfire of both tsarist administrative obstacles and permanent criticism issued by the Warsaw press. The latter urged them to be more and more socially and culturally active.⁹⁵

As a result, imagined new institutions turned into a Holy Grail promising to be the solution to the swelling social problems. Using Western state order as a benchmark, it was from this that an idea of the most rational path of social development was drawn. Positivists, like other European liberals, believed that harmonious social development was possible given certain conditions: a high level of education, social self-organization, and the Westernization of public

⁹² Weeks, "Nationality and Municipality: Reforming City Government in the Kingdom of Poland, 1904–1915," 27.

⁹³ On the positivist genre of nationalism see Wojciech Modzelewski, *Naród i postęp: problematyka narodowa w ideologii i myśli społecznej pozytywistów warszawskich* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1977); Porter, "The Social Nation and Its Futures: English Liberalism and Polish Nationalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Warsaw."

⁹⁴ Kamil Śmiechowski, Marta Sikorska-Kowalska, and Kenshi Fukumoto, *Robotnicy Łodzi drugiej połowy XIX wieku. Nowe perspektywy badawcze* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016).

⁹⁵ Andrzej Szwarz, "Inteligencja warszawska i prowincjonalna w świetle własnych opinii z lat popowstaniowych (próba sondażu)," in: *Inteligencja polska XIX i XX w. Studia*, red. R. Czepulis-Rastenis, vol. 3 (Warszawa, 1983), 195–207.

life.⁹⁶ In Łódź not only was the enlargement of a Polish presence in institutional bodies a hotly disputed issue, but in addition, the peculiarities of the local situation and acuteness of its problems tainted the debate. Responding to these circumstances, the local press made the improvement of local institutions its paramount mission.⁹⁷ It was a widely held conviction that:

Local social life is certainly far from tempting and encouraging, and there are hardly any facilities (*urządzeń*) which everywhere else constitute the indispensable need of every educated man, and it is difficult to point out any institutions which testify to the existence of a more serious intellectual life and social activity.⁹⁸

Thus, journalists bemoaned the inadequate, deficient, or inappropriate institutions which, if they existed, would prevent human degeneration, moral downfall, and various forms of disorder ranging from the trans-class presence of greed and adultery, to infant mortality, to worker's dehumanization. Correspondingly, all the moderate successes in building state-sponsored institutions (which were rare) or municipal institutions supported by local industrial moguls were greeted with satisfaction and used to launch yet another campaign for new ones.

So many significant social institutions have emerged, so many palatial buildings put to the benefit of the poorer strata of society; a narrow stream of philanthropy is intensely broadening its bed. Thus, the very ruthless accusation that in Łódź there is an inborn lack of sensitivity toward public issues is in fact not grounded and is even unjust.⁹⁹

At the same time the will to improve, if not the city then at least its image, can be seen lurking behind almost every expression of this kind. In addition, all participants in such debates were also taking the floor in the broader controversy on public responsibility and the pattern of welfare provisions (examined below in detail). Hence the above quoted voice is clearly in favor of various forms of private philanthropy, seen not only as benevolent, but also as sufficient if put into practice with due consequence.

⁹⁶ Tadeusz Stegner, *Liberałowie Królestwa Polskiego: 1904–1915* (Gdańsk: Nakładem autora, 1990); Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought before 1918*; Śmiechowski, "Searching for the Better City: Urban Discourse during the Revolution of 1905 in the Kingdom of Poland."

⁹⁷ Śmiechowski, *Łódzka wizja postępu. Oblicze społeczno-ideowe "Gońca Łódzkiego", "Kuriera Łódzkiego" i "Nowego Kuriera Łódzkiego" w latach 1898–1914*, 169.

⁹⁸ "Słowa i czyny," *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 90 (1898).

⁹⁹ "Słów kilka o Ziemi Obiecanej," *Rozwój*, no. 55 (1899).



Figure 11. Town's Credit Association (Miejskie Towarzystwo Kredytowe), author: Bronisław Wilkoszewski, 1896, Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, PL 39 607 A-7 11 (Wikimedia Commons).

If no such steps were taken, however, it was believed that the problems would loom larger and larger and turn into dystopian chaos. Immorality and crime would “blossom like a luxuriant flower.”¹⁰⁰ Without schools, an entire generation would be “lost and end up on the street”;¹⁰¹ without proper healthcare, a pandemic of cholera would destroy city districts; without good organization and regular institutionalized action, the city and its society would “retreat into savage barbarity.” It is no wonder that, in the face of such horrific prospects, with the danger of total neglect lurking around every corner, the diagnostic capacities of the press were stepped up to find the factors and actors responsible for such a miserable state of affairs.

In the early phase of these debates in late 19th century there was often a self-reflexive accusation, an attempt to mobilize one's own resources and lay responsibility for the state of affairs on individuals. One early voice wondered: “[H]ere, regardless of our will the question arises whether those who complain all the time

¹⁰⁰ “Echa tygodnia,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 370 (1907).

¹⁰¹ “Szkoly fabryczne,” *Rozwój*, no. 194 (1898).

but are not involved in any attempts should not plead guilty to the deficiencies of the present order.”¹⁰² Later the margin for voicing criticism was slightly broadened. Simultaneously, the “social question” ushered forms of class analysis and proto-sociology into the press debates.¹⁰³ Moreover, the “national question” and inter-ethnic tensions began to a greater extent to organize the dispute. Thus, the landscape of critical positions changed.

Pleas for “institutions” were also addressed to the imperial administration, while their deficit was registered and compared with that of other Russian cities. In the days of discussion about municipal reform this issue gained more momentum, especially given the growing discrepancy between the size and commercial significance of Łódź and its administrative status—it was not even the capital of the *gubernia* (which was in Piotrków):

Inasmuch as in other regions of the Monarchy cities of similar commercial and industrial significance have institutions which are lacking in our city, it is our duty to call attention to this deficit, in the belief that the most urgent needs of our “township” will be taken into consideration in the forthcoming future.¹⁰⁴

Responsibility for this state of affairs was laid on the inept local government, passive citizens, and inefficient organization. Of course, when reading the critiques, one should keep in mind the influence of tsarist censorship, which prevented those making diagnoses from freely pointing out all problems and obstacles.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless the magistrate was accused of being not only disorganized, but also uninterested in the city’s development. As one publicist announced: “In Łódź, nothing—literally nothing—is done, apart from collecting taxes and spending them in an uncontrolled manner for aims not related to the city’s good.”¹⁰⁶ According to this diagnosis, it was not only the government that was incapable of managing the city properly. The same could be said about society as a whole, especially the local elites with their renowned “failure to act”: “Nowhere are so many plans born, and nowhere do so many die.”¹⁰⁷ The diagnosis was clear:

¹⁰² “Słowa i czyny,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 90 (1898).

¹⁰³ On the entanglements of social science and the social question see Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, eds., *States, Social Knowledge, and the Origins of Modern Social Policies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Robert Castel, *From Manual Workers to Wage Laborers: Transformation of the Social Question* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2003).

¹⁰⁴ “Powiatowe miasteczko,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 63 (1899).

¹⁰⁵ Bartłomiej Szyndler, *Dzieje cenzury w Polsce do 1918 roku* (Kraków: Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza, 1993).

¹⁰⁶ “Z chwii,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 150 (1906).

¹⁰⁷ “W sprawie kąpieli,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 90 (1898).

the plans were not synchronized, action taken was irregular, and the only goal pursued among the actors involved was profit, not the common good.

Against this backdrop of criticism of an incapable administration and of the obstacles to political reform, active citizens were envisioned as a supplementary, bottom-up solution. Thus, the local public sphere was scrutinized in a search of new resources for urban renewal. If the attitude of industrial tycoons toward philanthropy was ambiguous, all efforts were directed to stimulate local patriotism and a sense of public responsibility. The absence of such feelings was explained by the abnormal character of the “Polish Manchester.” One author wondered whether there was any:

...true, warm attachment to this big city, where the air wheezes soot and dust that often forms a dense fog, here and there poisoned with stinking fumes; where water is drunk with fear of its germs and disgust at its strange taste; where it's difficult to pass through the dreary streets on their grid-plan because of heavy traffic (...) where money is on people's tongues and in their hearts... – ‘I hate Łódź!’ We hear this from the intelligentsia and surely it can be heard from the many poor chaps too.¹⁰⁸

The press also undertook a broader analysis of the social crisis. The decomposition of social bonds was associated with the city's particular history and its capitalist industrialization. This materialist line of critique notwithstanding, it was the nation which to an ever-increasing extent assumed the mantle of the prevalent form of community. This meant that it was enthroned as a desired goal, one toward which current activities should be oriented. Furthermore, it was assumed that all the actors (including the “enemies”) acted according to the national principle, hence not surprisingly activities were assessed from the respective national standpoints. This included those accused of undermining basic social bonds and forms of solidarity potentially capable of limiting the predicaments of industrial life.

...upstarts don't care about anything except their own pockets. No sentiments, but the opposite—the brutality of capital, let us admit, not a cultural one—has shown its true soul. How much does some Gottlieb care about the Polish working masses or the Polish nation, without power and authority? (...) They care little about the culture of the country, about its pains and sorrows.¹⁰⁹

However, calls for solidarity could also be heard as a means to overcome the diagnosed problems. The nationalized mode of critique, only later pushed to its limits, appeared to many to be rather misleading. Instead, profound changes were

¹⁰⁸ “Partykularyzm łódzki,” *Rozwój*, no. 292 (1911).

¹⁰⁹ “Ruch polityczny w Łodzi,” *Rozwój*, no. 245 (1907).

needed and the idea of a broader reconfiguration of social relationships began to lurk behind the accusations lodged against lazy magistrates and greedy Germans.

The solution envisioned was reform of existing municipal and/or national institutions to establish, regulate and control education, healthcare (especially the prevention of repeated epidemics), security, unemployment, cultural life, and urban development. In the early 20th century this debate was further invigorated by the hotly disputed issue of municipal reform, giving hope for a limited introduction of municipal autonomy and local elections. It was argued that the miserable condition of the city was a consequence of an archaic system of urban governance, based on laws originating from the beginning of the 19th century. Indeed, the Kingdom of Poland was almost the only place in Europe where there were no elected councils or any form of urban self-governance. Towns were ruled by magistrates—mayors, chairmen and auxiliary staff, nominated by the central government. They were simply officials with limited powers and temperate ambitions—all important problems, including urban investment and expenditure, had to be approved in Saint Petersburg.

Actually, it was a certain form of withdrawal on the part of the state which made the cities “weak”, while retaining the strong coercive apparatus supported mainly by a military structure of administrative oppression, one which ignored social provision.¹¹⁰ Despite many proposals for reorganizing the system of urban administration, the situation did not change for another fifty years, eventually becoming something of an oddity for local elites, eager to move in the direction of what they perceived to be modernity and gain more influence on local community life. All urban problems, it was believed, could be solved by local self-governance, sometimes without much consideration of financial constraints or the realities of urban life, which would magically change with the introduction of councils.¹¹¹ On the one hand this zealous debate spurred on thinking about how to arrange institutions and finally use the chance for self-governance, while on the other hand nationalists fanned the flames of antisemitism, raising fears that it would be the Jews who would in the end dominate the local councils.¹¹² Ideas for reform came to naught, however. The Russian administration was afraid that appointing elective officials in the ethnically diverse borderlands would only add to

¹¹⁰ Waldron, *Governing Tsarist Russia*.

¹¹¹ Kamil Śmiechowski, “Między rzeczywistością biurokratyzmu a utopią samorządu. Krytyka prasowa miejskiego aparatu urzędniczego w rewolucji 1905 roku na przykładzie Łodzi,” in: *Między irredentą a kolaboracją: ugoda, lojalizm i legalizm: “Dusza urzędnicza” – zewnętrzna akceptacja i wewnętrzna niezgoda?*, ed. Norbert Kasperek and Mateusz Klempert (Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo UWM, 2015), 105–24.

¹¹² Weeks, “Nationality and Municipality: Reforming City Government in the Kingdom of Poland, 1904–1915.”

the heated situation and make state control practically unfeasible. Nonetheless, for better and for worse, the shape of the local polity and corresponding institutional edifices came to the fore as a topic of debate.

Inventing Welfare

Łódź public opinion ardently participated in the welfare debate by widely re-articulating familiar diagnoses of the crisis. The first commonly accepted step was to reform the already-existing philanthropy system and build modern public institutions, and the second was to establish a local government capable of cooperating with educated and active citizens, who in turn would become more patriotic and better organized. The details, however, varied greatly. Sharp controversy took place concerning the basics of municipal order. In the context of Łódź's local circumstances the debate epitomized the modern conundrum of how to organize societies in the new circumstances of industrial capitalism, which confronted many countries at the time.¹¹³ The results of this debate were to define the future trajectories of social-welfare regimes, the mutual relationships between classes, and the relationship between the economic and political realms.

As has been widely documented by historians of the welfare state, a profound change in the assumed social order was indispensable for the introduction of general social provisions.¹¹⁴ As Peter Wagner commented, in particular:

Post-linguistic-turn historical sociology tries to deal with these issues by again linking the major political transformations that the introduction of early social policies obviously entailed to an intellectual transformation, in this case to a rethinking of the social bond, or of 'society'.¹¹⁵

Hence how society was conceptualized and imagined as a whole, and what relationships were in practice envisioned and reproduced between its groups,

¹¹³ For example see cases of Manchester or Bristol: Martin Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy: Charity and Society in Nineteenth-Century Bristol* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer Ltd, 1999); Peter Shapely, *Charity and Power in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester: Smith Settle, 2000).

¹¹⁴ On the turbulent and variegated origins of the welfare state paradigm, with the important role of discursive framing of the problem, see, among others, Ernest P. Hennock, *The Origin of the Welfare State in England and Germany, 1850–1914: Social Policies Compared* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Abram Swaan de, *In Care of the State: Health Care, Education, and Welfare in Europe and the USA in the Modern Era* (Cambridge; Oxford: Polity Press; In association with B. Blackwell, 1988); Michael Stolleis, *Origins of the German Welfare State: Social Policy in Germany to 1945* (Heidelberg; New York: Springer, 2013).

¹¹⁵ Wagner, "As Intellectual History Meets Historical Sociology."

between individuals, and impersonal mechanisms such as the market, all were subjected to powerful transformations.¹¹⁶ First of all, the lamented vagaries of capitalism were earlier seen as transitory, and in the Polish case also as stemming from the distorted, foreign nature of capitalism. Thus, it was argued, they would go away as soon the early stage passed and the proper people infused their morality into the whirlwind of capitalism, thus civilizing it.¹¹⁷ It appeared, however, that the lamented features refused to go away and that they were intransigent products and conditions of industrial capitalism as such and had become rather entrenched within it. It was thus deemed possible to think about reform and intervention, which were clearly desirable, and worth fighting for. Secondly, the condition of modernity and awareness of its predicaments led to a generalization about responsibility. Individual failures in capitalist production and harms experienced in the new form of life were to be re-framed as general consequences of a process one cannot individually control. Therefore, individuals were not to be held entirely responsible for possible failures and harms experienced, for instance workplace accidents.

It was then possible to argue that industrialization had transformed the reality of the workplace into one that was essentially collective, one in which it was industrial life itself, not the action(s) of any individual that ushered in new risks.¹¹⁸ The urban poor's dwellings in slum areas were no longer just temporary offshoots of urbanization or misfortunes haunting the intellectually deficient and morally corrupt masses, at most deserving only of some pity and some charity. This was posed as a problem that had to be somehow systemically overcome. The situation was now perceived as structurally embedded in the existing form of life. Furthermore, the universalization of the ultimate demand for basic justice (or rather perhaps a generalized feeling of injustice)¹¹⁹ did the rest. It put the "workers' question" on the agenda as an actual threat to the existing order. This peril was epitomized in the labor movement and socialism, which delivering a meaningful narrative about the world and its undergoing changes to proletarians and

¹¹⁶ William M. Reddy, *Money and Liberty in Modern Europe: A Critique of Historical Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹¹⁷ On the Polish case and debate on national capitalism of the benign nobles being able to turn even Łódź into an island of moralized order, see Zysiak, "The Desire for Fullness. The Fantasmatic Logic of Modernization Discourses at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Century in Łódź."

¹¹⁸ Anson Rabinbach, "Social Knowledge, Social Risk, and the Politics of Industrial Accidents in Germany and France," in *States, Social Knowledge, and the Origins of Modern Social Policies*, eds. Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996).

¹¹⁹ Barrington Moore, *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (White Plains: Sharpe, 1978).

their supporters in the intelligentsia alike.¹²⁰ Generalized suffrage did not, however, usher new challengers onto the scene of electoral competition immediately, but only slowly. Nevertheless, it was clear that at least the potential entrance of the destitute and uneducated masses into politics had to be taken into account as a debatable and real problem.¹²¹

In more urbanized societies, where capitalist transformation arrived still in the making, the question of how to renegotiate social relationships took place in real time. While the new social reality was often imposed “with blood and fire” through ongoing primitive accumulation, the new moral economy was nevertheless debated and contested from the very outset. For instance, artisan radicals tried to renegotiate the freshly established order of the market because it deprived both sides in contractual relationships of any rights and obligations.¹²² The pre-capitalist moral economy was defended and its dismantlement contested.¹²³ Even though this battle was lost, the modern imaginary social order was still open and new avatars of the “social question” or “workers question” were constantly disputed.¹²⁴ Examples include the powerful controversies over the “conundrum of class” and “vision of the people”—how to con-

¹²⁰ On crawling democratization, carried on the arms of socialist movement see Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy. The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹²¹ On anti-liberal strategies of political adaptation see Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna Politics and Culture*. The problem of the mass is investigated in Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy: Political Ideas in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2011); Stefan Jonsson, *Crowds and Democracy: The Idea and Image of the Masses from Revolution to Fascism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

¹²² William M. Reddy, *The Rise of Market Culture: The Textile Trade and French Society, 1750–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹²³ About the relational constitution of classes and involved polemics and renegotiation in England see the still seminal Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Vintage Giant (New York: Vintage Books, 1963). In more detail, the renegotiation of the moral economy is examined in Marc W. Steinberg, *Fighting Words: Working-Class Formation, Collective Action, and Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999). On another trajectory France consult William Sewell, “Artisans, Factory Workers, and the Formation of the French Working Class, 1789–1849,” in: *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986); Reddy, *The Rise of Market Culture*. On Germany among others Jürgen Kocka, *Arbeiterleben und Arbeiterkultur: die Entstehung einer sozialen Klasse* (Bonn: Dietz, 2015).

¹²⁴ Holly Case, “The ‘Social Question,’ 1820–1920,” *Modern Intellectual History*, 2015, 1–29, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1479244315000037>.

ceptualize class, the social order, and societal differentiation in the new circumstances and how to respond (if at all) to the raging misery of the destitute urban working poor.¹²⁵

In long-agrarian and now-partitioned Poland, capitalism came rather as a ready-made, like-it-or-not package. In Russian Poland after 1863, positivism had the upper hand in dictating the basic tenets of social philosophy and imagination. It was an offspring of European liberalism but was distinguished by some Polish mutations.¹²⁶ Polish liberals understood society as an organic whole, which enabled them to easily justify existing social stratification and economic and legal differences between the higher and lower classes. They were not, however, strongly influenced by the laissez-faire ideology typical of some early European liberal movements. On the contrary, Polish liberals were cognizant of some of the structural reasons for inequality and they attempted to alleviate them. Somewhat disavowing accepted liberal tenets, they looked for explanations outside of the analysis of the capitalist order. They were confident that if capitalists had indeed been good citizens, then class conflict would not have happened in their merry Poland. Simultaneously, they considered workers as politically immature and insufficiently educated to be equal partners in public life. They believed that social progress was a natural tendency in the development of capitalistic societies and that the conditions of life and work of the laborers would improve along with widespread education and the distribution of citizens' duties throughout the entire society.

This worldview was dominant in the 1870s and 1880s in Poland, but after 1890 it was severely undermined by socialists, nationalists, and younger generations of liberals, who demanded faster social modernization and supported different visions of the social order. At this time dominant ideas ranged from nationalistic ideas of solidarity among a purified body politic to socialist worship of class conflict, which would produce profound social transformation.¹²⁷ How

¹²⁵ Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1848–1914* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Martin J. Burke, *The Conundrum of Class: Public Discourse on the Social Order in America* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995).

¹²⁶ Janowski, *Polish Liberal Thought before 1918*.

¹²⁷ Stegner, *Liberalowie Królestwa Polskiego: 1904–1915*; Grzegorz Markiewicz, *Między państwem obcym a ideą państwa własnego: świadomość państwowa polskich elit intelektualnych w latach 1864–1914* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo UŁ, 2010); Andrzej Walicki, *Poland between East and West: The Controversies over Self-Definition and Modernization in Partitioned Poland: The August Zaleski Lectures, Harvard University, 18–22 April 1994* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University. Ukrainian Research Institute, 1994); Brian Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate: Imagining Modern Politics in Nineteenth Century Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

classes and their relationships were conceptualized, the way in which rights and responsibilities of the collective and the individual were reshuffled, and how the borders of the assumed polity were established and policed was hotly disputed. Even if most of the time this debate was embodied in rather mundane quarrels about municipal inefficiencies, the respective positions need to be seen against the backdrop of a much broader set of problems. What was at stake, after all, was the institution of society.

The discontents of early industrial capitalism urged local journalists to expose the traps contained in the limited responsibility of private owners. The sum of individual, profit-driven pursuits did not add up to a properly managed city. While in early Russian Poland capitalism was undoubtedly backed by the state, in the late 19th century it was a peculiar form of tsarist *laissez-faire*. In consequence, it was very different from the capitalism germinating in states with strong traditions of absolutist welfare. There, flamboyant municipal buildings serving the imperial state were growing and state-controlled population policies looked out for the biological stability of the urban population. In Russian Poland, however, the functions of local government and its actual powers were mostly limited to military-style policing. It was neither willing nor able to supplement urban social life with serious municipal management and protective institutions. And not surprisingly capitalist owners were not eager to build sewerage systems, pavements, and schools on their own.

Thus, in articles in the local press an implicit critique of private property without control, targeted against the selfish ethos of the owners as well, was a common topic. Densely and carelessly built filthy houses, posing an epidemiological threat, were singled out by proponents of the hygienist ideals. As they looked for explanations for such misery, they soon realized that these buildings were constructed in this way for a reason—speculative rent-extraction focused on short-term profits drawn from the poor and downtrodden inhabitants.¹²⁸ They were also acutely aware of the undesirable consequences of the spatial layout of the city. The aggregate of private plots and buildings did not compose a city in the proper sense of the word, and all public spaces or facilities, from street lamps and pavements to nonexistent urban greenery and a sewerage system were neglected.¹²⁹ Accordingly, calls were issued for someone or some institution to take responsibility for the common good and public spaces.¹³⁰

The questions, however, were: Who was in charge of changing the situation? To what extent were individual actors in the existing structural circumstances to blame? and last but not least, how could an alternative social order be designed in

¹²⁸ “Budownictwo łódzkie,” *Rozwój*, no. 50 (1899).

¹²⁹ “Zygzałki,” *Rozwój*, no. 215 (1898); “Drzewostan w Łodzi,” *Rozwój*, no. 41 (1900).

¹³⁰ “W sprawie przyłączonych przedmieść,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 535 (1908).

the rather unfavorable circumstances of tsarist autocracy? In a desperate attempt to find agencies capable of solving the problem, private investment was also re-evaluated and attempts were made to appeal to certain moral commitments of the capitalists. If they became more integrated in local society, the common argument went, they would doubtless be more eager to finance various benevolent establishments. As will be examined in detail below, these desperate attempts to find concrete solutions could be woven into dubious calls to moralize the market by saturating it with external ethical principles and forging a more tight-knit political community. This, however, could also lead to various forms of market nationalism, dreams about a moralized order of the national economy held together by the ethnic and cultural glue of the nation, or in many cases fantasies about removing the foreign and internally-corrupt parasites of German and Jewish capital. As these attempts were not, and could not be, of much practical value, some even tried to appeal not to human values or the common good, but to the logic of profit in order to encourage reform, for example, by arguing that public baths might be both lucrative and useful for society.¹³¹

Philanthropic efforts were praised in the days of desperate need, when no other solutions seemed viable to redeem the city from its pitiful conditions. Various forms of “private biopolitics”¹³² were seen in a favorable light, as a benign effort to somehow improve the living conditions of the working class. For example, *Goniec Łódzki* reported as follows on a factory district built by textile tycoon Karol Scheibler for the upper echelons of his factory crew:

This is a district which in itself forms a small town. This is also the healthiest district, with many green areas, within easy reach of facilities and the rest of the city. Houses for workers in Księży Młyn, as well as the factory buildings, are decorated perfectly, both in terms of sanitation and practical use.¹³³

Apt as it was, this description exemplifies the endorsement of any positive change, without a broader critique targeting the existing institutional order.

¹³¹ “W sprawie kąpieli,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 90 (1898).

¹³² Wiktor Marzec and Agata Zysiak, “Days of Labour: Topographies of Power in Modern Peripheral Capitalism. The Case of The Industrial City of Łódź,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29, no. 2 (2016): 129–59, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12080>.

¹³³ “W sprawie kąpieli,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 90 (1898). The first Polish-language magazine *Dziennik Łódzki*, sponsored by Scheibler, used these improved living conditions in order to discredit all other worker claims as inappropriate: “when we see thousands of workers walking to work and getting back every day with a bright face, we cannot complain about their miserable fate,” see Andrzej Małagowski, *Łódź–Księży Młyn: historia ludzi, miejsca i kultury* (Łódź: Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi, Rezydencja “Księży Młyn,” 1998), 26.



Figure 12. Workers' housing near the Scheibler factory, "Księży Młyn", postcard from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

At the same time, while more systematic infrastructural projects, such as hospitals and the aforementioned district, generated good publicity, swipes were taken at "capricious philanthropy." This was seen as a rather useless hobby for factory owners' wives "who play in their own clique", which was nothing more than a publicly advertised "mountain which brought forth a mouse."¹³⁴ Initially the intended answer was the intensification of similar efforts, though still grounded in principles of mercy, if not alms. Gradually, however, critics began to suggest that philanthropy was more a symptom of pathological social relationships than a solution to the local predicaments:

Philanthropy has become such a fancy thing, that [it seems that] philanthropists dress themselves and eat only to give people the possibility to earn money. But philanthropy exists only there, where poverty exists. A rich and well-organized country does not need philanthropy.¹³⁵

Similar diagnoses led commentators to propose the creation of stable, impersonal institutions to take care of the public good. Such a proposal inherently

¹³⁴ "Nasza filantropia," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 6 (1906); see also "Echa tygodnia," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 370 (1907); "Filantropia a potrzeby ludności," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 27 (1907).

¹³⁵ "Zachloroformowani," *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 117 (1905).

encompassed reconstruction of the alleged social bond. Not only were the poor not entirely to blame for their hardships, but they deserved gestures of solidarity on the grounds that it was the broader economic system which pushed them into their present situation. Society as a whole should create a basic safety net for itself—and systemically take care of certain things in the individual interest of its single members. Even if such a plea was not considered to be a demand for universal public welfare for everybody, some assistance was deemed necessary for the greater good, as some of the dangers which were breeding in the filthy hovels also threatened to harm the affluent social strata (e.g. contagious diseases).¹³⁶

Another proposed solution, which was hotly contested in the press, concerned various forms of cooperatives. The cooperative movement was widely propagated (not so much in practice but rather as a suggested solution) and widely debated during this time. However, varied the proposed options were, the issue was discussed across vast parts of the political spectrum. Some circles on the left envisioned the cooperative movement to be a gradual path on which to leave capitalism behind and simultaneously teach people new forms of socialist and collective endeavor.¹³⁷ Similar ideas were also popular within the significant current of germinating Polish nationalism, whose proponents, in turn, dreamed about a bottom-up Polonization of the economy (allegedly to be taken out of the hands of the small-scale Jewish merchants and huge international/German capitalists).¹³⁸ It was put forward that this could allow the building of a gradual path out of the pathologies of capitalism, without simultaneously questioning the very idea of property or expropriating either peasants or artisans of limited means.

¹³⁶ “Filantropia a potrzeby ludności,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 27 (1907).

¹³⁷ On its main intellectual figure, Edward Abramowski, see Andrzej Flis, “E. Abramowski’s social and political thought,” in: *Masters of Polish Sociology*, ed. Piotr Sztompka (Warszawa; Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1984). His main writings on the cooperative movement may be found in Edward Abramowski, *Braterstwo, solidarność, współdziałanie: pisma spółdzielcze i stowarzyszeniowe*, ed. Remigiusz Okraska (Łódź: Nowy Obywatel, 2009).

¹³⁸ Here the chief figure was the early Polish modern nationalist Jan Ludwik Popławski; see in general Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*; Teresa Kulak, *Jan Ludwik Popławski: biografia polityczna* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1994); Meghann Pytko, “Policing the Binary—Patrolling the Nation: Race and Gender in Polish Integral Nationalism, from Partitions to Parliament (1883–1926)” (doctoral dissertation, Northwestern University, 2013). Writings on bottom-up agrarian revival under the banner of national economy may be found in Jan Ludwik Popławski, *Pisma polityczne* (Warszawa: Skł. gł. u Gebethnera i Wolffa, 1910); Jan Ludwik Popławski, *Naród i polityka: wybór pism* (Kraków: Ośrodek Myśli Politycznej; Wydział Studiów Międzynarodowych i Politycznych UJ, 2012).

Cooperatives were proposed as an alternative to philanthropy. It was argued that philanthropy did not erase the causes of problems and condemned large parts of the population to total destitution of their dignity. Notwithstanding this criticism, cooperatives were at the same time often integrated into a discourse that denied that broader structural reform of the economy or property relations was necessary, and they were proposed as a seemingly simple solution: to take issues in one's own hands along with others facing the same predicaments, thus rhetorically giving agency to the popular classes, a project which at the same time quite openly shifted any responsibility away from their more affluent compatriots. If considered against the backdrop of the entire plethora of ideological positions discussed during this time, cooperatives sometimes came closest to a very individualistic vision of society, based at best on a de-institutionalized cooperation of family units. Even issues usually deemed incapable of being managed by individual pursuit and good will, such as sanitary reform and health provision, could allegedly be delegated to cooperatives. Accordingly, they could be presented as resting on the backs of the private initiative of family units:

The slogan “on our own for ourselves” (*Sami sobie*) should be the leading principle for these institutions, and mercy and begging in every form should be a foreign thing. (...) Here is a practical solution to this issue [improvement in health conditions for working-class children]. A simple row of four rural cottages, three or four morgens of land, in addition to one or two cows cost, on the fringes of the Łódź region, about one thousand rubles. (...) Such a household (...) could be bought by four working class, artisan or petty clerk families living in harmony. They could organize a half-year cooperative summer camp for members and children of their families.¹³⁹

Such proposals were part and parcel of a broader wave of social critique, which intensified along with the growing presence of the “workers question” in public debate, especially during and after the 1905 Revolution. This upsurge in discussion concerned mainly the urban working class, rising up not only against the Tsar, but above all for better working conditions. The 1905 Revolution brought about massive political participation. The events mobilized new segments of society, in particular workers, to actively participate in the public sphere.¹⁴⁰ Simultaneously, the question of labor conditions was forcefully raised by contentious claimants. Inasmuch as it appeared so high on the agenda, nobody could any longer ignore it. The social elite, the intelligentsia, the bourgeoisie and

¹³⁹ “Echa tygodniowe,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 78 (1907).

¹⁴⁰ Paweł Samuś, *Wasza kartka wyborcza jest silniejsza niż karabin, niż armata...: z dziejów kultury politycznej na ziemiach polskich pod zaborami* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2013); Blobaum, *Rewolucja*.

other social strata alike were forced to address the issue, regardless of whether favorably or through a potent conservative reaction aimed at pushing “the masses” out of the political scene altogether.¹⁴¹ All parties had to agree that working-class grievances needed to be addressed, even if only in the form of intensified social control and conservative patronage aimed at preventing moral decline and arresting revolutionary zeal.

Educating the Masses

The masses on the streets in 1905 made it clear to the urban bourgeoisie and Polish intelligentsia that if they did not manage social issues more efficiently, the revolt would pose a danger to their ordinary decent lives. Panic concerning the moral degeneration of the working class intensified, assuming a more political mantle, with National Democracy stoking fears about the destabilization of the social order. Simultaneously, various political milieux called for action to discipline, or at least educate, “the masses.” Even illiteracy was coded as a factor directly posing the peril of anarchy and disintegration.

“Renewed social life—after winning over the plague of anarchy—will pour into new forms and will be organized anew.”¹⁴² This striking passage comes from a manifesto calling for... universal mobilization to combat illiteracy. The manifesto would become one of the founding texts for the renewed ethos of social mission among the Polish provincial intelligentsia. The numerous local elites who signed it, however, did not want to wait for it to happen—they “consider(ed) it [their] sacred obligation to declare war against illiteracy now.” The main point of reference was nothing other than anarchy and disorder. Social life had to be rethought anew because “new foundations for social and state life were emerging.” When the “wheel of history turned exceptionally fast”, “the broad masses of the people” would “retake the helm of social leadership.” At least the intelligentsia thought so, not without fear about the future, when “the frightening power of illiterates” might take over the helm. Thus “everybody who was able to read and write” had a “magnificent and sacred obligation to become a teacher of the peo-

¹⁴¹ What equally well mattered, was the fact that proletarian politics could not find a safe haven among Polish non-proletarian milieux, eagerly pursuing a kind of oligarchic, exclusivist reaction grounded in a deep “fear of the masses”, now on the streets. The intelligentsia’s attitude was growingly tainted with a conservative fear of the masses, which inhibited the development of plebeian constituencies and forms of political articulation, see Marzec and Śmiechowski, “Pathogenesis of the Polish Public Sphere. Intelligentsia and Popular Unrest in the 1905 Revolution and After.”

¹⁴² “Odezwa do inteligencji naszego miasta,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 298a (1905). All quotes in the paragraph are from the same source.

ple.”¹⁴³ Disorder had to be avoided and there was a strong feeling of obligation to stand and face up to a modern challenge.

If in the eyes of local journalists moral and cultural rules were melting into air, leading to Sodom and Gomorrah, the solution could be found only by regaining a sense of good and evil clearly provided by universal humanitarian values. They could be re-established solely—in the still positivist spirit—by education:

This difficult and arduous task can be achieved through constant, well-organized and intentional peaceful work aimed at raising the level of ethical culture in our city, at making customs gentler, citizens more civilized, eradicating illiteracy, making notions and terms rational, building wealth, developing a school system—in brief, propagating the ideals of work, justice and love for higher virtues.¹⁴⁴

This formulation remained in place throughout the forthcoming years. The solution was to provide order and to educate the masses, otherwise an escalation of the crisis might make the near-apocalyptic visions come true: “Otherwise never ever will criminality diminish; otherwise the knife and the crook will always rule the city. Because each year the criminals will be joined by all those for whom there was no place in school.”¹⁴⁵ Education was a key issue: “The most essential need of the masses is education, our masses should learn! For this end there no such thing as too much money or too much effort!”¹⁴⁶ Leaving vast arrays of society behind would pose a threat to the most basic modern aspirations:

Social life is awakening from a long coma, revealing so many wounds, so many deficiencies, so many needs that we, more than others, could not leave in sweet [passive] non-being. Life requires intense work from us, and none of us can dare avoid it. The threat gives rise to a profound responsibility toward future generations, to whom we have to pass on the legacies of our grandfathers and fathers, multiplied by our own work. And what are we going to pass on? The savagery of habits, the downfall of morals, the filthiness of the precious ideals of mankind, and degenerated development.¹⁴⁷

This type of thinking brought moralizing back into the debate over social order, intended to prevent such “degenerated development.” Whilst previously, the vagaries of capitalism were associated rather with external impositions and the parasitic

¹⁴³ Wiktor Marzec, “Beyond Group Antagonism in Asymmetrical Counter-Concepts. Conceptual Pair Order and Chaos and Ideological Struggles in Late 19th – Early 20th Century Poland,” in: *“Hellenes” and “Barbarians”: Asymmetrical Concepts in European Discourse*, ed. Kirill Postoutenko (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018).

¹⁴⁴ “Dom ludowy,” *Rozwój*, no. 27 (1907).

¹⁴⁵ “Za dużo oświaty,” *Nowy Kurier Łódzki*, no. 208 (1912).

¹⁴⁶ “Echa tygodnia,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 307 (1907).

¹⁴⁷ “Dom ludowy,” *Rozwój*, no. 27 (1907).

practices of foreign capitalists, the idea of progress in its essence remained intact. Now, however, it became obvious that moral order had to be maintained to hold progress to its promise. With the growing polarization of political languages envisioning modernity, the question regarding which morals had to be imposed on progress became a bone of contention. “Degenerated development” is here most probably a code word for socialism, which would turn all hopes into ruins, as the “masses” would spread their greed throughout the social tissue. Thus, there was no longer a linear relationship between education and progress, and a particular disciplinary pedagogical rigor was necessary to save society from a vicious socialist future.

What is important, however, is that this process of civilization was also connected with turning the uncultivated social tissue of city residents into its citizens. The allegedly foreign and ruthless capitalists, and their victims, turned into an immoral, disintegrating mass, were likewise to be civilized by “Polonization.” The former had to be domesticated, and the latter educated in a proper, national, and moral manner.

Envisioning Urban Citizenship

Journalists had a quite precise idea about what kinds of institutions a proper European city should have. Looking to Western European ideas concerning a proper urban order as a reference point for Łódź, they noticed that their city lacked these. An important component of the envisioned new order, lurking in the background of many of the already-mentioned debates, was the idea of urban citizenship, which combined entrepreneurial activity with a certain form of local “patriotism.” This envisioned order of the city disrupted the development of ideas about the modern nation. The critical case of Łódź, a multi-ethnic urban center, helps us to revisit the usually expounded history of Polish nationalism and the emerging modern (ethicized) nation.

The nation was doubtlessly an important horizon, against which the issues of local citizenry were hotly debated. Awareness of the role that education, cultural heritage, and the press played in securing the emergence of the modern nation is not an invention of later nationalism studies. The actors in those debates postulated the establishment of theaters and museums which were aimed at nothing less than nation building. However, in their attempts to overcome the perceived inadequacy of the city of Łódź compared to the modern benchmarks, intellectuals above all imagined an urban community of citizens, united by the common task of municipal development. If an additional layer was a direct competition between nationalities in the particular urban environment of Łódź, where “the Germans” had established the desired clubs and newspapers and Poles had not, this did not preclude the fragile idea that a trans-class and trans-ethnic citizenship was possible.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ “Muzeum Publiczne w Łodzi,” *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 320 (1904).

The national undertone resonated in some of the above quoted fragments, which lament the “non-Polish” character of the city. From the perspective of the Polish press, the lack of Poles in key institutions was the main obstacle to Łódź’s proper development. One has to ask, however, *who* these Poles were who were supposedly lacking. First of all, the problem was a lack of autonomy and agency which would enable introducing the widely discussed improvements. Although this critique could not be expressed explicitly, it was obvious that in the end it was the tsarist administration which was responsible for many of the bemoaned troubles. Regardless of the fact that Polish public opinion was undoubtedly anti-Russian, even independent of any quality standards of this administration, it was indeed true that the tsarist administrative apparatus was not particularly effective. It was not committed to introducing social provisions and managing the “biopolitical” welfare of the country.¹⁴⁹

The obvious proposed solution would be, naturally, to increase the number of Polish citizens and their activity in general. A common refrain in the Polish press was that if only Poles managed the city, then “all Łódź’s defects, all its dark sides could be most efficiently removed.”¹⁵⁰ However, what kind of such Polish self-government was envisioned? The answer was a form of nationalized meritocracy in which positions of power were occupied by exactly those who were regarded as decent and appropriate in the socially conservative and economically liberal social imagination. The legitimacy of the industrial champions would have been admitted, had they been nationalized. Moreover, the same rigid social hierarchy as before was to be maintained, but under Polish supervision:

Polish Łódź—it should have Polish institutions. Thus, in these institutions, which take care of every society, should those people who are appropriate be placed, i.e. our affluent factory owners (*fabrykanci*), physicians, lawyers, regents, pharmacists and merchants (...).¹⁵¹

Where did one find these Polish (or perhaps polonized) decent citizens? The typical citizen of Łódź was certainly not viewed as Polish, or even German. He was rather a particular form of denationalized, profit-oriented modern cosmopolitan, usually without a stable identity and moral obligations. In some articles, journalists claimed that there was no local patriotism and all city dwell-

¹⁴⁹ On tsarist national policies in Poland and the failure to address social questions see Leszek Jaśkiewicz, *Carat i sprawy polskie na przełomie XIX i XX wieku* (Pułtusk: Wyższa Szkoła Humanistyczna w Pułtusku, 2001); Weeks, *Nation and State in Late Imperial Russia*; Waldron, *Governing Tsarist Russia*.

¹⁵⁰ “Partykularyzm łódzki,” *Rozwój*, no. 292 (1911).

¹⁵¹ “Czyja wina?,” *Rozwój*, no. 224 (1898).

ers were rather “only newcomers, temporary residents, for whom a common bond is only a lust for money and a gold rush, at any price.”¹⁵² This was assumed to be one of the reasons for all of the city’s problems – the lack of patriotism toward and deeper relations with the city: “Has Łódź created any attachments? Is there any local patriotism? If not, that would be a black spot disgracing the second biggest—in terms of size, population, industry and trade—city of the Kingdom.”¹⁵³ Indeed, the specific relation to the city presented by the figure of *Lodzermenschen* was not considered as a proper form of local patriotism by local journalists.

The prescription for all these predicaments was a project of citizenship-building among the Polish elites, to make them capable of competing with the foreigners. Polonization also meant a wider mobilization and transformation of newcomers into real citizens. ‘Nation’ meant rather nationalization, bearing strong traces of an inevitable process. Polishness was not a mere accomplished fact (of ethnicity, culture or any other positive feature), but rather a performance-based and enacted affection to the local cause. In one article, citizens of Łódź were compared to migrating birds which fly from one country to another: “I hope”, the author stated, “that thousands of these bird-citizens approach citizenship duties honestly and seriously.”¹⁵⁴ A detailed analysis of the social composition of local society was performed in order to flesh out who exactly could build the future polonized citizenry. It is worth noting that this project was still relatively inclusive, grounded in politics and active citizenship rather than ethnicity.

Let’s skip the species called “Lodzermenschen.” These are admittedly attached to Łódź, but besides this, nothing interests them. This is their entire narrow homeland. Their particularism has to be evaluated negatively. The Polish intelligentsia is mostly exogenous: it came for current profits and it did not integrate itself into Łódź, thus it often misses other places and hates Łódź. (...) It is hard to expect from a worker, who came here from a village, and was admitted to the local factory, any love for the city which sucks the work, sweat and blood of the rural newcomers. While we can easily find elements attached to Łódź among the artisans, perhaps they are not sufficiently aware of this attachment. Equally strongly attached to the city are the German factory owners, merchants, and industrialists in general, who have settled here for several generations, if only they were not hypnotized by pan-Germanism, if only they were not asphyxiated on their trips to Berlin. These two local patriotisms, on the one hand that of Polish artisans and the petty bourgeoisie, and on the other, of the Łódź industrialists, are not difficult

¹⁵² “My i wy,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 479 (1908).

¹⁵³ “Partykularyzm łódzki,” *Rozwój*, no. 292 (1911).

¹⁵⁴ “Mały felieton. Powrót pćactwa,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 210 (1906).

to prove in the offerings, made according to their capacities, and funds for goodness and improvement of the city.¹⁵⁵

Such citizenship projects were common in articles about modern reform of local social relations and the institutional landscape. Such projects focused on awakening local patriotism and creating a political bond enabling local citizens to effectively manage their city as a coherent and involved polity. In these visions of a new institutional order, Polishness was understood politically as a conviction and readiness to work for the common local good of the city.

This view offers an interesting counterbalance to the usual narrative about the transformation of the Polish idea of nation. According to this, the earlier political vision of the noble-class nation from the pre-partition era gave way to one in which the nation to a growing extent was seen as a cultural entity, in the face of the situation of a non-existing state. ‘Nation’ had to be redefined to be effectively maintained, which also had other consequences, including growing ethnicization and exclusivity.¹⁵⁶ It seems, however, that within the highly heterogeneous urban population the civic idea of a nation (or at least operative political community) was more trans-ethnic and more place-based. Regardless of whether it was the result of an empirical situation, where “candidates” for a Polish institutional order had to be sought from within different ethnic populations, or in the political wisdom of local journalists, the fact remains that a relatively inclusive vision of urban polity was maintained against the odds in the face of harsh criticism railing against “foreign elements.” Łódź journalists, thrown into the whirlwind of a multinational city, had to re-appropriate some of its features in order to forge any positive identity, to go against the external, more ethno-national, discourse which excluded Łódź as a whole from the assumed Polish national community. The inclusive idea of urban polity was also functional as a gesture of self-assertion of the local identity.

At the same time, the “thread” of Polonization was also present in the debate over immoral and destructive capitalism. Here it acquired a slightly different shape. It was not only within the political community that citizens were defined by their practical attitude.

¹⁵⁵ “Partykularyzm łódzki,” *Rozwój*, no. 292 (1911).

¹⁵⁶ On the transformation of Polish nationalism see above all Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*. Interesting comments on the inaccuracy of the application of the usual division of state-based and culture-based-nations to the Polish case, see Andrzej Walicki, *Idea narodu w polskiej myśli oświeceniowej* (Warszawa: Polska Akademia Nauk Instytut Filozofii i Socjologii, 2000); Andrzej Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The Case of Poland* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994); Andrzej Walicki, “Intellectual Elites and the Vicissitudes of <Imagined Nation> in Poland,” *East European Politics & Societies* 11, no. 2 (March 1, 1997): 227–53.

Ethnicizing the Economy

Critics of the capitalist moral order found the deficiencies of individual capitalists in their moral corruption and lack of any obligation toward the broader entity, purportedly the nation. It was the workers and the Polish people who fell victim to the predatory practices of German and Jewish (here sometimes just ‘cosmopolitan’) entrepreneurs. It seemed that some deeper moral capacities were needed to transform the situation. The mere fact of decently performing social roles in the capitalist order was not enough to reform it, as this—obviously—perfectly reproduced its pathologies. In the eyes of the local press, the pitfalls of economic reality stemmed from the social composition of the local industrialists. Thus, the idea of political citizenship was conflated with economic activity, which purportedly also demanded moralized practices and national affiliation; “But producer-citizens are most hard to find among Łódź factory owners and industrialists”,¹⁵⁷ as one writer complained. Thus, the discourse concerning the Polonization of institutions had its parallel, or perhaps better, evil twin, in the idea of the polonization of industry. Foreign industrialists not only threatened the development of Polish national assets but undermined the very heart of Polishness—the national character of local cities, landscapes, and morals.

The Łódź bourgeoisie, with its spirit and position, is foreign to our country. Because it plays a dominant role among the classes of our country’s population it leaves an imprint which, for instance, in Łódź removes the Polish character of the city.¹⁵⁸

This line of thinking also reappeared in the progressive press, which was much readier to openly criticize capitalists. More left-center titles also combined (or conflated) the critique of capitalist discontents with nationalist sentiments. It is worth noting, however, that this proposed “Polonization” was usually not yet a code word for antisemitism, but more a general differentiation between the domestic and the foreign. For years national animosities had been much more focused on the Germans than the Jews. Only later, gradually appearing in the 1890s and speeding up after 1906, during subsequent Duma elections, did antisemitism become a politically exploited theme.¹⁵⁹ Even then, however, the blade of criticism toward industrialists retained its largely anti-German edge:

¹⁵⁷ “Wystawy a fabrykanci łódzcy,” *Rozwój*, no. 280 (1913).

¹⁵⁸ “Najwyższy czas,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 316 (1907).

¹⁵⁹ Robert Blobaum, “The Politics of Antisemitism in Fin-de-Siècle Warsaw,” *The Journal of Modern History* 73, no. 2 (2001): 275–306; Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*; Ury, *Barricades and Banners*; Theodore R. Weeks, “Fanning the Flames: Jews in the Warsaw Press, 1905–1912,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 28, no. 2 (December 1998): 63–81; Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism*.

It is already high time that the capital of the country's industry be turned into a truly Polish city. This would be possible if Poles played a role in basic Łódź enterprises, i.e. in managing factories. Of course, for this [task] the proletariat might not be called upon, as it is poor and overworked; here the capital of the wealthy is needed. In our country so-called families of pedigree are counted among this class, which, if only they wanted, might use their funds not only for active involvement in Łódź industry, but also to develop this industry (...). Thus, one has to move our bisons in this direction and convince them, at least in this way, to demonstrate their patriotism, which today is instead displayed in horse racing, card playing, mistresses and spreading the world over the fame of ... Polish prodigality.¹⁶⁰

The notion of economic patriotism was thus applied in equal measure to the populations at the core of the Polish national imagination as to the “foreign capitalists.” The latter, however, gradually lost ground in terms of their possible “reintegration.” The condemned disorder of cosmopolitan capitalism and of the egoistic desires of an urban population without culture were confronted with an implicit vision of a noble, Polish economy with “Catholic values and a code of honor”,¹⁶¹ supplemented perhaps with some corporatist institutions assisting the working class, which might possibly finally recover its moral purity and the benign countenance of a genuinely Polish people (*lud*).

In this vein, it was feared that the new capitalist order would change people's mindsets and strengthen their animal instincts. The underlying assumption revealed here is that capitalism somehow does not fit the Poles, and the other way around, too. Correspondingly, if Poles became capitalist, they would lose their Polishness, and if capitalism was sufficiently polonized to be actually Polish, it would cease to be capitalism. The newborn bourgeois-entrepreneur did not fit well either into this dubious syllogism, or into the existing social structure and celebrated Polish moral values. This image was strengthened by the social upsurge in 1905 and the great lockout, when factory owners closed down major factories so as to force workers to accept pre-revolutionary hierarchies on the shop floor.¹⁶² At this time Łódź was described as a place where:

¹⁶⁰ “Najwyższy czas,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 316 (1907).

¹⁶¹ Zysiak, “The Desire for Fullness. The Fantasmatic Logic of Modernization Discourses at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Century in Łódź,” 57.

¹⁶² These revolutionary events constituted a shock therapy for the Polish intelligentsia and proved that any coalition with the factory owners was going to be extremely difficult if not impossible Magdalena Micińska, *Inteligencja na rozdrożach: 1864–1918* (Warszawa: Instytut Historii PAN, 2008).

Factory owners' policy is not complicated; it is cynically honest (...): to squeeze everything possible out of people and country, and go hand in hand with those willing to help in order to acquire the widest possible license. We have numerous examples of when Łódź nawabs have supported anti-Polish institutions.¹⁶³

This municipal nationalism had its limits. While *Rozwój* repeatedly accused local moguls of anti-Polonism, the National Democratic milieu (toward which the newspaper displayed a growing convergence) were more eager to support the industrialists in the name of the economic interests of "the country" and *against* "socialist anarchy."¹⁶⁴ It was these left-center milieu who took the baton of anti-capitalist critique in the nationalized mode. Social critique at its peaks targeted capitalism as the cause of the moral decline. Spoiled, greedy, and usually foreign capitalists without civic virtues ("We have so many rich, rich people, and unfortunately so few citizens") were occupied on the one hand with deliberate speculation and deadly competition, and on the other in vain pleasures and ignoble debauchery. From this point of view, it was concluded that, "nowadays the capitalist class seems worthless to society."¹⁶⁵

Inasmuch as the capitalist ownership structure and market economy were taken for granted, only rarely were moderate calls made for poverty alleviation and limited social provisions (such as compulsory social insurance paid by the workers themselves). How then did this correspond with the rather common critiques of capitalist discontent and the imperfections of city life? The answer put on the table in major local dailies was the national composition of owners—the foreign entrepreneurs were found guilty. Therefore, the Polonization of industry and its accompanying institutions was trumpeted as the way out.

Capitalism in the abstract, as a system of social relationships, as such was difficult to address and to blame. The direct responsibility for discontent fell upon the greedy and spoiled Lodzermenschen: tradespeople and factory owners, i.e. to a growing extent, Germans and Jews. Depending on the political opinion of the journal and time of publication, the elements varied, although the main pattern remained unchanged. A lack of concern about or involvement in any Polish inter-

¹⁶³ "Ruch polityczny w Łodzi," *Rozwój*, no. 245 (1907).

¹⁶⁴ Interesting analysis of complex negotiations and self-refashioning of the Polish, National-Democratic engineers working for the German industrialist during the 1905–1907 revolution is presented in Andreas R. Hofmann, "The Biedermanns in the 1905 Revolution: A Case Study in Entrepreneurs' Responses to Social Turmoil in Łódź," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 82, no. 1 (2004): 27–49. See also more detailed investigation in Yedida S. Kanfer, "Łódź: Industry, Religion, and Nationalism in Russian Poland, 1880–1914" (New Haven: Yale University, 2011).

¹⁶⁵ "Zachloroformowani," *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 117 (1905).

ests, or even economic benefits on any level other than the individual; the basic problems of communication in terms of language as well as values; the ‘other’ way of living reflected in exotic habits and different time structures—all of this was used to threaten public opinion with a horrific vision of a dangerous parasite on Polish soil and in Polish culture.



Figure 13. The Izrael K. Poznański Factory, author: Bronisław Wilkoszewski, 1896, Muzeum Miasta Łodzi, MHMŁ/I/2096 (Miastograf.pl – digital collection).

The argumentation used in these criticisms contained many elements of economic antisemitism. At the same time, it increasingly held sway over Polish liberal and nationalist public opinion.¹⁶⁶ In this manner, Jewish tradespeople and innkeepers were held responsible for the popularity of tobacco among the Polish masses, and consequently even for conflagrations caused by smokers.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Grzegorz Krzywiec, “The Polish Intelligentsia in the Face of the ‘Jewish Question’ (1905–1914),” *Acta Poloniae Historica*, no. 100 (2009): 133–69; Theodore R. Weeks, “Polish ‘Progressive Antisemitism’, 1905–1914,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 25, no. 2 (1995): 49–68.

¹⁶⁷ “Walka z pożogą,” *Rozwój*, no. 215 (1900).

Meanwhile, the Germans, presented as the most influential group, were allegedly responsible for the aberrations in Łódź's development, the exploitation of the illiterate Polish masses. Their inability (or disinclination) to influence the political scene was also targeted by the press, which urged them to become modern citizens involved in the public sphere and not simply pursue material aggrandizement. Finally, even the Polish nobility and intelligentsia were to blame for their reluctance to become engaged in Łódź politics. The dreamed-up solution was the Polonization of Łódź.

While early calls "to get rid of the foreign elements and install Polish ones" referred to local politics and civility,¹⁶⁸ year by year the vision of Polish national capitalism was more grounded in a quite literal ethnic Polonization. This change corresponded to the more general transformation of Polish nationalism. Within the debate on urban citizenship and moralized capitalism this had a slightly slower pace in Łódź. National Democrats in Warsaw were already redefining Polishness along ethnic lines and envisioned a disciplined national body-politic, successfully defending itself against the Jewish threat.¹⁶⁹ At the same time though, when such ideas touched on the sphere of local politics, urban citizenship in Łódź was still envisioned in a more open way, where active citizens of the city remained welcome regardless of their ethnic or national credentials.

However, it was not likely that visions of urban community would be endlessly constructed against the tide. Gradually the idea of a more coherent, ethnic-based and disciplined nation dominated, or as *Rozwój* proclaimed: "The froth has subsided and there is still some boiling, but in the cauldron a firm whole is coagulating, a germ of a better, national future."¹⁷⁰ Not only did ethnic tension have to be eliminated from the integrated body of national capitalism, in addition, class differentiation was subsumed under the national body-politic (with the workers under the hierarchic control of a national leadership).

¹⁶⁸ "Czyja wina?," *Rozwój*, no. 224 (1898).

¹⁶⁹ On the growing power of political antisemitism those days see Weeks, *From Assimilation to Antisemitism*; Wiktor Marzec, "What Bears Witness of the Failed Revolution? The Rise of Political Antisemitism during the 1905–1907 Revolution in the Kingdom of Poland," *Eastern European Politics and Societies* 30, no. 1 (2016): 189–213, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08883254155581896>; Ury, *Barricades and Banners*; Grzegorz Krzywiec, "Eliminationist Anti-Semitism at Home and Abroad: Polish Nationalism, the Jewish Question, and Eastern European Right-Wing Mass Politics," in: *The New Nationalism and the First World War*, ed. Lawrence Rosenthal and Vesna Rodic (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Blobaum, "The Politics of Antisemitism in Fin-de-Siècle Warsaw."

¹⁷⁰ "Ruch polityczny w Łodzi," *Rozwój*, no. 245 (1907).



Figure 14. Fair in Leonard Square, postcard from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

The multi-dimensional vision of hierarchy also affected the idea of the integration of the municipal economy into the country-wide national project. When a hierarchy was again imposed, the allegedly foreign industrial center would not stand high in its ranks. Former local interests were to recede and the health of the nation was to be more important than running the accounts of local industry. Hence Łódź's economy was to be sacrificed in favor of the growing significance of the national one. Consequently, as Łódź was the most vital industrial center in Poland, its alien character raised doubts about its chances under the Polish version of capitalism. Even the local press, normally so eager to support Łódź's claims to the role of a prominent urban center, did not hesitate to warn that its further growth might harm Polish interests across the country:

All in all, it is a disturbing and significant fact that Łódź is the product of someone else's energy and of foreign capitalists. Its growing domination—to the detriment of Warsaw—is a glaring example of our economic and financial underdevelopment.¹⁷¹

Thus, local pride and striving for a better image of the city were finally subsumed under the broader national interest, to which the local Polish elites should give way, postponing the interests of the urban polity, already so divided that it was no longer perceived as a meaningful entity.

¹⁷¹ "Warszawa i Łódź," *Rozwój*, no. 224 (1914).

Table 2. Expression of metropolitan urban discourse with diagnostic expressions and visions of improvement 1897–1914

| Diagnosis: unwanted features of the city | Exemplary articulations | Solutions proposed | Exemplary articulations |
|--|---|---|--|
| Cultural otherness | <i>[Germans express local and Polish patriotism but] unfortunately everyday facts deny this. Declarations made out of private interest only.</i> | Polonization of institutions | <i>The Polish Łódź—it should have Polish institutions. In these institutions, which take care of every society, those people who are appropriate should be placed, i.e. our affluent factory owners (fabrykanci), physicians, lawyers, regents, pharmacists and merchants (...).</i> |
| | <i>Łódź is the creation of somebody else's energy and foreign capitalists. Its growing advantage in the country is (...) clear evidence of our underdevelopment in economy and finance.</i> | Polonization of economy | <i>It is already high time that the capital of the country's industry be turned into a truly Polish city. This would be possible if the Poles participated in basic Łódź enterprises, i.e. in managing factories. (...).</i> |
| Lacking culture and local elites | <i>There is no variance in social stratification, which would produce a type of Łódź dweller, having distinct features of blood and character. Among local inhabitants there are no bonds with the city as a unified social organism, there are only newcomers, temporary inhabitants, invigorated by a common lust for gold and feverish striving for property at any price.</i> | Constructing local citizenship and ethos of civil obligations | <i>I hope that thousands of these bird-citizens approach citizenship duties honestly and seriously; that they will help the common people in social issues, so as to remove the hostility against them felt among the numerous class of the poor, the working class.</i> |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| | <p><i>The local social life is certainly far from tempting and encouraging, and there are hardly any facilities which everywhere else constitute the indispensable requirement of every educated person, and it is difficult to point to any institutions which testify to the existence of serious intellectual life and social activity.</i></p> | <p>Development of cultural life, harmonious development</p> | <p>Lódź has grown so much and matured, is enriched and beautified itself, and now it is civilizing itself, and there is no doubt that it will also take enormous steps, as only it certainly can, on this path. Culture will soon be a need and ambition of its inhabitants.</p> |
| <p>Lacking metropolitan features</p> | <p>Lódź has beautiful houses, wooden pavements, electric trams, some shops, three railway lines and droshkies on rubber. No doubt, externally it resembles a metropolis (gród wielki) with European features. Yes, Lódź has the varnish of salon furniture, but this decoration is only an external feature. It is misleading; beneath there is a cramped atmosphere, like a township uncannily resembling the renowned center of the world – the famous Kiernozia [a village in the region mocked in jokes for its provinciality].</p> | | |
| | <p><i>Our Lódź, despite the appearance of a big city, is so far rather an enormous township (miasteczko) with respect to the culture of its inhabitants. It is somehow like a concentration of small townships, a plethora of Garwolins or Pacanóws [emblematic provincial cities in plural], into one entity. It bears many resemblances to the intellectual and social life of many similar godforsaken places.)</i></p> | | |

Table 2. cont.

| Diagnosis: unwanted features of the city | Exemplary articulations | Solutions proposed | Exemplary articulations |
|--|---|--|--|
| The trap of aggregate private interest | <i>The streets are neither paved, nor lit. The magistrate denies responsibility, as they are not municipal property, and the owners neglect them (...) as they do not want to spend money.</i> | | |
| Inefficient local administration | <i>In Łódź, nothing—literally nothing—is done, apart from collecting taxes and spending them in an uncontrolled manner for aims unrelated to the city's good.</i> | Efficient and self-governing state structure | <i>We have to finally understand, that for the stupidity and greediness of the “morguls” there is only one medicine. We have to oblige them to pay tax. Meanwhile, we need a democratic and constitutional state regime, in order to give the population of this state the power to rule.</i> |
| Lacking infrastructure | <i>There is the power of millions, but there are no hospitals, there are many palaces—proudly prominent—but there are no sanitary flats for the hard-working masses, there are trimmed gardens, but no public parks.</i> | | |
| | <i>For all its work this society has not been able to create appropriate institutions. The most important needs of the local population are either entirely neglected or they are served by private institutions, doing only as much as they can.</i> | Local self-governance | <i>Shame, shame! [The emergency health service] should be independent of the mercy of capricious philanthropy, long ago this should have been solved by a municipal organ financing it from municipal funds. But this is no fault of the emergency health service, or anybody else's; this is a systemic fault, which can be fixed by local self-governance.</i> |

| | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <p>Inefficient philanthropy serving the vanity of the elite</p> | <p><i>Philanthropy has become such a fancy thing, that [it seems that] philanthropists dress themselves and eat only to give people the possibility to earn money. But philanthropy exists only there, where poverty exists. A rich and well-organized country does not need philanthropy.</i></p> | <p>Municipal and state welfare institutions</p> | <p><i>We have to undertake ardent work in order to replace philanthropic institutions with municipal or state ones. The broader the group considering this a necessity, the closer we get to make it happen.</i></p> |
| <p>Degeneration of the urban population</p> | <p><i>In Łódź, there are businesses worth millions, but nonetheless there are no schools.</i></p> | <p>Improvements in school system</p> | <p><i>So, when the street—from whose claws the factory schools did not rescue many future prey—when this poisonous setting for children’s souls, (...) the street, the Minotaur again is taking a new hecatomb, a sincere sorrow has to shake everybody’s soul. If this or next year they do not open more elementary schools, an entire generation won’t learn to read.</i></p> |
| | <p><i>Never will the number of bandits fall; the knife and the club will reign over Łódź eternally. The cadres of offenders will be supplemented with those who did not find a place in schools—and who were swallowed up by the street.</i></p> | <p>Education and moral improvement</p> | <p><i>Social life educates the young of both sexes, teaches them decent mutual relationships (...), contributes to gentle habits and discourages the young from going to taverns, where the reptiles of debauchery and degeneration of morals are bred.</i></p> |

Forging Modernity – Conclusion

All the above-described struggles created a particular, truly modern language, crisscrossing many ideological milieux and detailed political identities. Its features included a prospective attitude aimed at self-reshaping in a desired, modern, and time-adequate manner.¹⁷² This discourse contained a sober awareness of the actual conditions of the city, whilst it also built a strong “will to improve” out of the predicaments. This ushered in a time structure with combined impatience and expectation, a particular form of awareness of the crisis combined with a critique aimed at overcoming it.¹⁷³ It projected a kind of “flat modernity” which moves along at the pace of history and in one linear time frame synchronously carries along all its elements. In Łódź, critics recognized some isolated fragments which, destitute of their accompanying contexts, caused more harm than good. Thus, using a rhetoric that rested on certain “reference points” (usually other European cities) and certain ideas of harmonious development (coded as order, proper urban environment, lack of scandalous infrastructural voids), local journalists attempted to build a modern vision for their city. It was supposed to be a path of development that bypassed the conundrum of an approaching unexpected, insular, and foreign modernity.

The vehicle for this vision was a new form of urban polity and municipal citizenship. Its shape was very different from those patterns familiar from the “main current” of the debate on Polishness. New ideas of citizenship were developed in local disputes over who the city needed and who didn’t deserve the name of ‘local citizen’. This problem was debated against the backdrop of a long tradition of criticism focused on the foreign nature of local entrepreneurship and the failure to deliver sufficient proof of national or even local patriotism. All in all, the will to improve and to harmonize Łódź’s modernity with alleged benchmarks of modernity led local public opinion to forge a new identity through a partial re-appropriation of externally ascribed vices. Thus, the local multi-ethnic motley crew of “foreign” industrialists and “savage” workers was from time to time part and parcel of the constantly refashioned urban polity. Only later did the nationalist re-description of the assumed political community take the upper hand.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Michel Foucault, “What Is Enlightenment,” in: *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, 1st ed (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Zysiak, “The Desire for Fullness. The Fantasmatic Logic of Modernization Discourses at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Century in Łódź.”

¹⁷³ On dialectics of crisis and critique among the enlightened elites acting outside of the absolutist state see Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*.

¹⁷⁴ On the notion of re-description, here used rather in the generic sense, see Quentin Skinner, “Rhetoric and Conceptual Change,” *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought* 3

The predicaments of local capitalism also instigated a more profound criticism which had not previously been expressed in officially printed media. Simultaneously, year by year socialist parties broadened their capacities to publish news, booklets, and leaflets. These productions intensified immensely during the 1905 Revolution. While in the initial phase liberal public opinion was polarized in respect to its evaluation of the popular upsurge, in the final phase it was the nationalists who successfully hegemonized the public sphere. The divide between the political language of nationalism, with its various intensities, and the socialist project of renewal would set the tone for debates on urban modernity in the forthcoming interwar decades.

(1999): 34–63; Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Kamil Piskala

THE INTERWAR: DEMOCRATIC POLITICS AND MODERN CITY BETWEEN TWO WORLD WARS 1918–1923

“We” is no mere grammatical convention...¹

The Decline of the “Polish Manchester”

“Dzieje wielkiej kariery” [*The History of a Great Career*] is a famous book written by historian Henryk Dinter, devoted primarily to the 19th-century development of Łódź.² The title was an explicit reference to the positive image shared by many 19th-century European industrial cities, headed by Manchester, “the first modern city.”³ This kind of positive stereotype of 19th-century industrial cities was influenced by such elements as the fast pace of everyday life, economic success, opportunities for spectacular social promotion or how easily they adopted technological novelties. Naturally, rapid industrialization, particularly in its peripheral, Central-European variation, also had its dark side. This has been expressed by the images explored in Chapter 1; Łódź as the “city of chimneys”, a “cultural desert”, the city of chaos and the fall of morality. These images competed with each other in social perception; however, it is hard to say which one clearly dominated before 1914.⁴

The positive image of the city, as one of success and continuous prosperity also affected the perception of Łódź among some of its citizens. When describing the atmosphere on the eve of the First World War, Mieczysław Hertz, a famous activist and a Łódź entrepreneur, wrote:

¹ Tony Judt, *The Memory Chalet* (New York: Penguin Press, 2010).

² Dinter Henryk Stanisław, *Dzieje wielkiej kariery. Łódź 1332–1860* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1965).

³ Kidd and Wyke, *Manchester*.

⁴ Kossert, “‘Promised Land?’ Urban Myth and the Shaping of Modernity in Industrial Cities: Manchester and Lodz,” 187.

The year 1914 was prosperous for Łódź. It appeared that this truly American boom of our city would continue. The population grew, new streets carved into suburban arable land, factories were built and expanded. A lot was expected from the so-called winter season as news of good yields in Russia sounded very optimistic. Anticipating the fulfillment of auspicious forecasts, factories worked at full capacity and warehouses were filled with goods awaiting their buyers.⁵

However, the First World War and its consequences changed the trajectory of the city's history, putting an end to the era of the "American boom." In the interwar period, Łódź was increasingly less associated with a "great career", growing fortunes and business opportunities. 19th-century clichés no longer managed to characterize the city convincingly or define the challenges it was facing. The ramifications of the debate about the future of Łódź underwent a deep redefinition, and the dispute about how to define the modern took on a new dynamic.

The Years of War: the Economic Collapse and Political Liberalization

Łódź was located about a hundred kilometers from the German-Russian border. As a result, almost immediately after the outbreak of the war in August 1914, it found itself in the zone of direct military operations. In the first phase of combat, as the frontline continued to move, the city changed hands several times. In late November and early December 1914, fierce and bloody fighting took place around Łódź, involving several hundred thousand German and Russian soldiers. This so-called "battle of Łódź", one of the largest battles on the Eastern Front in the first year of the war, resulted in the Russian army being pushed out to the east and the Germans permanently seizing Łódź.⁶ However, despite the scale of military operations, the city itself suffered only to a minor degree—the losses affected primarily the peripheral districts and were a result of an artillery attack. It was the German occupation started in December 1914, which proved to be of much graver consequence to Łódź.

The first negative effects of the war were felt by Łódź's textile industry only several months after the military operations had begun. In the face of increasing uncertainty on the part of entrepreneurs and the border location of Łódź, the number of orders made at the factories in Łódź decreased dramatically. Soon there were also problems with obtaining raw materials and resources (mainly,

⁵ Mieczysław Hertz, *Łódź w czasie wielkiej wojny* (Łódź: skl. gł. Księg. S. Seipelt, 1933), 3.

⁶ Prit Buttar, *Collision of Empires: The War on the Eastern Front in 1914* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 356–87.

coal supplied from Zagłębie Dąbrowskie, among others).⁷ Once the banking institutions had been evacuated deep into Russia, the financial liquidity of enterprises started to be questioned. Consequently, the majority of factories were closed and thousands of people found themselves to be unemployed and without a source of steady income. Halting the textile manufacturing in a city where this kind of industry dominated so considerably was bound to trigger off a number of negative social effects.

As a result, Łódź started to lose its population quickly during the war years. A number of inhabitants moved to nearby villages, often seeking the support of their family and hoping to find an easier source of income. A swath of unemployed workers, willingly or unwillingly left to work in German industry which was suffering from labor shortages. Due to malnutrition and bad sanitary conditions, the number of people sick with infectious diseases grew rapidly, and consequently so did the mortality rate, which rose from 23.4 ‰ in 1913 to 35.6‰ in 1917. It is estimated that the city's population decreased by 40%.⁸

Attempts were made to deal with the growing problems in the process of self-organization. As early as the beginning of 1914, when it was possible that the Russian authorities would leave the city, a Citizens' Committee [*Komitet Obywatelski*], which made efforts to normalize the situation in the city, was founded. Moreover, charity organizations such as "A Drop of Milk" [*"Kropla Mleka"*] or the Citizens' Committee for Helping the Poor [*Komitet Obywatelski Niesienia Pomocy Biednym*] became intensely active. However, there were limits to what they could accomplish, and their operations were additionally hampered by the German's occupation politics.⁹ Along with the deteriorating food and resource supplies of the war-waging Reich, the occupiers' politics became increasingly stricter. On the one hand, the population's food rations were systematically reduced and a number of "ersatz goods" (inferior products that replaced items difficult to come by, e.g. coffee) were being introduced. On the other, confiscation actions were conducted on a large scale. The German economy, shifted to the war mode, needed a continuous influx of resources obtained in a number of ways, among others, from the occupied territories.¹⁰ The needs of the local economy were not considered.

⁷ Fijałek et al., *Łódź: dzieje miasta do 1918 r.*, 287–98.

⁸ Fijałek et al., 352.

⁹ See: Grażyna Ewa Karpińska, "In the Streets. The (Non-)Everyday Life in the City of Łódź during the Great War," *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 192 (2015), <http://dspace.uni.lodz.pl:8080/xmlui/handle/11089/18441>.

¹⁰ Fijałek et al., *Łódź: dzieje miasta do 1918 r.*, 298–300; Jesse Kauffman, *Elusive Alliance: The German Occupation of Poland in World War I* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

Confiscations and the introduction of “ersatz goods” directly affected the quality of life of the city’s population. Furthermore, they were also a serious blow to Łódź’s industry. As a result of the occupying authorities’ operations, a large number of machines and much equipment was confiscated or destroyed when extracting precious metals from their parts.¹¹ This was exacerbated by the fact that along with the shift of the frontline to the east, Łódź’s enterprises lost access to their funds kept in the Russian banks, and after the October Revolution the capital deposited in these accounts vanished entirely. It is estimated that the total losses of Łódź’s industry due to confiscations and the plunder of the German occupier amounted to around 190 million rubles, and as much again as a result of severing economic ties with Russia and the Russian Revolution.¹² Another far-reaching consequence of the Russian Revolution was the breaking of traditional ties between Łódź’s textile industry and the Russian markets, which had been the main consumer of Łódź’s manufacture for years. All this contributed to a tragic outcome during the four years of war for Łódź’s industry, which in turn translated into growing social tension and the advancing pauperization of a segment of the population.

However, the regime introduced by the occupiers coincided with a political liberalization. The supervision of the Germans, and even more so, the Austrians, over the activity of official and clandestine organizations was much less effective and restrictive than it was under Russian rule. The margins of political freedom expanded substantially and it was mostly the overt forms of agitation targeted at the occupiers that were decidedly repressed. Under these new conditions, Łódź started to transform into an important center of political life. This was clearly evidenced by the course of the election campaign to the city council, which took place at the turn of 1916 and 1917. On the one hand, the decision of the Germans to hold elections to city councils in the territory of the Kingdom was a gesture of good will toward the population of the occupied lands; on the other, it was aimed at creating a body that would share the responsibility for the population’s deteriorating material situation.

The elections were also a great opportunity for the increasingly active parties and political circles to develop agitation and confirm the reach of their own social influence. Voting itself took place according to a very conservative, curial electoral system, which meant that in order to gain a seat in the 6th curia (the so-called curia of the “popular vote”), around fifty times more votes were needed compared to a seat in the 2nd curia (trade and big industries). Hence, although a city council elected this way would represent the sentiments of the population

¹¹ Wiesław Puś, “The Development of the City of Łódź (1820–1939),” *Polin. A Journal of Polish–Jewish Studies* 6 (1991), 13.

¹² Fijałek et al., *Łódź: dzieje miasta do 1918 r.*, 301.

in only a limited fashion, the election campaign itself was extremely animated, and the production of various kinds of propaganda fliers and appeals quite considerable.¹³ As it turned out, it was actually an overture to the complete democratization that occurred just two years later.



Figure 15. German occupation during WWI, a time of rising political activity: patriotic demonstratoin on the anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May, 3.05.1916, from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

The city council elected in 1917 as well as its appointed mayor Leopold Skulski (an apothecary connected to the right-wing camp) had very limited powers, and on major issues, it could only appeal to the occupying authorities as a petitioner. Nevertheless, the interest in political problems stirred by the elections did not subside, which was also influenced by the course of events in the international arena. The Russian Revolution, the famous manifestos of President Wilson on war goals and peace terms, in which the postulate to appoint an independent Polish state was directly formulated, and finally, the increasingly significant defeats of the Central Powers on the Western Front all made Poles anticipate the defeat of the occupiers and the restitution of the Polish state. In the first days of

¹³ Janina Jaworska, "Druk Wydawnictw Polityczno-Propagandowych w Łodzi w Okresie Pierwszej Wojny Światowej," *Roczniki biblioteczne* XIX, z. 1–2 (1975); Aneta Stawiszyńska, *Łódź w latach I wojny światowej* (Oświęcim: Napoleon V, 2016).

November 1918, Austria lost control over Galicia, and on 7 November in Lublin, the pro-independence left-wing parties proclaimed the formation of a “Republic of Poland’s” government independent of the occupiers.¹⁴ On 11 November, following rumors about a signing of a treaty on the Western Front and the return of Józef Piłsudski from a German prison in Magdeburg to Warsaw, the disarmament of German soldiers began.

After the creation of the state, an ardent bid for electoral support started. In Łódź, election campaigns were largely marked by radical social sentiments. While on a national scale, the ND turned out to be the strongest party, in Łódź parties appealing to workers won both the elections to the Legislative Sejm and to the city council. It was the Polish Socialist Party which combined pro-independence postulates with a socialist program typical of parties that were offshoots of the Socialist International,¹⁵ and the National Workers’ Union calling for progressive social reforms but rejecting the radical forms of class warfare as shattering the unity of national community.¹⁶ These two parties formed a coalition after the elections, appointing Aleksy Rzewski, one of the local leaders of the Polish Socialist Party, to the office of city president.¹⁷

Democratic Politics and the Press in the Independent State

The turn of 1916 and 1917 witnessed the birth of a completely new, democratic field of “urban politics”, previously unknown under Russian rule. This emerged after the Germans announced elections to the city council in Łódź, although primarily as a result of the municipal elections held in early 1919 in the revived Polish state. Disputes about the city, its future and possible directions of growth held until then on the pages of the press and publications had to adjust their nature to the new conditions. It was assumed that from that point forward, the municipal government, appointed and supervised by the citizens, would gain key influence on the city’s development as well as the tools to raise its citizens’ quality of life. While it allowed a larger segment of citizens to engage in “urban politics”, it also naturally became an issue on which the local political elites at-

¹⁴ Peter D. Stachura, *Poland, 1918–1945: An Interpretive and Documentary History of the Second Republic* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 28.

¹⁵ More on the Polish Socialist Party and its ideology: Jan Tomicki, *Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, 1892–1948* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1983); Michał Śliwa, *Polska myśl socjalistyczna: (1918–1948)* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy imienia Ossolińskich, 1988).

¹⁶ Teresa Monasterska, *Narodowy Związek Robotniczy: 1905–1920* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1973); see also Ludwik Mrocza, *Łódzka Organizacja Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej w latach 1918–1926* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1972), 39–47.

¹⁷ Mrocza, *Łódzka Organizacja Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej w latach 1918–1926*.

tempted to focus society's attention. Furthermore, along with the creation of a democratic local government, competing visions had to address more directly the issue of how to manage the city with available measures. Within the conditions of democratic politics, discourse about the city and desired changes also had to include the question of mass political mobilization and adjust its rhetoric to the conditions of electoral competition.



Figure 16. General panorama of the industrial city, author: unknown, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-U-3228.

The development of local government and the birth of “urban politics” were inscribed within wider transformations brought about by the political outcomes of the First World War in this part of Europe. “Succession states” emerging on the map of Europe following the disintegration of former, multinational empires, fulfilled the ambitions of 19th-century nationalist movements. Intellectuals and political leaders engaged in the activity of nationalist movements perceived an independent state not only as instrumental in developing a sense of national community, but also as the only chance to prevent their civilization lagging behind that of the West.¹⁸ According to authors connected to the Polish pro-independence left-wing, statehood was supposed to become an agent of accelerated modernity, gradually bridging the gap between Poland and Western Europe.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe Before World War II* (University of California Press, 2001), 145–46; Behrends and Kohlrausch, *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890–1940*, 3.

¹⁹ On a positive attitude to the state as a modernizing agent among peripheral socialists see Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths towards Modernity: Contextualizing Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans* (Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2009).

Great hopes tied to the opportunities afforded by regaining statehood were quite common. Jędrzej Moraczewski, the prime minister of the short-term government at the turn of 1918 and 1919, recounted the atmosphere in November 1918 as follows:

It is impossible to express this elation, this frenzy of joy that the Polish population was steeped in at this moment. After 120 years, the cordons vanished! They were gone! Independence! Unification! Own state! Forever! Chaos? It doesn't matter. It will be fine. Everything will be fine because we're free of the leeches, thieves, looters (...) we'll govern ourselves.²⁰

The perspective of “governing oneself” kindled the political imagination. It was commonly perceived that the instruments of national and municipal power had granted the participants of political life the opportunity to create deep changes to social reality. The present, carrying the stigma of the partitioning powers, was the subject of criticism; the future, however, seemed open and undetermined, as if awaiting bold plans and ambitious projects. Social reality was viewed as more flexible, more subject to changes and reformative actions. All these factors—developing the institution of modern representative democracy, great hopes connected with emerging statehood, the political empowerment of working people accelerated by radical social sentiments—transformed the first postwar years into a period of ideological inflation, one which abounded in modernizing projects and visions that competed with each other.²¹

The press was the main arena of discursive struggle between these visions, and at the same time also the medium which had the most potential for political mobilization throughout the interwar period. As noted by Paul Brykczynski:

The press, in particular, constitutes a critical tool in understanding the discursive battles that shaped interwar Polish culture. In the 1920s and 1930s, newspapers were at the very height of their influence in shaping the conceptual universe and life-world of Polish society because, on the one hand, increased literacy meant that they were accessible to a very wide audience and, on the other, they did not yet have competition from television or even the radio.²²

²⁰ Jędrzej Moraczewski, *Przewrót w Polsce*, ed. Tomasz Nałęcz (Warszawa: Muzeum Historii Polski, 2015), 51.

²¹ Brian Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World: Beyond Martyrdom* (Chichester: Wiley–Blackwell, 2014), 74; Krzysztof Kawalec, *Spadkobiercy niepokornych: dzieje polskiej myśli politycznej 1918–1939* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 2000), 11–14.

²² Paul Brykczynski, *Primed for Violence: Murder, Antisemitism and Democratic politics in Interwar Poland* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2016), 15–16.

The vehement revival of the public sphere caused both by democratization and common hopes awakened by the regaining of independence left a significant mark on the Polish press. In the new situation, the former general ideological orientation of the press often transformed into specific party sympathies, as a result of which many of the officially non-partisan or independent papers got involved in political conflicts and electoral competition.²³ This also applied to Łódź.

Among the key papers printed in Łódź in the early 1920s, formally only the weekly *Łodzianin*²⁴ was published as the press organ of a political party. Published by the Polish Socialist Party, its pages featured both general program articles on socialist ideology, the tactics that a socialist movement should pursue in the post-war conditions, and statements about Łódź and the politics of coalition which controlled the city board since 1919. The weekly *Dziennik Zarządu miasta Łodzi* also wrote extensively about the activities and plans of the local government. This paper, founded in 1919, was originally meant to be the official organ of the municipal council. Although "Dziennik..." did not reach a mass audience in a high print run, aside from content on official matters it also offered a rich journalistic section and a number of technical articles devoted to the municipality's policies and the plans of the City Hall. Unsurprisingly, the paper was favorable toward the city authorities and despite very moderate rhetoric, it usually displayed values, arguments and postulates similar to those of the more partisan *Łodzianin*.

Two large journals with a long history and rich tradition – *Rozwój* and *Kurier Łódzki* – stood in direct opposition to the city authorities. Although *Rozwój* declared its independence and remained a private publishing endeavor, it continued to be closely connected to the National Democracy party – just as it had been before 1914; it generally represented views typical of this formation (the local activists of the ND often presented their views on its pages). Until the outbreak of the First World War, *Kurier Łódzki* had presented itself as a progressive paper. By the early 1920s, however, it clearly sympathized with the right-wing camp, its postulates resembling those of *Rozwój*. Among the dailies printed at the time in Łódź, *Kurier Łódzki* included the largest proportion of articles about local issues. Moreover, due to the fact that a group of Łódź entrepreneurs owned shares in the paper, it also devoted a lot of attention to the shape of Łódź's economy.²⁵

²³ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Prasa polska w latach 1918–1939* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1980), 29–30.

²⁴ In the period between December 1920 and May 1921, *Dziennik Robotniczy* was published in its place, however, it was decided to return to the former title and frequency of its publication. See Andrzej Notkowsky, *Pod znakiem trzech strzał: prasa Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej w latach 1918–1939* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Edukacyjne, 1997), 176.

²⁵ Leszek Olejnik, "Z dziejów prasy łódzkiej. „Kurier Łódzki” i „Echo” – wydawnictwa Jana Stypułkowskiego (1919–1939)," *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica*, no. 52 (1995): 143–62.

Kurier Łódzki differed slightly from *Rozwój* in its party sympathies—during the parliamentary elections in 1922, the daily openly supported the list of the “Polish Center”, a political initiative created by the right-wing activists who had left the National Democracy. For the purposes of pre-electoral polemics, it accentuated its Christian-democratic profile and its “centrality” (as opposed to a right or left-wing profile). However, essentially, both dailies represented the wide intellectual milieu of the Polish nationalist right-wing,²⁶ and together their discourse about city issues warrants joint consideration. Another argument for such an analysis is the fact that before the second municipal elections in Łódź, held in May 1923, both papers firmly supported the joint electoral list of the national right-wing (the Christian Union of National Unity). In the early 1920s, *Głos Polski*, a paper of unclear political orientation, was unable to compete with these two right-wing dailies.

From Class Warfare to the Modernization Program

The formation of a state defined as “our own” as well as its rapid and broad democratization meant that any dispute regarding potential paths of modernization and definitions of the modern also had to engage with the issue of exercising power and ways of obtaining it. The logic of electoral politics naturally turned to popular parties, which had a strong program identity. Consequently, the most convincing visions and projects for the growth of the city, formulated since the early existence of the independent state, were drawn from wider ideological projects adopted by major parties, along with the language, argumentative style and rhetorical structure that were inherent to them. As in other European interwar contexts, the press started to become a vehicle of clearly defined political programs.²⁷ A fragment of the declaration announced on the pages of *Łodzianin* can serve as an example. It was printed after the formation of the new city council and it unambiguously defined the activity conducted at the level of the municipal government as part of a globally (!) waged class warfare:

The world war subdued class antagonisms only for one historical moment because here was the proletariat of the entire world returning to their households, already gravitating anew toward socialism, readying themselves to deal the final blow to the

²⁶ Joanna B. Michlic draws attention to the wide influence of the political ideas of the National Democracy party, which far exceeded the limits of individual parties, and how easily papers embraced them, even if they typically distanced themselves from the ongoing political game, Joanna B. Michlic, *Poland's Threatening Other: The Image of the Jew from 1880 to the Present* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 73–75.

²⁷ Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic*.

Moloch of capitalism which started this horrible slaughter of nations. In Independent Poland, we feel we are a part of this great international working army and that is why we shall put up a fight on the territory of the city council in the name of socialism whose ultimate goal is to abolish the exploitation of one man by another.²⁸

Although these types of references may appear lofty at first glance, they should not surprise. It is worth remembering that socialism was one of those modern European political ideologies which aspired to a holistic and total description of social reality. Hence, it was natural that general ideological premises became a kind of matrix for the discourse about the city. The language of class analysis, the definition of social conflicts as well as the key thesis that private ownership of the means of production was the foundation of social evil – these were all adopted for the purposes of the urban discourse.²⁹



Figure 17. Female textile workers on the road to the factory, author: unknown, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-P-2234.

²⁸ “Deklaracja radnych PPS,” *Łodzianin*, no. 3 (1919); see also “Na marginesie rozpraw budżetowych,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 7 (1920).

²⁹ See also Maria Nartonowicz-Kot, “Kształtowanie się założeń taktycznych PPS w samorządzie miejskim (1918–1923),” *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica*, no. 1 (1980).

The press discourse of Łódź socialists also embraced a distinctive way of understanding the historical process based on assumptions and ideas entrenched in European socialism. The so-called Marxism of the Second International, which had been the theoretical foundation of the ideology and programs of socialist parties in Europe since the late 19th-century, postulated viewing history as a process of progressive changes essentially independent from the will of individuals, and inevitably leading to the creation of a socialist society. This kind of thinking ran strongly through the writings of, for instance, Karl Kautsky, the “pope of Marxism” in the era of the Second International.³⁰ It is not entirely clear to what degree Kautsky’s “necessitarian Marxism”³¹ was at that time embraced by the Polish socialists. The entire idea was also undermined by the program crisis experienced by socialists across Europe at the end of the First World War and the first years after it. Nonetheless, the vision of historical process rooted in this socialist ideology offered the analyzed discourse a clear temporal axis and a certain “leaning” into the future. Therefore, a clear line was drawn separating the past from the present while postulated projects and activities were defined as consistent with the abstract logic of historical progress. In a nutshell: as a step toward socialism.

The tension between the past and the future, which was one of the axes of the analyzed discourse allowed the ongoing political rivalry to be defined as follows:

There are two worlds in existence today: the old world with its forms and habits, and the new, progressive one. These worlds are colliding and generating political groups from which parties are stemming.³²

Therefore, the projects pushed by the socialist city authorities were sanctioned as convergent with the natural order of progressive change. Any imperfections of the current situation were directly associated with the political forces opposing the socialist policies (in practice, mainly with the nationalist right-wing). This kind of construct also enabled the use of an established negative (auto)stereotype of the city that can be traced to the 19th-century. When the conditions in which the socialist municipal council was assuming power were summarized, it was not only incidental disadvantages that were accentuated, such as high unemployment, but also issues that were the product of many years of failure. In light of the formulated diagnosis, Łódź was a city of neglect, devoid of appropriate

³⁰ Gary P. Steenson, *Karl Kautsky, 1854–1938: Marxism in the Classical Years* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978).

³¹ Andrzej Walicki, *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The Rise and Fall of the Communist Utopia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995).

³² “Socjaliści a oświata na terenie miasta Łodzi,” *Łodzianin*, no. 46 (1922); see also “O organizacji magistratów,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 3 (1920).

infrastructure, built chaotically, suffering from excessive social inequalities and an underdevelopment of cultural life.

[W]e are in need of a building to house the municipal council, (...) we are in need of a city hospital (...), we are in need of maternity wards, shelters for the elderly and children, night shelters, etc., social-welfare institutions. We do not have even one city building that would satisfy the cultural needs of a large city, such as a theater, concert and reading hall, community centers, etc.³³

Another writer stipulated:

It is hard to find an example of greater deficiency and neglect in terms of health, esthetics, facilities and public utility, charity, cultural and educational organizations than that displayed by Łódź under the former Russian administration.³⁴

These failures were attributed to Russian rule which, uninterested in developing the city, had hampered social initiatives and was primarily interested in exploiting the Polish land.³⁵ Capitalism was exposed as the other source and just as strongly criticized for subjecting the process of the city's growth to the logic of multiplying profit. The example of connecting the negative (auto)stereotype of the city with the structure of motivation peculiar to capitalism is illustrated by *Łodzianin*, which assessed the state of the city's cultural institutions as follows:

Every sensible, thinking man of at least average intelligence is interested in art and literature in all its manifestations. This is true for Warsaw, Kraków, Lwów, Poznań, for everyone everywhere except for Łódź. It is not hard to find the reasons for this "mental stagnation." Łódź, the city of upstarts and profiteers, has always lagged behind in culture. Business always comes first!³⁶

Thanks to a clearly accentuated temporal axis and focus on the future, the discourse of the socialist city board's supporters was a "modernizing" one *par excellence*. It recognized the city's underdevelopment, defined its causes and indicated the necessity of implementing targeted policies to address it. Further action and projects were viewed as part of a wider process of progressive change. On the one hand, socialism was indicted as their ultimate goal, on the other, the

³³ "Program budownictwa miejskiego w Łodzi na najbliższe lata," *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 1 (1922).

³⁴ "Z Komisji Powszechnego Nauczania," *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 1 (1919).

³⁵ See e.g. "O organizacji magistratów," *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 3 (1920).

³⁶ "Teatr miejski," *Łodzianin*, no. 151 (1921); see also "Z Komisji Powszechnego Nauczania," *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 1 (1919).

“West” often became a direct positive point of reference.³⁷ It was Western cities that were presented as modern and viewed as a model to follow. Defining the challenges faced by the new city authorities, the previously quoted manifesto directly suggested that:

The sewage system, waterworks, gardens and city parks, new tram lines, the construction of cheap and clean workers’ housing units resembling those in the West, schools and city buildings – these are the most urgent tasks of urban management whose completion should generate jobs for many thousands of the unemployed.³⁸

Operating with such a broad remit requiring prompt action and progressive change was in the analyzed period characteristic of the discourse of the press favoring the socialist city authorities. The first years of independence and democratic local government were a time of ever more daring modernizing projects formulated on the pages of *Łodzianin* and *Dziennik Zarządu miasta Łodzi*. These projects fell into two groups—the first included those that referred to social policies and public services, the other to infrastructural enterprises. In the first case, the need to promote education as well as efforts to expand the scope of medical care services offered by the city were particularly accentuated. In the face of food-supply shortages and high unemployment, much attention was devoted to the work of the local administration in the area of subsidizing meals for the population and the distribution of various forms of aid. Unemployment was to be alleviated by public works, which were defined as useful in two ways—according to the quote—firstly, as a way of providing the unemployed with a source of income; secondly, as a tool for implementing desired changes to the esthetics and infrastructure of the city. In the area of infrastructure and city planning, the ideas presented in the immediate postwar years were very ambitious and largely went far beyond simply alleviating previous negligence.

The plan to expand and modernize the city’s railway system was characteristic in this respect. It should be recalled that Łódź at that time lay some distance from the main railway lines. In anticipation of economic prosperity, obtaining the right number of railway connections and the status of an important transportation hub—not only on a national scale but at the Europe-wide level—was presented as imperative for the appropriate functioning of Łódź’s industry, based on the supply of materials and the exportation of ready-made textile products.

³⁷ See e.g. “Filantropia czy opieka społeczna?,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 5 (1920); “Przedsiębiorstwo miejskie,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 37 (1920); “O Urzędzie Stanu Cywilnego,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 5 (1919); “Na przelomie,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 1 (1922).

³⁸ “Deklaracja radnych PPS,” *Łodzianin*, no. 3 (1919).



Figure 18. Typical backyard of a cheap tenement house in Łódź, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-U-3838.



Figure 19. Crowd in the street in a district on the outskirts, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-G-5745.

“The future of Łódź depends highly on its transportation policies”—stated a technical study on railway communication published in *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*.³⁹ The “central” location of the city was to be expressed in a network of railway lines radiating in all directions. This way, the city was to connect directly not only to the biggest trade and industrial centers in Poland (Silesia, Zagłębie Dąbrowskie, Poznań, Kraków etc.) but also to the major European metropolises—Paris, Munich, Prague, Budapest, Kiev and St. Petersburg. The study concluded as follows: “Hence, Łódź meets every condition to become the hub of nearly all traffic between the West and East, South and North.”⁴⁰ Similar plans produced an image of Łódź not only as a potentially key industrial city but also a city lying at the intersection of major roads in this part of Europe.



Figure 20. Electric tram on Piotrkowska Street, author: unknown, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-U-3852.

³⁹ “Komunikacja kolejowa w Łodzi,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 9 (1922).

⁴⁰ “Komunikacja kolejowa w Łodzi,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 9 (1922); see also Błażej Ciarkowski, *Łódź, która nie powstała* (Łódź: Dom Wydawniczy Księży Młyn, 2016), 16–17.

The expansion plan of Łódź was characterized with similar panache.⁴¹ It included a list of proposals on investment necessary for the urban infrastructure and the construction of new buildings for public use. The city was in desperate need of new parks and gardens, a “telephone exchange”, “12 postal branches”, new school buildings, hospitals, tuberculosis sanatoria, quarters for offices and public institutions as well as “a theater and philharmonic hall, a public library, community centers, a power plant, etc.” Moreover, the socialist discourse repeatedly mentioned proposals for the expansion of urban tram lines (nearly tripling the length of existing lines), the paving of streets and the building of new residential houses.

Table 3. The modernizing program presented in the discourse of *Łodzianin* and *Dziennik Zarządu miasta Łodzi*, 1918–1923

| Area | Exemplary projects and postulates |
|--|---|
| Transportation | Expansion of the railway network Expansion of the suburban tram network Extension of tramway lines within the city limits (better connections between working districts) Building a by-pass railway Building new railway stations |
| Housing | Building new apartments for workers Efforts to lower rents |
| Public services | Universal elementary education and education for adults Building new schools Building sanatoria for patients suffering from tuberculosis Increasing the number of hospital beds in the city |
| Recreation and leisure | Creating a „people’s park” Increasing the number of green spaces and squares Building school playgrounds for the young |
| The city’s esthetics and sanitary conditions | Building a sewage system and waterworks Paving streets |
| Others | Building offices Creating a civic registry office Creating a city employment agency |

⁴¹ “Memoriał Magistratu m. Łodzi”, *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 29 (part 1) and 30 (part 2) (1922); see also “Program budownictwa miejskiego w Łodzi na najbliższe lata”, *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 1 (1922).

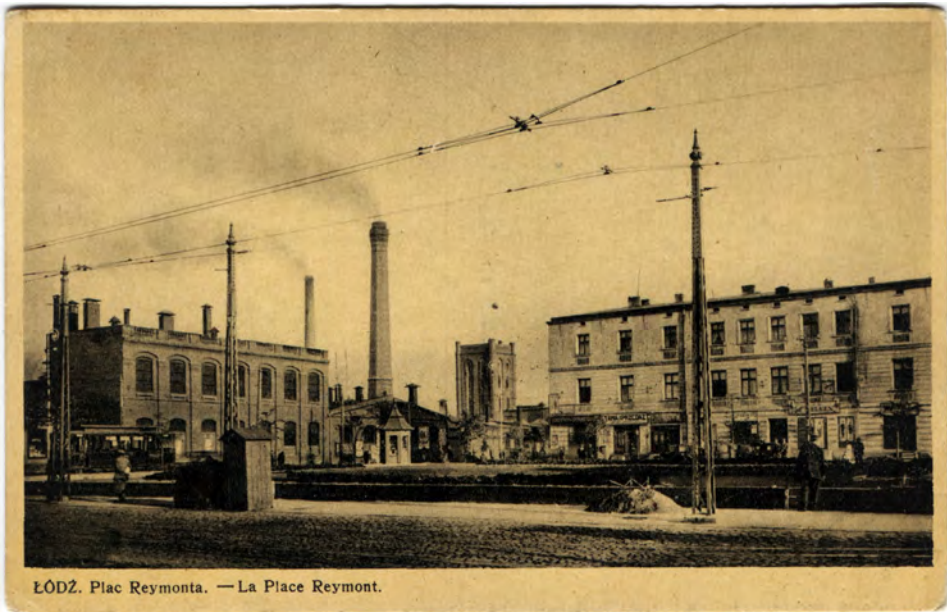


Figure 21. Reymont Square, postcard from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

Visions of a Metropolis and Municipal Socialism

Combined, the projects presented by the city authorities on the pages of *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi* formed an attractive vision of a dynamically developing metropolis, aspiring to be a major Central European center. This ambition was confirmed by the prognoses that recurred in the discourse of socialists indicating that in the near future the city would exceed the symbolic number of one million citizens while a five percent annual population growth could be considered something very natural.⁴² Correspondingly, ambitious plans to invest in infrastructure were justified to a lesser degree with the need to “make up” for previous negligence, and more as a need to prepare for the challenge of the city's forthcoming dynamic growth and its expanded functions.⁴³ Anticipated expansion of the city borders was also seen as an opportunity to limit spatial chaos.

⁴² “Program budownictwa miejskiego w Łodzi na najbliższe lata,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 1 (1922).

⁴³ See e.g. “Komunikacja kolejowa w Łodzi,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 9 (1922).

According to the logic of socialist discourse, this element of a negative (auto) stereotype was also connected with the legacy of capitalist industrialization:

The city had formed and expanded chaotically, unfettered by any guidelines, which resulted in flats and factories intermingling. This, aside from ignoring the most primitive postulates of architectural esthetics—on the one hand increases the risk of fires, (...) on the other, creates an atmosphere which is highly hazardous for the health of the population.⁴⁴

The answer to these maladies was a gradual demarcation of discrete zones—e.g. industrial, located in the south and recreational and curative in the northern section of the city, in the area of Łagiewniki.⁴⁵ This can be seen as a forerunner of the concept of a “functional city”, popular in the interwar period among Polish urbanists,⁴⁶ continued and implemented—as discussed in Chapter 3—after 1945 under “state socialism” as well.

The idea of functional and rational urban planning illustrates a more general tendency characterizing the discourse of the supporters of the socialist city board. Although the outlined plans and visions were bold and promised to overcome previous stagnation, they were typically presented without excessive emotion. On the contrary, for a long time they more resembled a tempered expert discourse than an ardent, mobilizing political appeal. This applies both to *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi* and to some degree also the partisan *Łodzianin*, whenever it addressed the issue of the plans and intentions of the city authorities. The postulated operations and projects were justified in a rational and multi-faceted analysis. The arguments forwarded led to the conclusion that these were the optimal solutions to the problems at hand. Technical vocabulary and references to the demands of a modern urban politics helped achieve this effect. Numerical data and statistics, used abundantly, were typically treated as an undeniable argument in favor of a formulated interpretation or thesis.

⁴⁴ “Memoriał Magistratu m. Łodzi,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 29 (part 1) and no. 30 (part 2) (1922); see also “W sprawie zabudowy miasta,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 15 (1921).

⁴⁵ “Memoriał Magistratu m. Łodzi,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 29 (1922); “Program budownictwa miejskiego w Łodzi na najbliższe lata,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 1 (1922).

⁴⁶ Martin Kohlrausch, “‘Warszawa Funkcjonalna’: Radical Urbanism and the International Discourse on Planning in the Interwar Period,” in: *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890–1940*, ed. Jan C. Behrends and Martin Kohlrausch (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014); Helen Meller and Heleni Porfyriou, *Planting New Towns in Europe in the Interwar Years: Experiments and Dreams for Future Societies* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

It is noteworthy that the actual troubles of Łódź industry in the postwar period were very rarely scrutinized. It seems that so strong was confidence about the possibilities offered by the existence of an independent statehood that speedy prosperity was treated as something obvious. This was an assumption and not a postulate or a proposition. Therefore, the goal of this modernizing politics on the scale of the city was not so much a resumption of economic growth but rather a giving of an appropriate ramification, plan and direction to developmental processes that previously occurred chaotically and in an unsupervised manner. This was to be carried out by the city authorities, based on expertise and relevant data. They would eliminate the capitalist logic, which was associated with chaos and social problems, from respective areas of life while laying the foundations to redistribute the fruits of anticipated economic prosperity. For instance, it was suggested that industry should be taxed on turnover, which would compensate for the social cost of factory operations and provide some of the wherewithal to finance municipal enterprises.

Instrumental in implementing this task was to be the politics of municipalization of key enterprises; crucial from the perspective of its citizens' wellbeing. The following was stated to explain why in European cities an increasing number of enterprises were directly managed by the city authorities:

Two basic phenomena influenced the development of municipal businesses: on the one hand, a huge increase of communal expenditure, on the other, the strengthening of municipal socialism. Municipal socialism is based on extending the authority of the city council to pursue urban enterprises.⁴⁷

Municipalization was unambiguously defined as a mark of progressive change when it occurred in local government policies. At the same time, positive experiences of Western cities were used as a point of reference, and statistics were employed to confirm the objective existence of a trend to expand the city authorities' control over more and more enterprises.

Currently, 93% of waterworks in Germany are in the hands of the municipality (...). The same goes for gasworks. Nearly 2/3 of gasworks in England belong to the city; as far as power plants go, the greatest municipalization takes place in England. Tram lines are predominantly municipal in England and across the continent. After 1888, England entered the phase of the greatest municipalization. The cities leading in this area are: Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ "Przedsiębiorstwo miejskie," *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 37 (1920); more on the idea of municipal socialism in inter-war Europe: Eley, *Forging Democracy. The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000*, 59–60.

⁴⁸ "Przedsiębiorstwo miejskie," *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 37 (1920).

Municipalization was not only to provide cheaper services to the citizens but also to lead to increased resources for the local government. In other words, the profit gained from enterprises would no longer end up in the hands of shareholders but would undergo socialization and would return to the citizens in the form of urban investment.⁴⁹ In constructing the concept of “municipalization”, a difference was drawn between capitalism, that is the effect of activities calculated at maximizing profits and the city authorities’ program. The former was associated with chaos, a lack of planning, short-sightedness and injustice. It can be illustrated by the example of tram lines and plans for their municipalization:

There are entire working-class districts in Łódź: Bałuty, Chojny, Koziny and others, that have no tram lines, but of what interest is this to the shareholders? Nevertheless, an expansion of the tram network in the suburbs is in the interest of the broad masses and that is why we demand the municipalization of tram lines.⁵⁰

The modernizing program of the socialist municipal council would be characterized by planning, rationality, democratism as well as working for the benefit of the general population. Hence, municipalization was often presented as a mechanism that facilitated a transition from capitalist logic (and all its negative associations) to a new order of operation.

Rhetorical Shifts

Plans for an extensive municipalization of enterprises providing services for the general population were not completed by the local government authorities elected in 1919. Neither were the majority of the ambitious plans for infrastructural investment and metropolitan aspiration. As noted earlier, regaining independence and establishing modern representative democracy at the national and local level produced great hopes and expectations vis-a-vis the new postwar reality. However, it was soon clear that long extant difficulties would not vanish overnight, and the ambitious modernizing plans would have to wait for their implementation.⁵¹

Until 1921, the Polish state continued to fight for its borders while the economic situation of the country, destroyed during military operations and struggling with an inflation crisis, was far from normal. The Łódź textile industry re-

⁴⁹ “Deklaracja radnych PPS,” *Łodzianin*, no. 3 (1919); see also Ryszard Szwed, *Samorząd terytorialny w polityce i działalności PPS, 1918–1939* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1989), 15.

⁵⁰ “Żądamy umiastowienia tramwajów,” *Łodzianin*, no. 1 (1922).

⁵¹ See: Mroccka, *Łódzka Organizacja Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej w latach 1918–1926*, 75–81.

gained its position only very slowly and with difficulty. Unemployment remained high and, on a daily basis, the population grappled with problems much more down-to-earth than those diagnosed in *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi* as the justification for intended modernizing endeavors.⁵² Furthermore, the city's resources proved to be insufficient to cover even the most basic expenditures, not to mention more serious investments or an immediate buy-out of such enterprises as the tram lines or a power plant. Hence, during their four-year term, the socialists started to shift their focus. This also coincided with the rhythm of political competition dictated by the forthcoming elections—parliamentary in November 1922 and local in May 1923. The rhetoric of a “promise” gathered around modernizing intentions and was especially characteristic of the first months of independence. This was gradually overshadowed by the rhetoric of “battling obstacles”, which sought to expose the objective hurdles blocking the implementation of the city authorities' ambitious plans. Shortly before the next local elections, the rhetoric of the “defense of accomplishments”, focused on describing the results of the work of the outgoing city board, was applied with increasing force (particularly in *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*). There was also the rhetoric of a “threat” (in the partisan *Łodzianin*) which employed suggestive images of negative consequences should the right-wing take control of the city.⁵³

For the purposes of the description of the continuous fight with obstacles, which the city board purportedly waged to implement its ambitious plans, there were attempts to define the relationship between the local government in Łódź and the central government in terms of class antagonism. Since January 1919, when Ignacy Jan Paderewski had taken office as prime minister, the majority of the cabinet were center-right. In the discourse of socialists, the boundaries between the ideologies, political orientation and classes started to blur. Hence, the socialist city board in Łódź was defined as “working”—based on the working class and representing it, while the center-right government in Warsaw was defined as “bourgeois.” Thus, it was entangled in the political and economic interests of the propertied class.

The government's continuous opposition to the tax projects of Łódź's municipal council cannot be explained in terms of concern for the benefit of the state. The reason for this position of the government is its bourgeois-class nature.⁵⁴

⁵² Waclaw Pawlak, *W rytmie fabrycznych syren: Łódź między wojnami* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1984).

⁵³ See e.g. “Za dwa tygodnie,” *Łodzianin*, no. 17 (1923); “Głosujcie na listę nr 2,” *Łodzianin*, no. 18 (1923).

⁵⁴ “Z dziejów robotniczego Magistratu m. Łodzi,” *Łodzianin*, no. 152 (1921); see also “Kampania reakcyjna przeciwko miejskiemu zarządowi w Łodzi,” *Łodzianin*, no. 10/11 (1919); “Ministerstwo Skarbu sabotuje robotniczy magistrat m. Łodzi,” *Łodzianin*, no. 19 (1919).

Political and class antagonism constructed this way provided an explanation for the reasons behind the problems, primarily financial ones, with which the city board struggled. It was not the postwar crisis or its own incompetence but a witting sabotage by central government that blocked the possibility of implementing ambitious plans. The government supposedly refused to support Łódź financially so as to compromise the “working” local government and restore power to the right-wing elites. Hence, under the pressure of practical problems and disappointment resulting from failed attempts to complete ambitious programs, the socialists tried to re-describe the distribution of power affecting the situation in the city:

It should not be forgotten that the council exercises its power within the existing legal regulations and under the supervision of governmental bodies. Under these conditions, the implementation of the socialist municipal program depends (...) primarily on the country's overall political relations. There is no doubt that the workers' city councils can facilitate and streamline the process of adjusting urban management to the needs of the wider working masses. However, let us not forget that the factor currently deciding the fate of the council's management is the government (...) which under pressure of a well-organized force has no choice but to make smaller or larger concessions in the spirit of workers' postulates.⁵⁵

This way, the disappointment or anger resulting from the unfulfilled promises of the city authorities could be directed against central government and become the fuel of political mobilization during the national campaigns launched by the Polish Socialist Party.

However, ultimately, this kind of manipulation proved rather ineffective and the rhetoric of “battling obstacles” unconvincing. In the face of the increasingly bad ratings of the city board, in July 1921 the aldermen of the coalition of the National Workers' Party⁵⁶ resigned in an attempt to avoid liability for the poor situation in Łódź in the eyes of the voters. In the parliamentary elections of November 1922, the Polish Socialist Party received only 8.6% of the votes, and the winner was the Christian Union of National Unity, a coalition of the nationalist right-wing. The elections scheduled for May 1923 were also expected to bring the socialists defeat. As mentioned earlier, in these circumstanc-

⁵⁵ “Z dziejów robotniczego Magistratu m. Łodzi,” *Łodzianin*, no. 151 (1921).

⁵⁶ The National Workers' Party was formed in 1920 after a merging of the National Workers' Union and the National Party of Workers, which previously operated on the territory of the former Prussian partition (Pomerania, Greater Poland, Silesia), see Jerzy Holzer, *Mozaika polityczna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1974), 195.

es, the socialist discourse started to be dominated by rhetoric focused on the “defense of accomplishments.” Long lists of achievements were drawn up and statistics documenting the different successes of the city authorities were quoted.⁵⁷ This, however, could not prevent a palpable social disappointment and clear discrepancies between the initial declarations, awakened hopes and the actual results. To counter such impressions, the issue of education was pushed to the fore, along with the positive changes that had taken place thanks to the work of the city authorities.

During the partitions, especially under Russian rule, education was one of the most neglected issues. Łódź was also the first city in the territory of the former Russian partition that actually implemented compulsory elementary schooling. Promoting education at various levels and building several modern schools required substantial effort. This was the object of particular pride for the outgoing city authorities.⁵⁸ Right before the elections, a high percentage of the illiterate in the city was defined as a “horrendous negligence”⁵⁹, in the face of which the promotion of education became a key challenge, both from the standpoint of patriotism and the perspective of the empowering efforts of the proletariat:

One of the greatest ills of reborn Poland is the issue of education. Realizing that education is the cornerstone of Poland’s existence and growth as well as a critical condition in the emancipation of the proletariat, the workers’ city board has made universal education a priority.⁶⁰

The socialist municipal council in Łódź controlled urban management in the period most difficult for the city. This had an impact on its operations which were unable to take their usual course. Nevertheless, under these difficult conditions, the pro-workers city board implemented within the city’s boundaries the key task of reborn Poland—universal schooling.⁶¹

⁵⁷ See e.g. “Czteroletnia praca w samorządzie łódzkim,” *Łodzianin*, no. 18 (1923); “Rzut oka na działalność samorządu łódzkiego w latach 1919–1922,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 15 (1923); “Słów kilka o łódzkim samorządzie,” *Łodzianin*, no. 1 (1923); “W obronie prawdy,” *Łodzianin*, no. 9 (1923); “Nasz plan,” *Łodzianin*, no. 16 (1923); “Zastanówcie się!,” *Łodzianin*, no. 17 (1923).

⁵⁸ “Wielkie uroczystości szkolne,” *Łodzianin*, no. 42 (1922).

⁵⁹ “Rzut oka na działalność samorządu łódzkiego w latach 1919–1922,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 15 (1923).

⁶⁰ “Z dziejów robotniczego Magistratu m. Łodzi,” *Łodzianin*, no. 153 (1921).

⁶¹ “Rzut oka na działalność samorządu łódzkiego w latach 1919–1922,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 15 (1923).



Figure 22. New building for the Stanisław Staszic elementary school; education was one of the main areas of local investment in the 1920s, author: unknown, ca. 1925, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny – Archiwum Ilustracji*, 1-N-1643.

Within the context of pre-electoral mobilization, the issue of the permanence of these successes was inscribed in the dynamics of a class conflict. Elections were not defined simply as competition between various parties and their programs but as a clash of the classes, a confrontation between the working class and the propertied class. As a result, the rhetoric of a “threat” constructed on binary oppositions was particularly charged. The adjective “bourgeois” became the polar opposite of the program of modernization, defined as “proletarian.” A characteristic example of this device can be seen in the PPS’s pre-electoral manifesto of May 1923, which brimmed with emotion:

We want cheap bread and we want free education! We want healthy living conditions and housing for the workers! We want social welfare and medical care for you, your wives and your children! We want a Community Center and People’s Theater, We want a sewage system, waterworks, and railway connections. We want sensible urban planning, we want cobbles and sidewalks (...) In a word, we want material prosperity and spiritual growth for all people who labor for their bread.

What do we not want?

We do not want unemployment, (...) We do not want cuts in workers’ wages, We do not want contracts with trade unions to be broken. We do not want hun-

gry children in schools. We do not want infants, children, mothers and the elderly without shelter! We do not want old workers without pensions (...) We do not want anti-Jewish shenanigans! Lastly, we do not want rat holes for workers while the arbitrage vultures nest in palaces! We do not want this, they want this, our and your enemies!⁶²

As illustrated in the above quotation, the logic of increasing electoral competition was conducive to honing the rhetoric. It also resulted in a multiplication of direct appeals to political mobilization and suggestive descriptions of the consequences which the “wrong” electoral decision might entail. In a situation of direct electoral contention, the basic axis of the conflict that gave structure to the socialist discourse was particularly visible. This resulted in intensified emotional appeals to the class identity of workers combined with a blurring of the lines between the class itself and the political force aspiring to represent it. The successes of the “proletarian” city board were thus presented as the successes of workers themselves, the experience of exercising power in the city was defined as the experience of the entire working class (and not of the people who actually held office and who incidentally often came from the intelligentsia) while a potential electoral failure was defined as a failure for all workers. Facing the phantom of the worst-case scenario, appeals were made:

Looking critically at the entirety of the municipal council’s work, does the proletariat not understand how important the issue of keeping authority in the hands of the proletariat really is? Will it listen to the enemies of the working class and jeopardize the future of its children?⁶³

Similar techniques and rhetorical tools were also employed by the key opponents of the socialists, that is, the nationalist right-wing camp. The discourse of the right-wing press was also based on binary oppositions, the rhetoric of a threat and confrontational language. There were efforts to create a strong political identity; however, this was based on a different foundation—it was not class that lay at its center, as with the socialists, but rather identification with an ethnic national community.

⁶² “Głosujcie na listę nr 2,” *Łodzianin*, no. 18 (1923); see also “Za dwa tygodnie,” *Łodzianin*, no. 17 (1923).

⁶³ “Słów kilka o łódzkim samorządzie,” *Łodzianin*, no. 1 (1923).

Table 4. The rhetoric of “class warfare”, 1918–1923

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>The definition of class conflict and its political dimension</p> | <p><i>State dignitaries purposefully and consciously are sending excited masses to the municipal council which is struggling with financial difficulties because the bourgeoisie and several banks headed by the government will not give Łódź a loan.</i></p> <p><i>The essence and the motivation behind the government's actions is to starve working Łódź, not to give it money, and to discredit the rule of the working class.</i></p> <p><i>The ND clan will not allow a worker to take power in the city into his own hands. It only tolerates its own stooges. Therefore, sooner or later, an ultimate battle must be fought against the domestic reactionaries, and the proletariat must take a firm stand against domestic backwardness.</i></p> <p><i>Our cities house a considerable concentration of working masses and are the soil on which the working class is fighting to have some of their demands met.</i></p> <p><i>The elections to the new city council are approaching while the philistine coalition of profiteer-capitalists are readying themselves for an onslaught on the stronghold of the Polish proletariat: Łódź.</i></p> |
| <p>Blurring the differences between the city authorities and the working class</p> | <p><i>The working municipal council of Łódź dealt effectively with the myth propagated by the reactionaries according to which the working class was not fit to exercise power.</i></p> <p><i>The local government of Łódź has become the workbench of creative work for wide masses of working people, who so far have been removed from any influence on the city's institutions. The local government of Łódź is a practical institution preparing the proletariat for the great new tasks that lie ahead.</i></p> |
| <p>Reinforcing pride of the working class</p> | <p><i>[Łódź] is unequivocally yours because you built it, brick by brick!</i></p> <p><i>Based on three years of work and its outcomes, we can say with complete certainty that in terms of its representatives on the city board, the proletariat of Łódź came out of the fire test victorious and passed the examination in social maturity with amazing results.</i></p> |

Against the “Philosophy of the Crowd”

The efforts of the socialist city authorities of Łódź and their supporters to formulate a complex argument-based program of city modernization may be viewed as a kind of hegemonic articulation—an attempt made at a moment of political breakthrough to enforce its own definition of what is modern. Such claims were naturally questioned by the right-wing papers —*Kurier Łódzki* and *Rozwój*, which often employed irony as a rhetorical tool to disarm and compromise the socialists’ aspirations. This type of counteraction concentrated mostly around three related planes: defining the role of the city authorities, assessment of the competences of the people exercising power in the city, and understanding the key challenges faced by the city in the postwar conditions.

In the first case, the attack primarily consisted of targeting the link made between the politics of the local authorities and the class warfare waged on a national and global scale. Manifestations of the city authorities’ political identity or references to diction typical of socialist ideology were mocked as politicking or empty words.⁶⁴ Simultaneously, the argument about the class nature of the city authorities’ politics made by socialists themselves was reversed. Firstly, the right-wing press unmasked the false identification of the working class with the party aspiring to represent it (the Polish Socialist Party). Secondly, it was stressed that in practical terms, class politics meant resignation from caring about the city as a whole and consequently would lead to the subordination of subsequent advancements to the partisan interests of the members of the city authorities.⁶⁵

Our “city’s fathers” draw inspiration from the philosophy of the crowd which they lead in parties and trade unions, and which—in order to gain and maintain popularity—they lull into backwardness instead of educating and lifting them. Not capable of providing bread (...) they throw around strong words, demagogic slogans, trying to use these to intoxicate the crowds and to infuse them with hate toward the rest of society.⁶⁶

In opposition to this stance, the right portrayed the city authorities’ domain as fundamentally “unpolitical”—in the light of the right-wing discourse, the role of local government was neither to participate in partisan rivalry nor to support

⁶⁴ See, e.g. “Sprawa mieszkaniowa,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 37 (1920).

⁶⁵ “W kotle nowej Rady Miejskiej,” *Rozwój*, no. 99 (1919); “Obywatele!,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 243 (1919); “Bezprzykładna jednostronność,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 298 (1919); “Rada Miejska czy wiec partyjny,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 54 (1922); “Bankructwo demagogii w samorządzie,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 334 (1922); “Przed wyborami,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 106 (1923).

⁶⁶ “Sojusz ciemnoty z demagogią,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 338 (1920).

any one class in its efforts but simply to manage the city in a way that was reasonable, beneficial to all its residents and unencumbered by any ideology.⁶⁷ In other words, the opponent was charged with the sin of particularism whereas the right-wing press cast itself as defender of the interests of the “general” population.



Figure 23. View of the southern, industrial district (Catholic cathedral and the main Evangelical church in the center), from Łukasz Biskupski’s collection.

This kind of argumentation was completed with an image of the socialists as the city’s overlord, systematically painted by *Kurier Łódzki* and *Rozwój*. Aside from the aforementioned political rabidity, the authorities were also attributed with such flaws as short-sightedness, incompetence, immorality, cynicism and stupidity.⁶⁸ Combined with this image, the program of municipal-

⁶⁷ See, e.g. “O wyborach do Rady Miejskiej w Łodzi,” *Rozwój*, no. 34 (1919); “Bankructwo demagogii w samorządzie,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 334 (1922); see also Grzegorz Radomski, *Samorząd terytorialny w myśli politycznej Narodowej Demokracji: 1918–1939* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2009).

⁶⁸ “Przejrzyste drogi,” *Rozwój*, no. 59 (1922); “Zanik sumienia i ambicji,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 267 (1919); “Konsolidacja narodowa,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 120 (1923); “Sojusz ciemnoty z demagogią,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 338 (1920); “Uzupełnienie czy rozwiązanie Rady Miejskiej,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 33 (1923).

ization and the expansion of the city authorities' competence loomed large as a threat—the larger the scope of the socialists' operation, the worse the consequences of their rule would be.

Rejection of the broad program of modernization proposed by the city authorities stemmed also from the fact that the right-wing press defined the central challenges faced by the city after the regaining of independence differently. In the discourse of “municipal socialism”, as illustrated earlier, the underdevelopment of Łódź was clearly recognized and the action program was largely based on extensive infrastructural investment. In the discourse of the right-wing press, the most urgent problem experienced by the city and its authorities was the condition of industry in Łódź, which also translated into the population's standard of living:

The working circles in Łódź are waiting impatiently for the moment when this industry, wasted away by the occupiers, the industry which had fed at least 350,000 people and their families directly, and indirectly, all of Łódź, will thrive again.⁶⁹

Therefore, all effort had to be channeled into providing the conditions that would allow the resumption of a “normal” (that is, prewar) functioning of industry in Łódź. Ambitious investment plans were depicted as fantasies that did not take into consideration the city's present situation and that distracted from the need to rebuild the economic potential of Łódź:

We are demanding and we will not stop making the following demands from the municipal council: bake better bread, supply coal and the other resources this city needs, eliminate waiting lines (...) and overall, manage the city better. This is what the council should keep in mind. But the city council does not heed such details and only engages in lofty, and at times even eccentric, projects.⁷⁰

Efforts to improve the esthetic of the city were similarly deemed an example of inappropriately defined priorities:

[T]he money will inadvertently be spent, if it hasn't already, on various non-productive things such as cutting down trees on Kościuszko Avenue, taking down railings, moving benches from the center to the side, etc., unnecessary beautification right now (...) Factories are working at half capacity, industry is going through a coal shortage and a crisis of resources while the city is buried in debt. Wake up, citizen of Łódź, don't let this hard-working city fall.⁷¹

⁶⁹ “Agitatorzy i robotnicy,” *Rozwój*, no. 96 (1919).

⁷⁰ “Z Rady Miejskiej,” *Rozwój*, no. 133 (1919).

⁷¹ “Nasza gospodarka miejska,” *Rozwój*, no. 75 (1921).

The right-wing press concentrated on the inconveniences of everyday life as a response to the discourse of the socialist city authorities and their supporters. Whereas the authorities took the long-term view and operated with a logic of holistic plans, their opponents wanted things delivered here and now. The hegemonic aspirations behind the socialists' visions and declarations were contrasted with a list of food-supply problems, examples of official incompetence, complaints about unemployment, images of muddy and dirty streets, and suggestive descriptions of the odor that pervaded life in a city without a sewerage system.⁷² *Rozwój* exploited this contrast when ironically describing a scene that members of the government—the prime minister, Wincenty Witos and deputy prime minister and socialist Ignacy Daszyński—would have witnessed had they visited Łódź in December 1920:

Much like Dante in the “Inferno”, the ministers wandered through Łódź, inspecting swampy streets, swampy gateways, and swampy stairs. All of Łódź turned into one huge marsh (...). And no wonder, Łódź has no sewage system, so tons of waste and dishwater go down the gutter, and since there is no drainage, just imagine this street sludge spilling from sidewalk to sidewalk (...).⁷³

In response to the poor sanitary conditions and the stench, a project of building the sewerage system was put forward by *Kurier Łódzki*. It seems to have served primarily as a way to compromise the socialist city authorities who were unable to undertake such an expensive project.⁷⁴ Regardless of that, it is noteworthy that the right-wing press did suggest several similar projects of infrastructural investment and the creation of new cultural institutions. For instance, mention was made of founding a polytechnic school⁷⁵ which would provide Łódź's industry with an influx of qualified workers, along with the creation of a “Polish theater”⁷⁶ and the building of new apartments.⁷⁷ However, these kinds of projects were scattered and did not form a coherent, holistic vision of a modern city. The discourse of the nationalist right-wing saw the foundations of its desired order and prosperity lying elsewhere: at the level of organizing a national community.

⁷² “Nasza gospodarka miejska,” *Rozwój*, no. 75 (1921); “Łódź w listopadzie,” *Rozwój*, no. 308 (1920), “Śniło mi się,” *Rozwój*, no. 343 (1920); “Wywiad u przyjeźdnego,” *Rozwój*, no. 22 (1922).

⁷³ “Śniło mi się,” *Rozwój*, no. 343 (1920).

⁷⁴ “Kanalizacja m. Łodzi,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 152 (1919).

⁷⁵ “Łódzka szkoła politechniczna,” *Rozwój*, no. 109 (1919); “O szkołę techniczną,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 43 (1919).

⁷⁶ “Teatr miejski w Łodzi,” *Rozwój*, no. 13 (1919).

⁷⁷ “Sprawa mieszkaniowa,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 37 (1920).

National Capitalism

While the discourse of socialists clearly drew on the topos of progress and accentuated the need to change the status quo, the position of *Rozwój* and *Kurier Łódzki* can be considered as fundamentally conservative. Both dailies concentrated on the defense of the traditional system of values, the existing hierarchy of social prestige and private property as the foundation of economic life. Capitalism underwent a certain naturalization here—contesting it, or even an attempt at complementing it with appropriate social legislation or the municipalization of public service enterprises, was treated as irrational, a gateway to economic chaos and the disintegration of the existing order. In the eyes of rightist journalists these were “ideas worthy of a herd of sheep (...), at odds with life, and physically downright unattainable.”⁷⁸

From the perspective of the right-wing press, “national capitalism” was the best way to organize social and economic life. While this term did not appear on the pages of the researched papers, it is an apt label for analytical purposes. It illustrates the essence of how nationalist discourse viewed the social order. It should be remembered that on the one hand, it approved of capitalism and regarded private property as the foundation of economic life. On the other hand, it rejected the classical liberal interpretation of capitalism with its free market competition and the belief that social order emerged spontaneously in the clash of egoistic pursuits. Similarly, the antagonistic vision of capitalism that was distinctive of socialist doctrines was also rejected. As an alternative, the right-wing discourse suggested a solidaristic vision of capitalism, at least in the area of a given national community. Instead of liberal competition there was supposed to be accord. “National instinct” was to correct the imperfections of the market mechanism allowing the reconciliation of both seemingly contradictory pursuits and the diverse expectations of various social groups.

Naturally, this kind of view was not specific to Łódź and its right-wing press. The idea of national solidarity in various forms was one of the key motifs in nationalist thought of the first half of the 20th century.⁷⁹ However, closer analysis allows us to understand how this kind of political idea was transformed into an effective tool in the rhetorical battle between competing parties within the local space of debate.

Arguments in favor of a solidaristic compromise and the concerted effort of the various social groups comprising the national community were developed on

⁷⁸ “Naganka,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 52 (1920); see also “Wobec demokracji,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 32 (1920).

⁷⁹ Mieczysław Sobczak, *Stosunek Narodowej Demokracji do kwestii żydowskiej w Polsce w latach 1918–1939* (Wrocław: Wydawn. Akademii Ekonomicznej im. Oskara Langego we Wrocławiu, 1998), 157.

the pages of *Rozwój* and *Kurier Łódzki* on two levels. First, there were references to the rule of law and a will to recognize legitimate claims. Allegedly, society was divided into groups whose interests might conflict but it was assumed that it was possible to find a “fair” solution that would maximize social benefits. In other words, capitalism was not a zero-sum game, as socialists seemed to suggest, in which the successes of one group meant disadvantage to another. A sensible compromise could effect the simultaneous improvement of the situation of groups whose interests seemed to be at odds.⁸⁰ In such instances, references were made to categories similar to those employed by socialists—conflict and interest—while the superiority of the postulated solidarity was justified on economic and moral grounds. Solidarity was also justified in terms of the logic governing social reality.

There were recurrent references—direct and indirect—to the metaphor of society as an organism, a figure deeply rooted in the political philosophy of Polish nationalism.⁸¹ Its graphic and intuitive character also lent it very strong persuasive potential. The organicist metaphor offered a coherent interpretation of social reality while arguing that social conflicts within a community are simply fictitious and stem from a misunderstanding of the laws governing it. In nationalist thinking it was assumed that individual classes or professional groups or—as it was sometimes phrased—“states” are parts of a bigger whole. If social groups are much like organs comprising a living organism, then an objective conflict between them is impossible. The growth of one part is only possible alongside the development of the whole, just as the growth of an organ can only take place with the development of the entire organism. Turning one part against the whole (e.g. the working class against the bourgeois) was not only immoral and irrational (in the economic sense)—although such argument was used when describing protests and social tensions—it was also a blow to the very base of the existing order. “Class egoism”, which was supposedly promoted by socialists, in reality would only lead to counter-productive outcomes—instead of improving the material situation of the mobilized workers, it would lead to its dramatic deterioration.

⁸⁰ “O zrzeszenie rzemieślnicze,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 254 (1918); “Wznowienie pracy,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 343 (1918).

⁸¹ Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*. The metaphor of an organism was also reflected in the medicalization of the images of Jews constructed on the pages of the analyzed papers. They were compared to a „disease” eating through an organism (e.g. gangrene) or a bacterium which despite its small size was capable of threatening a mighty human organism, cf. Ireneusz Jeziorski, *Od obcości do symulakrum: obraz Żyda w Polsce w XX wieku : antropologiczne studium przypadku* (Kraków: Zakład Wydawniczy “Nomos,” 2009), 220–28. On adopting a biology vernacular by the Polish nationalists in the late 19th-century Grzegorz Krzywiec, *Chauvinism, Polish Style: The Case of Roman Dmowski (Beginnings: 1886–1905)* (Peter Lang Edition, 2016).

A good example of the way in which the organicist metaphor functioned within the discourse of the right-wing press can be seen in its portrayal of strikes, frequent in the industrial-crisis immersed Łódź. In *Rozwój* and *Kurier Łódzki*, a strike was presented not only as an economically irrational act but above all, as a threat to the tissue connecting the national community.⁸² When one part of the social body refrained from work—thus, stopped performing its function—the entire organism stopped functioning properly, which led to its slow decay, typically labeled as “anarchy.” This threat was often expressed directly. On the pages of *Rozwój*, the following comment appeared in response to the wave of strikes sweeping through the country between 1918 and 1919:

A worker has the right to demand living conditions worthy of his work. However, what is taking place right now is leading to the complete destruction of workplaces, and by extension, to the abject poverty of the Polish worker. (...) Our country shall become the prey of foreign production.⁸³

Kurier Łódzki used this organicist metaphor:

Strike after strike, much like water, drop by drop, is eating through our economic body, weakening young civic tissue, it has already reached our nervous centers, and is already burrowing into our bones.⁸⁴

On another occasion, the link between the economic situation of individual groups and the community as a whole was thus explained:

However, walk-outs, instead of improving the conditions of creative work, are blocking its normal flow; instead of increasing a worker's wage, and by extension, improving his existence, they are knocking income out of his hand, making his existence harder, disrupting the overall wellbeing of the population, ultimately pushing the country toward bankruptcy.⁸⁵

The negative effects of the conflict between workers and capitalists was thus stretched across society as a whole. Simultaneously, as illustrated by the quotation from *Rozwój*, there was a smooth transition from recognizing the legitimacy of workers' demands to disciplining striking workers and stressing

⁸² See, e.g. “Agitatorzy i robotnicy,” *Rozwój*, no. 96 (1919).

⁸³ “Zagrożony przemysł,” *Rozwój*, no. 8 (1919); see also “Wobec demokratyzacji,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 32 (1920); “Naganka,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 52 (1920); “Nowa ofensywa,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 238 (1921).

⁸⁴ “Pogotowie,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 79 (1920).

⁸⁵ “Praca twórcza a bezrobocie,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 181 (1919); see also “Chleba i pracy,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 235 (1919).

that they must submit to the interest of the whole. It is noteworthy that “work” itself was an absolutely central category in the discourse of national capitalism. It was symbolically expressed in the slogan that appeared in a *Rozwój* vignette (“We shall build our Motherland with harmony and work!”) and the slogan used while agitating for the benefit of the right-wing, “national list” in the run up to the local elections in 1923 (“Order, work and justice”). Work was defined as the basic link connecting all social body parts and guaranteeing their harmonious growth.⁸⁶ Hence, the uninterrupted performance of an assigned function within the national “organism” was supposed to be a factor ensuring the stability of the existing order.

Antisemitism as Social Critique

The discourse of “national capitalism” basically had a conservative nature—neither calling for deep reforms or a spectacular modernizing spurt nor did it reject the rules on which the existing order was founded.⁸⁷ At the same time, it somehow had to address the experience of economic crisis and the claims and emotions that surfaced during periods of social tension. In light of the discourse in *Kurier Łódzki* and *Rozwój*, the economic situation of the city was bad, however, the basic rules of the existing economic system were considered acceptable (even natural). If any tensions surfaced, they were eased by tracing the source of the problems (and the obstacle blocking “national capitalism’s” potential from being realized) to ethnic relations—it was the part of Jews in economic life that lay behind the crisis.

The order envisaged by “national capitalism”, based on work uninterrupted by strikes and regulated by the “national instinct”, was characterized by stability, harmony of interests and a steady growth of social wealth. This vision did not anticipate experiences such as uncertainty caused by the unpredictability of economic processes, fear of pauperization or anger fueled by social injustice—all

⁸⁶ See e.g. “Wznowienie pracy,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 343 (1918).

⁸⁷ This does not mean, however, that it should be considered unmodern. As pointed out by Shmuel Eisenstadt, it is not only those projects that invoke Western models and ideas of progress that should be considered innately modern. This also applies to the concepts that seem to be overtly conservative, if not reactionary. Eisenstadt argues that they too constitute a form of response to the modern challenge—they are based on the pursuit of the creation of a previously planned social order, and the belief that societies can freely shape their existence via their sole efforts. In this sense, „multiple modernities” can include the classic, Western model of a secularized, liberal society but also various strains of Islamic fundamentalism or the order which emerged in Japan after the restoration of the Meiji. Shmuel Eisenstadt, “Multiple Modernities,” *Daedalus*, no. 129 (2000).

typical of an actual capitalist economy. These features of modernity and capitalism, chaos, instability and uncontrollable change, were purportedly the result of the activity of Jews. Therefore, the antisemitism that pervaded the discourse of *Rozwój* and *Kurier Łódzki* became the tool of a specific, translocated social critique—the source of economic problems and social conflict was couched in ethnic terms. One group (Jews) was presented as the root of the problem while another (Poles), the victim.

Several examples aptly present this mechanism. For instance, unemployment affected Łódź particularly severely in the period of the postwar crisis. The inability to find work by representatives of various social groups—workers and intelligentsia alike—was explained in terms of competition with Jews and the reluctance of Jewish entrepreneurs to hire Poles. High levels of unemployment among demobilized soldiers arriving to Łódź were written of thus:

Those who came were bitterly disappointed. Wherever they turned, they met locked doors and rejection, rarely given in comprehensible Polish. (...) Factories able to employ a considerable percentage of the untrained and unqualified remain in Jewish and German hands. Wherever a Jew is the owner, making a fortune on the backs of Polish workers, veterans have no access – they are only likely to encounter derision or a spiteful joke.⁸⁸

Another text added:

The number of workshops in Łódź's industry has not increased compared to the number before the war. The supply has gone up. (...) Workshops are being taken over by Jewish workers. Trade unions have taken the side of the ousted Polish worker. Jews have formed their own trade unions. And so, there are fierce battles, not only for every factory or its departments but for every single weaving and textile loom.⁸⁹

A similar plight was also allegedly experienced by members of the Polish intelligentsia who “loitered” around Łódź while in the city's institutions “most management positions were in the hands of Jews and Germans.”⁹⁰

In all three quoted statements, competition for the insufficient number of workplaces was presented as strife between various ethnic groups treated as inseparable units. Individuals seeking work (and at the other end of the spectrum, individual entrepreneurs) were identified with particular ethnic

⁸⁸ “Dola zdemobilizowanych,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 66 (1922).

⁸⁹ “U dołu i u góry,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 68 (1923).

⁹⁰ “Przeciw „ucudzoziemczaniu” naszego miasta,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 176 (1919).

groups.⁹¹ The experience of unemployment was ascribed only to one ethnic group—Poles. Jews (and in the case of some statements, Germans too) seemed not to have experienced it. Furthermore, Jewish entrepreneurs also contributed to exacerbating the situation by refusing employment to demobilized soldiers—a refusal that was not interpreted as falling within the category of a rational capitalist’s decision to keep costs low, but as a deed motivated by Jews’ resentment toward Poles.

Fluctuating business cycles, inflation and complications on financial markets were similarly explained. On the one hand, understanding macroeconomic phenomena was impossible based on everyday experiences or common knowledge. On the other hand, their consequences impacted on the lives of individuals in a very concrete and often severe way. This double bind exacerbated the sense of insecurity and its source in mysterious, unpredictable forces. In *Rozwój* and *Kurier Łódzki*, this dissonance was addressed in the use of antisemitic clichés which associated unforeseeable changes on the market with alleged behind-the-scenes schemes devised by Jewish capitalists. For instance, fluctuations of demand for textile goods on the national market, which directly affected employment levels in Łódź factories were explained as follows:

[T]he manufacturing market in Łódź is controlled by a handful of Jewish wholesalers operating via a herd of “unlicensed” middlemen that provoke a bear or a bull market as they please, which affects the entire trade in Poland.⁹²

Fluctuations in the rate of exchange of the dollar, which was a key currency in transactions conducted by Łódź companies, were explained in similar terms (“Behind the scenes, doctors are deliberating on how to cure the sick ... dollar. Instead of Latin, jargon [Yiddish – K.P.], and often German, is spoken at these councils”),⁹³ and so were the changes in stock market prices and the inflation mechanism:

It should be stressed that the stock exchange is affected by non-Polish factors that are hostile to the nation, or at least not prepared to join the Polish social contract. If heavy industry, which is so influential in the stock exchange, were in Polish hands, such a compromising depreciation of the currency would have never happened.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Sergiusz Kowalski and Magdalena Tulli, *Zamiast procesu: raport o mowie nienawiści* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo W.A.B., 2003).

⁹² “Gangrena łódzka,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 73 (1922).

⁹³ “Łódź a dolar,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 83 (1922).

⁹⁴ “Zamaskowany wróg,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 47 (1923); see also “Numerus clausus,” *Rozwój*, no. 72 (1923).

Unfavorable, and from the perspective of an average citizen, usually incomprehensible changes in the macroeconomic indicators were thus presented as a result of conscious machinations performed in secrecy and beyond the reach of public opinion. In other words, according to the discourse of the right-wing press, the market by itself was not unpredictable—it was made so by the manipulations of the Jews. Their elimination from economic life would eliminate the causes of chaos and instability.

Moreover, the discourse of *Rozwój* and *Kurier Łódzki* also made Jews liable for an uneven distribution of market information, and indirectly, for a sense of instability intrinsically linked to risk, which is a part of running any business.⁹⁵ Ultimately, a sense of not being able to control the overall shape of economic processes, which was particularly acute in the first years after the war, which were marked by inflation and a fluctuation of business cycles, was explained in terms of the purposeful activity of a specific ethnic group—the Jews.

The presence of Jews in the urban space was also to affect the particular esthetic of the industrial center of peripheral capitalism. The negative (auto) stereotype of a neglected, dirty city was exploited to stigmatize the Jewish population:

Despite its population of half a million, Łódź (...) does not have the characteristics of a Western city with as few as 100,000 residents. (...) You will encounter a lot of four and five-floor houses but their architecture will rarely draw your attention. (...) They are often barrack-like structures built somewhat frantically here and there. (...) Łódź has no sewerage system or waterworks. (...) Each house's owner builds a sidewalk around their own property. Hence, they present not only a range of materials but they also differ in their height. (...) Walking down the streets of Łódź, particularly during periods of rain and black ice, requires skill. Pedestrians must look up so as not to break their noses on a lamp post, look under their feet lest there should be a step or a pipe sticking out or some iron slab (...) they must look to the right so as not to knock up against a pillar or a cornice, to the left so as not to fall off the sidewalk into the street, and finally, look up to avoid having water poured down their collars from a balcony; balconies have no ducts draining rainwater. (...) While traffic in the city's main arteries (...) is very heavy, trams are always packed, it should be noted that this urban traffic is not too colorful. (...) it is tinged with black, a grim, mournful picture painted by silhouettes in long cloaks, moving along lazily or standing around, among which, from time to time, a bright ginger beard, like a patch of rust, will peek out from under a hideous "mandatory" cap.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ "Żyd na urządzie," *Rozwój*, no. 7 (1919).

⁹⁶ "Niecico o Łodzi," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 38 (1920).

In this instance, the city's streets were described in a manner aspiring to objectivity. The stereotypical image of a Jew was inserted, based on the conviction (deeply rooted in the analyzed discourse) that Jews habitually neglected hygiene and that their traditional garment was unsightly.⁹⁷ Such a device blurred the line between the esthetic of the urban fabric and characteristics ascribed to Jews, blaming them for a condition which was rather typical of accelerated capitalist industrialization.



Figure 24. Fair at the Old Market, postcard from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

Journalists often linked the activity of Jews to all the attributes of modern capitalism that were viewed as immoral and unacceptable for the solidarity-based, properly organized national community. Exploitation, which was not associated with opposing class interests but—according to articles in the analyzed papers—with ethnic divisions. As with unemployment, the victims were supposedly Polish workers, whilst the beneficiaries Jewish industrialists or traders.⁹⁸ It should be added that exploitation itself was not linked to efforts to maximize profit, which had no regard for ethnicity and which ensured capitalism its dynamics, but pri-

⁹⁷ See e.g. “O znieawidzone języki”, *Rozwój*, no. 51 (1919); “Kwestia żydowska”, *Rozwój*, no. 86 (1921); “Kultura „puryców””, *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 168 (1918).

⁹⁸ “Szczęśliwa mniejszość”, *Rozwój*, no. 71 (1920).

marily to Jews' desire to oppress Poles.⁹⁹ Naturally, references were also made to a deeply rooted stereotype about the supposed greediness of Jews; however, this element can be considered as marginal. It was more common to explain the phenomenon of exploitation with references to a total ethnic conflict, where one side grasps at any means to oppress another.¹⁰⁰ The economic success achieved by that was sometimes portrayed only as an effect and not a fundamental reason for such behavior.



Figure 25. The Bałucki Market, author: unknown, 1931, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-G-5749.

Another sign of progressive demoralization was the purported decline in tradesmen's ethics and a growth in speculation. As mentioned in the introduction, high prices and speculation in staples were one of the greatest social issues in Łódź during the difficult postwar years. This phenomenon was inscribed in the narratives of the analyzed press titles via ethnicization, as for instance by suggesting that "a Jew is an idler only waiting to bamboozle a buyer, to cheat a producer-

⁹⁹ See e.g. "Z tygodnia," *Rozwój*, no. 74 (1919).

¹⁰⁰ See e.g. "Kronika tygodniowa," *Rozwój*, no. 74 (1919).

supplier.”¹⁰¹ Local market relations were unanimously criticized as stemming from Jewish deficiencies:

Tradesmen’s ethics are at a horrifyingly low level in Łódź. However, trade ethics in Łódź cannot be equaled with the notion of the Polish tradesman’s ethics. In Łódź, nearly all trade is in the hands of Jews and Germans, and if this trade exhibits today symptoms of common crime, it is thanks to the methods of the Jews.¹⁰²

Such pieces were filled with metaphors typical of biological racism; the title of the above quoted article hardly leaves any doubt about the danger threatening the national organism: *The Łódź Gangrene*. In this vein other arguments were elaborated:

Economically speaking, Jews destroyed our trade, ousted our bourgeoisie from Polish cities, and having taken over trade, they created profiteering and completely destroyed the worker, the artisan and the intellectual.¹⁰³

To confirm this type of generalization, the aforementioned figure of *pars pro toto* was typically used – individual examples of alleged wrongdoings committed by Jewish tradesmen were to confirm the presupposition that it was the Jews (as an ethnic group, and not even as a collective of “Jewish tradesmen”) who were responsible for profiteering and the high price of staple products.¹⁰⁴ A fully-fledged antisemitism was a vehicle for the discourse of modernity in the right-wing press from the early twenties onwards.

The table presents collectively assessed categories that were generated during analysis of the selected texts and which painted a picture of capitalism degenerated by Jews and an opposing perspective of “national capitalism”, along with exemplary articulations. Articulations comprising the vision of national capitalism typically have a postulative nature, while statements about degenerate capitalism are seemingly objective descriptions of a factual state.

¹⁰¹ “Kupiec,” *Rozwój*, no. 15 (1921).

¹⁰² “Gangrena łódzka,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 73 (1922).

¹⁰³ “Kwestia żydowska,” *Rozwój*, no. 86 (1921); see also “Legenda o polskim Żydzie,” *Rozwój*, no. 84 (1922); “Drożyzna a rabini krakowscy,” *Rozwój*, no. 63 (1923); “Radni i pan poseł w obronie paskarstwa,” *Rozwój*, no. 50 (1919).

¹⁰⁴ “Z tygodnia,” *Rozwój*, no. 74 (1919); see also Kajetan Mojsak, “Perpetuum mobile. Nacjonalizm integralny Romana Dmowskiego a reguły dyskursu antysemitckiego,” in: *Analizować nienawiść. Dyskurs antysemitcki jako tekstowe wyzwanie*, ed. Paweł Kuciński and Grzegorz Krzywiec (Warszawa: Instytut Badań Literackich PAN, 2011).

Table 5. "National capitalism" versus degenerate capitalism: image in the right-wing press, 1918–1923

| Properties of national capitalism | Exemplary articulations | Properties of degenerated capitalism | Exemplary articulations |
|------------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Order, organization | <i>Let today be the day (...) of victory for nationalist issues, the right mind, the notion of social order and organization.</i> | Disorder, chaos | <i>Current sad experiences have illustrated sufficiently the detrimental effects of a deeply penetrating Jewish influence on municipal issues, how dangerous they can be when given enough power, sowing havoc and unrest.</i> |
| Cooperation | <i>Hence, it is evident here that only the good will of the government, employers and employees as well as their calm and matter-of-fact communication with each other can contribute to the resumption of work which is the only cure for the maladies currently experienced by our entire nation.</i> | Conflict | <i>In the incessant array of black strikes, socialists are purposefully aiming to (...) completely ruin the general population (...), and ultimately to vex it so much that it slips into madness out of despair and people start murdering each other, as in Russia. (...) In this chaos, when all creative work has collapsed, socialists shall temporarily seize power only to return it into the hands of the lurking Jewish moguls when the right time comes.</i> |
| Work | <i>Only work can lift our Motherland out of the depths into which it is currently sinking.</i> | Walk-outs/ strikes | <i>Therefore, it is the duty of the better informed (...) representatives of the working class to combat the thoughtlessly organized walk-outs (...). As this is an action calculated to only benefit our enemies, Germans and Jewish Litvak profiteers and food Shylocks.</i> |
| Frugality as the source of capital | <i>To quote the poet – private property should be spread over millions. This happens not through disinheritance and expropriation but through the method tested by civilized nations: arduous work and savings.</i> | Speculation or deceit as the source of capital | <i>"[M]uch as a tenant used to oust a noble, a seller is now pushing out a manufacturer but not in an open fight [but] stealthily during commotion. The means of strife are simple: a factory stands idle during the war, the price of shares is low but "the director is conducting" a sales department with the occupiers; with some cash, what is easier than buying up shares while continuing to badmouth them? Once 50 percent of the shares are reached, the fear of liability for one's actions is gone.</i> |

| | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Distributed ownership | <i>The more individuals there are in Poland who own something, who can carry their weight with more than their labor, who also have certain economic foundations, the less dangerous slogans of social revolt become, and the more prosperous the existence of the broad mass is.</i> | Concentration of capital | <i>[T]he industrial market in Łódź is controlled by a handful of Jewish wholesalers operating via a herd of 'unlicensed' middlemen who provoke stagnation or a bull market as they please, which affects the entire trade in Poland.</i> |
| Low, honest profit of the entrepreneur | <i>The owners of factories, industrial and agricultural enterprises should be satisfied with minimal profits conscientiously calculated to cover the costs of production, their personal livelihood and anticipated losses.</i> | Speculation, profiteering | <i>From the political point of view, we cannot resent the fact that the majority of Jewry, of course except for the sparse local intelligentsia, engages in profiteering and the illegal manipulation of currencies – this should be left to the producer's office.</i> |
| Hard work | <i>Hence, the only remedy to high prices and shortages is the honest, arduous and tenacious work of the entire population of our State.</i> | Idleness, laziness | <i>[A] Jew is an idler only waiting to bamboozle a buyer, to cheat a producer-supplier.</i> |
| Honest pay | <i>It is also universally recognized that a worker should be appropriately compensated for his work and protected against the exploitation of the employer.</i> | Exploitation | <i>A Jew making a fortune on the back of the Polish worker.</i> |
| Respect for the worker | <i>Respect for work and the worker (...) is elementary in a society organized in the spirit of modernity.</i> | Arrogance of the capitalist | <i>The insolence of Litvaks.</i> |

Table 5. cont.

| Properties of national capitalism | Exemplary articulations | Properties of degenerated capitalism | Exemplary articulations |
|--|--|---|--|
| Tradesmen ethics | <i>Trade (...) should only be allowed to sold tradesmen whom you can find among Christian merchants. Maximum prices should also be established, along with strict penalties should they be exceeded.</i> | Deceit | <i>In Łódź, nearly all trade is in the hands of Jews and Germans, and if this trade exhibits today symptoms of common crime, it is thanks to the methods of the Jews.</i> |
| Moral principles | <i>Our society must work and develop based on the generally accepted rules of social morality. Neither a plant nor an animal will tolerate parasites, not to mention a human, who has the right to eradicate that which does not deserve protection.</i> | Tyranny of the dollar | <i>The dollar regulates its [Łódź's – K.P.] existence, its fortune and misfortune reflects on the fortune and misfortune of life in Łódź (...) Łódź does not care about political pivots, the Vilnius issue, it treats with laxity the readings of Belmont, Petrażycki and Baudouin (...) What Łódź wants to know today is when the current eclipse of the dollar will end, and the sweet period of prosperity return.</i> |

From Antisemitism to Political Mobilization

The way in which right-wing discourse explained speculation in staple products is a good example of the phenomenon that had occurred since the local elections of 1919, in which, in the publications *Rozwój* and *Kurier Łódzki*, two groups of enemies—the political (socialists) and the ethnic (Jews)—were frequently coupled. A similar strategy had already been tried out in the territory of Łódź during the Revolution of 1905–1907, when attempts were made to use antisemitic resentment as fuel to fight socialist parties.¹⁰⁵ The ethnicization of political difference was already firmly established in Polish nationalist discourse and it widely infected political debate with the vicious germ of antisemitism.

According to the narratives recurring in the analyzed texts, in the immediate postwar period, the persistence of high prices was only possible thanks to the passivity of the city authorities. A desired rhetorical impact was made by forging a seemingly logical connection between high prices and the efforts of the socialist municipal council to expand its control over the circulation of staple goods. An alleged ineffectiveness displayed by the city authorities caused the black market to thrive, which in turn became an opportunity for (only Jewish!) traders to turn a quick profit.¹⁰⁶ This interpretation was allegedly confirmed in the course of a rally devoted to the issue of food supplies organized by a number of nationalist organizations. According to *Rozwój*, socialists “together with the National Workers’ Union and Jewish profiteers” had interfered with this endeavor to improve the city’s food supply. Further, it was reported that the events attracted a crowd of “paid agitators” representing the interests of the Polish Socialist Party, who “shouted at the profiteers, but in reality were defending their own interests, surely not without compensation.”¹⁰⁷

Similarly, antisemitism was one of the key tools employed against the Polish Socialist Party and the socialist city board.¹⁰⁸ *Rozwój* embraced it vehemently, blurring the difference between “bolshevism”, defined as a complete rejection of

¹⁰⁵ To find out more on how the figure of a Jew was in the discourse of national democracy associated with political opponents (particularly, socialists) see Grzegorz Krzywiec, “Z taką rewolucją musimy walczyć na noże: rewolucja 1905 roku z perspektywy polskiej prawicy,” in: *Rewolucja 1905. Przewodnik* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2013); Paweł Śpiewak, *Żydokomuna: Interpretacje Historyczne* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “Czerwone i Czarne,” 2012); Marzec, “What Bears Witness of the Failed Revolution? The Rise of Political Antisemitism during the 1905–1907 Revolution in the Kingdom of Poland.”

¹⁰⁶ See e.g. “Radni i pan poseł w obronie paskarstwa,” *Rozwój*, no. 50 (1919).

¹⁰⁷ “Terror łódzkiej partii PPS i jej sprzymierzeńców,” *Rozwój*, no. 123 (1919).

¹⁰⁸ See e.g. “Rządy socjalistów w Łodzi,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 165 (1919).

values and the collapse of social order (“anarchy”), „socialism” and Jews, purposefully conflating them.¹⁰⁹ This produced strikingly original notions such as the “urban soviet” (to describe the city council in which the Polish Socialist Party held the majority) and “social Maccabees.”¹¹⁰ The decisions of the city authorities were supposedly motivated as much by partisan rabidity and class “blindness”¹¹¹ as the desire to satisfy the expectations of the Jews—who were presented as the actual policy makers, lurking behind the backs of the socialists. As explained by *Kurier Łódzki*: “The ruling fraction of the Polish Socialist Party has virtually become the subject of exploitation on the part of the Jewish leaders who defend shopkeepers, stall owners, landlords and at the same time, are rabid supporters of socialists.”¹¹² This trend culminated in the period running up to the local elections in 1923—the electoral competition was defined as a battle between two political, and hence ethnic camps: the Polish national camp and the “socialist-Jewish” alliance.¹¹³

This kind of move was part of a wider rhetorical strategy calculated at disciplining and politically mobilizing the voters. Its ultimate result was the assumption represented in the right-wing press that in Łódź the conflict between Poles and Jews was unavoidable. As a result, the axis of argument was built on metaphors of war. Jews were depicted as a lethal enemy. The wide inventory of attributes ascribed to them drew extensively from the repertoire of fully-fledged cultural antisemitism. The Jews were portrayed as a separate “psychological type.”¹¹⁴ They were marked by a deviousness which allowed them to easily cheat Poles, especially those who were uneducated and illiterate. Reference was made to the figure of a “sneaky Jew”, which was already widespread trope. “A sneaky Jew” used his cunning and craftiness to achieve material and political advantage, particularly at a time of crisis and general chaos.¹¹⁵ Another key feature ascribed to Jews was their supposed extraordinary solidarity which always exceeded political, class

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. “Wojujące żydostwo w skórze PPS,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 90 (1920); “W kotle nowej Rady Miejskiej,” *Rozwój*, no. 99 (1919); “Z Rady Miejskiej,” *Rozwój*, no. 65 (1920).

¹¹⁰ “Przejrzyste drogi,” *Rozwój*, no. 59 (1922).

¹¹¹ “Bankructwo demagogii w samorządzie,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 334 (1922).

¹¹² “Uzupełnienie czy rozwiązanie Rady Miejskiej,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 33 (1923).

¹¹³ “Pod znakiem jedności,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 107 (1923); “Rządy socjalistów w Łodzi,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 163 (1919); “Konsolidacja narodowa,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 120 (1923); “Przed urną wyborczą,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 123 (1923); see also Michlic, *Poland’s Threatening Other*, 96–97.

¹¹⁴ “Dwa oblicza Judy,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 50 (1923).

¹¹⁵ *Rozwój* wrote about Jews arriving from Russia (the so-called Litvaks): „A Litvak likes to bask in the eastern turmoil, he is a crazy risk-taker [...] he is enamored not only in unusual financial operations but also in coups, revolts and slaughters,” *Żydzi w Polsce*,” *Rozwój*, no. 115 (1919).

and worldview differences.¹¹⁶ Equipping the enemy with these particular features allowed the right-wing press to legitimize and reinforce their appeals for the national unity of the Poles beyond any social differentiation:

Urban dwellers, be they an intellectual, industrialist, tradesman, artisan or worker, should feel solidarity in their goal to lift the cities, improve the fate of urban dwellers, alleviate their maladies, boost handicraft, industry and trade. Here, when Polish cities are being flooded by Jewry, it is an absolute imperative that the Polish urban population understands the common ground of these interests. Otherwise, the conquering of Polish cities by Jews, systematically conducted for years with an increasing degree of success, will eventually lead the Polish element to take the role of the cities' pariah and laborers.¹¹⁷

In this way the vision of a disciplined, obedient national community ready for action ceased to be just one alternative political project. It became the only right and necessary response to the threat. The Polish-Jewish conflict was undergoing a process of naturalization:

Jews vote en masse (...). And so should we if we do not want Jews to prevail over us. Each lost Polish vote is a social crime! By neglecting their electoral responsibility, each Polish citizen shall be held liable to himself, to society and to future generations.¹¹⁸

The quotation above illustrates well the mechanism of stigmatizing these groups and individuals who contested the vision of "national consolidation" enforced by the right-wing camp. Lost votes are not those that remain uncast, but those supporting political forces other than the nationalists.

The above quotation also reveals the manner in which the situation in the city was defined using categories of an ethnic conflict that pervade all spheres of social life.¹¹⁹ The catalog of derisive expressions employed to stigmatize was wide, and the vast majority were openly antisemitic—"Jewish servants"¹²⁰, "Shabbos goye"¹²¹, "Judophiles"¹²² and similar. Whatever political mobilization was achieved thanks to these rhetorical constructions was fueled by skillful fearmongering

¹¹⁶ "Ławą, nie luzem," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 45 (1918); "Konsolidacja narodowa," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 120 (1923).

¹¹⁷ "Rola i przyszłość miasta," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 289 (1922).

¹¹⁸ "Doniosły moment," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 53 (1919).

¹¹⁹ See e.g. "Jeszcze o organizacji bojowej kapitału żydowskiego," *Rozwój*, no. 5 (1920); "Konsolidacja narodowa," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 120 (1923).

¹²⁰ "Z tygodnia," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 218 (1919).

¹²¹ "Stracone zachody miłości," *Rozwój*, no. 10 (1922).

¹²² "Intrygi żydowskie," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 180 (1918); "Żydzi w magistracie," *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 36 (1919).

Table 6. The rhetoric of the “consolidation of the nation”—ethnic conflict and political mobilization, 1918–1923

| The argumentation structure | Exemplary articulations |
|---|---|
| Definition of the ethnopolitical conflict | <p><i>Our city is in a peculiar condition and constitutes a land where Polishness must exert itself to oppose the attempts of elements foreign in their spirit and race, the elements both hostile and willing to support any corrupting or revolting actions that would weaken the prowess and integrity of society as well as the normal growth of its economic life.</i></p> <p><i>Today will show whether the issues of urban management will end up in competent hands, whether they will end up in the hands of Poles or foreign hands.</i></p> |
| Stigmatization of rival parties | <p><i>At the same time, it cannot be omitted that in order to gain power, the left will always make the greatest compromises with Jews, and that this compromise will always take place at the expense of the city.</i></p> <p><i>Jews vote en masse (...) with a unified front—in solidarity. And so should we so as not to let Jews prevail over us. Each lost Polish vote is a social crime.</i></p> |
| Electoral appeal | <p><i>[W]e firmly believe that the entire Polish population of our city will go to the ballot boxes without fail or hesitation and come together under a banner of noble messages, promising a better tomorrow to our city: order, work, justice.</i></p> <p><i>[I]t is crucial that all Polish citizens of our city, those citizens who think and feel patriotically, to whom national matters are particularly dear, (...) go en masse and cast their vote on the list of the consolidation of the nation no. 8.</i></p> <p><i>The Polish population, facing the danger of again forfeiting urban management for a number of years, must comprehend the imperative dictated by the national and civic conscience to every individual thinking in patriotic terms to cast their vote for the cross-party and cross-class list no. 8 of the Christian Union of National Unity (...) which supports the interests of all classes.</i></p> <p><i>Today, all Christian and patriotically-oriented Polish citizens will cast their votes for the only national list, the list that is cross-class, the list that upholds the interests of the state and the entire Polish population regardless of their status or class, for the Christian Union of National Unity list no. 8.</i></p> |

as well as the promise carried by the vision of “national capitalism.” This benign state of affairs would make class differences obsolete, ease social conflict, eliminate a sense of economic uncertainty and offer the perspective of a gradual in-

crease in the prosperity of the national community as a whole. In a city like Łódź inequalities were stark, the postwar economic crisis severely affected the population and hopes sparked by the newly regained independence were strong. Such a promise had a crucial meaning. The effectiveness of this rhetoric was confirmed by the results of the local elections in 1923, won by the right-wing parties and painfully lost by the Polish Socialist Party. It can be assumed that the rhetoric of consolidation, rooted in a wider vision of “national capitalism”, proved attractive to a large section of the working-class electorate.

Class or Nation?

The vision of “national capitalism” reconstructed here defined a nation as an economic community that was based on solidarity and stabilized by each of its respective elements performing its functions. It can be classified as a kind of conservative utopia which attempted to overcome the contingency and uncertainty inscribed in the experience of modernity, at the same time as clearly being its product. At the turn of century modernity, industrialism and big-city life fascinated, but it also raised concerns.

The experience of modernity was ambivalent: on the one hand, it promised rapid technological progress and an improved form of human co-existence; on the other, it meant constant uncertainty, havoc, randomness, a hectic pace and the disintegration of former values, etc.¹²³ To use Claude Lefort’s language, political modernity was an epoch where “markers of certainty” were constantly diluted.¹²⁴ At the same time, this experience of uncertainty triggered efforts to establish (or re-establish) order and provide a lasting foundation to society. As noted by Zygmunt Bauman, modern political ideologies can be described as an embodiment of these tendencies.¹²⁵ Trying to capture the same property of the modern public sphere, post-structuralist theorists of discourse talk about the pursuit of hegemony, driven by the desire to “suture the society”, hence, stabilize the fluid universe of signs.¹²⁶ The discourse of “national capitalism” can be read as a similar attempt at taming modernity and designing a proper social order.

¹²³ Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*; Berend, *Decades of Crisis*; Mark D. Steinberg, “Emotions History in Eastern Europe,” in: *Doing Emotions History*, ed. Sussan J. Matt and Peter N. Stearns (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

¹²⁴ Claude Lefort, *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism* (MIT Press, 1986).

¹²⁵ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence* (London; New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2013); Peter Beilharz, *Zygmunt Bauman: Dialectic of Modernity* (London; Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2000).

¹²⁶ Howarth, *Discourse*.

The vision of “national capitalism” appears as a space of order and stability made possible only if each part of the national community performs its ascribed function. Solid work and honest pay were supposed to guarantee harmony between the two “organs” of the national body that were key to industrial Łódź—the workers and the capitalists. This harmony was viewed as a factor instrumental in the modernizing of the city, understood as a process of cumulative, gradual, quantitative changes which occurred by themselves or naturally, without the need for elaborate strategies to be developed or deep systemic reforms implemented. Hence, the role envisaged for the city authorities was very limited and was basically of an administrative, unpolitical nature.



Figure 26. Panorama of the southern working-class districts (view from the tower of the Catholic cathedral on Piotrkowska Street), author: unknown, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-U-3820-2.

The vision of “municipal socialism” played a similar function in the first years after the war. However, it accepted the ethnic diversity of the city. The sources of imperfections were primarily regarded as the legacy of bygone imperial orders and the mechanism of capitalist industrialization. While the vision of “national capitalism” involved a program of transformation to facilitate shaping the national community into a desired form, the vision of “municipal socialism” fostered the gradual empowerment of the working class through class warfare.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ “O organizacji magistratów,” *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*, no. 3 (1920).

In both cases, a utopian vision was an element within a wider structure calculated to achieve effective political mobilization. This included a negative diagnosis of the city's situation, an attempt at defining the sources of problems and the obstacles hampering the realization of the suggested vision, specifying the mechanism of the desired modernization as well as a catalog of points of reference to positive models or examples. Arranged this way, the elements of both analyzed discourses can be presented schematically in the form of a table:

Table 7. The structure of “municipal socialism” and “national capitalism” discourses, 1918–1923

| | The “municipal socialism” discourse | The „national capitalist” discourse |
|---|--|--|
| Diagnosis of the situation (key elements) | Stark social inequalities Spatial chaos and poor condition of the urban infrastructure Unemployment | Ethnic conflict (Poles vs. Jews) Economic crisis Social turmoil („anarchy”) |
| Source of problems/ the enemy/ obstacles blocking the desired changes | Legacy of Russian rule Capitalist industrialization Egoism of the propertied class Sabotage on the part of the central government | Jews Politics of the city authorities Strikes Legacy of Russian rule and German occupation |
| Relationship toward the past of the city | Partial incorporation of the discourse of the “bad city” and linking it to capitalism – the past of Łódź evaluated negatively | The past of the city viewed moderately positively (criticism limited to the former Russian authorities) – emphasizing the necessity to restore “normal relations” in economic life |
| Mobilization mechanism | Rhetoric of class warfare (emancipation and social change) | Rhetoric of a threat (integration of the national community) |
| Source of legitimization | Democracy, the will of the people/working class (as the universal class); the laws of history | Objectified national interest |
| Main mechanism of modernization | Planned, rational, based on technical knowledge | Spontaneous arrival of economic prosperity |
| Role of the city authorities | The main subject of modernization; by expanding the area of municipal activity, more spheres of life (housing, health care, community services, local transport, education, food supply, etc.) may be exempted from the harmful capitalist logic | Limited—accentuating the “unpolitical” nature of the local government, the main task should be ensuring the “Polishness” of the city and managing existing community resources (local government should not hinder the activity of private initiative) |

Table 7. cont

| | The “municipal socialism” discourse | The „national capitalist” discourse |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Leading metaphors | “The stronghold of the proletariat”, „avant-garde city” (including the city in the universal plan of empowering the working class) | “The capital city of work”, „the capital city of industry” (stressing the economic function of the city) |
| Main points of reference | Western Europe—higher quality of life (a derivative of the rational urban politics) and higher advancement of emancipatory processes | Other Polish cities—stronger „national instincts” Polish state (a project of a national state) Western Europe—a higher quality of life (a result of accumulated wealth) |

Interestingly, there are similarities between both analyzed discourses. Not only is their interior structure parallel; there are convergences in specific modernizing projects. For instance, they both (although in the right-wing press to a decidedly lesser degree) appealed for universal education and school building, developing a network of cultural institutions (especially a theater) and building sanitary installations. However, ultimately, these convergent postulates were inscribed in completely different systems of reference—e.g. for socialists, universal education was aimed at removing inequalities, while for the right-wing press it was supposed to strengthen national identity. Socialists treated investment in the city infrastructure predominantly as a way to make life easier for citizens, whereas the right-wing cared more about its effect on the condition of industry. Finally, socialists viewed theater as decent entertainment for the working class, and nationalists saw it primarily as a bastion of “national art.”

“Municipal socialism” and “national capitalism” discourses were based on vivid political identities, construed on the basis of class and ethnicity, respectively. The social structure of interwar Łódź was conducive to demarcating political divisions along these lines. While over 60% of the citizens were working class (industrial workers and their families), the city still maintained its multinational and multi-faith character—according to the 1921 census, nearly 62% of the population declared as Polish, 31% as Jewish, and 7% as German.¹²⁸ Class difference also

¹²⁸ Arkadiusz Rzepkowski, *Ludność miasta Łodzi w latach 1918–1939* (Łódź: Ibidem, 2008). This division partly overlapped with the religious diversity—according to the census records from 1931, just over 56% of the citizens declared their faith as Catholicism, just over 33% as Judaism, and slightly over 9% as affiliated with Protestant churches (p. 117).

overlapped with ethnic difference. Poles decidedly dominated among workers; there were significantly fewer Germans and Jews. In the case of the bourgeoisie, despite relatively rapid processes of assimilation during the interwar period, Jews and Germans dominated. Intense democratization and consequently, electoral rivalry, made these differences the subject of political interpretation. The press discourse concentrated on strengthening class or national identification presented in clear opposition to the “enemy”—in terms of class or ethnicity.¹²⁹ This meant that in the first years after the war, the dispute over the future of the city referred not only to issues connected to spatial management but primarily to who the actual host of the city would be: the Polish national community or the Łódź working class.

The Crisis of Modernization and European Civil War – Conclusion

The engine behind the development of Łódź since the mid-19th century was the textile industry. The economic successes of the local factories directly translated to an incredibly fast growth of the city’s population (from a thousand residents in 1825 to about 475,000 in 1914¹³⁰), investment in infrastructure (building electric tram lines, hospitals, developing a road network, etc.) and expanding the city limits. After Poland regained independence, it seemed that industry in Łódź would prosper again—this was tacitly assumed in the discourse of “municipal socialism.” “National capitalism” discourse developed a vision of the “capital city of industry”, a dynamically developing economic center whose production would satisfy the needs of the domestic market but also reach the Russian and Balkan markets.

The future of Łódź is secured. It has its own outlet with 30 million people, which can cover 70% of prewar manufacture. Exports to the East, considering the direct borders with Russia and Ukraine as well as a matchless familiarity with the territory and Russian relations, expansion of Łódź’s manufacture to the Balkans, especially Romania and Bulgaria, all allow Łódź to anticipate that perhaps in the near future, its industry shall not only achieve its 1914 state but that it can exceed it considerably.¹³¹

¹²⁹ More on the political consequences of ethnic and religious diversity in interwar Central Europe: Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, 185–90.

¹³⁰ Fijałek et al., *Łódź: dzieje miasta do 1918 r.*, 196.

¹³¹ “Łódź,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 252 (1921); see also “Nasz przemysł włóknisty i jego najbliższe zadania,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 295 (1921); “O drogi eksportowe dla łódzkiego przemysłu manufakturowego,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 10 (1922); “O rynki zbytu dla przemysłu łódzkiego,” *Kurier Łódzki*, no. 18 (1922).

However, this kind of hope remained largely unfulfilled. The mechanism of “partial”, peripheral modernization in Central Europe, which led to the creation and dynamic growth of industrial centers such as Łódź, was in crisis even in the years preceding the First World War. The war brought destruction and losses but also political solutions that deeply transformed the global economy. Liberal capitalism of the 19th-century, characterized by the progressive globalization of economic exchange and the conquest of increasingly new markets through industrial production, was not reborn after the war. The single market of multinational empires in Central Europe was sliced up by custom borders, which resulted in severing former trade ties. As Conan Fischer noted:

Unable to compete effectively on the international market and facing oblivion at home, one government after another resorted to protecting its struggling agricultural and industrial sectors through the imposition of tariffs or import quotas. The strategy was perfectly understandable, but the inevitable result was a further decline in world trade and continued stagnation within the protected economies themselves.¹³²

Simultaneously, along with technological development and the formation of new consumer needs, the role of individual branches of industry also gradually declined—the steel industry, largely based on cheap labor, mining and the textile industry, which had propelled the growth of the economy in the “long 19th-century”, ceased to play major role, conceding to the electro-technical, car or chemical industries. The economic order which had created the conditions for the dynamic growth of Łódź was already becoming obsolete in the interwar period.¹³³

Furthermore, contrary to earlier hopes, the postwar economic crisis hampered modernizing processes in Central Europe. These were mostly implemented by state agencies and local governments, primarily municipalities.¹³⁴ Certain successes that managed to be achieved in various areas of social politics or representative investment projects could not outstrip increasing social disappointment.¹³⁵ Also, in Poland, after a short period of euphoria at regained independence, press debates and

¹³² Conan Fischer, *Europe between Democracy and Dictatorship: 1900–1945* (John Wiley & Sons, 2011), 181; see also Robert Bideleux and Ian Jeffries, *A History of Eastern Europe: Crisis and Change* (London: Routledge, 1998), 423–24.

¹³³ Berend, *Decades of Crisis*, 115–18, 225–31; see also Derek H. Aldcroft, *Europe's Third World: The European Periphery in the Interwar Years* (London, New York: Routledge, 2016), 48.

¹³⁴ See e.g. Edward D. Wynot, *Warsaw between the World Wars: Profile of the Capital City in a Developing Land, 1918–1939* (New York: East European Monographs, 1983); Wojciech Musiał, *Modernizacja Polski: Polityki rządowe w latach 1918–2004* (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2013), 157–61.

¹³⁵ See: Aldcroft, *Europe's Third World*, 171–83.

intellectuals' statements became dominated by bitter tones, critical of the state's situation. These statements were partly the grounds for the coup conducted in 1926 by Józef Piłsudski in the name of "sanation", a repair of the country.¹³⁶

In Łódź, the most spectacular manifestation of social disillusionment took the form of massive strikes in the textile industry, which shook up city life every few years (e.g. March 1927, October 1928, March 1933, March 1936). The financial situation of the city, despite recurring appeals for support from central government in Warsaw, remained bad throughout the entire interwar period. Consequently, the scale of investment in the next several years was far from what was needed or diagnosed in press discourse.¹³⁷ While a partial sewerage and waterworks system were finally built, with a series of housing investments following and several public service buildings erected, Łódź continued to be viewed as poorly managed, neglected, full of contrasts and overcrowded.¹³⁸ In 1931, as many as 63% of apartments in Łódź had only one room, and another 19% just two rooms.¹³⁹



Figure 27. Piotrkowska Street in the 1930s, postcard from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

¹³⁶ Joseph Rothschild, *Piłsudski's Coup D'etat* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966); Antony Polonsky, *Politics in Independent Poland 1921–1939: The Crisis of Constitutional Government* (Clarendon Press, 1972).

¹³⁷ Ciarkowski, *Łódź, która nie powstała*.

¹³⁸ Wiesław Puś, "The Development of the City of Łódź (1820–1939)," 17.

¹³⁹ Ludwik Mroczka, *Fenomen robotniczy Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej: studia z dziejów społecznych łódzkiej klasy robotniczej (1918–1939)* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WSP, 1987), 176.



Figure 28. District Court building in Dąbrowski Square, an example of modernist and monumental representative architecture of public service buildings in the 1930s, author: unknown, 1930, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny – Archiwum Ilustracji.



Figure 29. Modernist headquarters of the Department of Waterworks and Sewerage System in Łódź, author: unknown, 1938, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-G-6595.



Figure 30. Installation of the sewerage system on Piotrkowska Street, author: unknown, 1929, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-G-6598.

At the same time, the visions of “municipal socialism” and “national capitalism” reconstructed in this chapter remained unrivaled until 1939. Although the political scene in Łódź was quite diverse, subsequent local elections continued to be won in turn by the national right-wing or the Polish Socialist Party and its allies. In 1923, as mentioned earlier, a right-wing coalition took over the city. Four years later, in October 1927, the Polish Socialist Party won the elections with their program of active investment policies of the city authorities, modeled on the achievements of “Red Vienna.” At that time, the policies of the Viennese socialists were the model for “municipal socialism”¹⁴⁰ all over Europe, so it is no surprise that in the course of the electoral campaign, the Polish Socialist Party used this example extensively to validate its diagnoses and program. However, what brought them electoral victory in 1927 coincided with a period of economic difficulty. In 1929, the world economic crisis broke out and its consequences were particularly painful for the city. A large number of businesses went bankrupt

¹⁴⁰ Helmut Gruber, *Red Vienna: Experiment in Working-Class Culture, 1919–1934* (Oxford University Press, 1991); Iris Graicer, “Red Vienna and Municipal Socialism in Tel Aviv 1925–1928,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 15, no. 4 (October 1, 1989): 385–401, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488\(89\)90003-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(89)90003-0).

and the unemployment rate soared. The nationalist right-wing was again the beneficiary of crisis-induced frustration and discontent. It had an impressive victory in the next local elections held on 27 May 1934, obtaining as many as thirty-nine out of seventy-two possible seats (the PPS won only 7).¹⁴¹



Figure 31. Modernist housing estate on Polesie Konstakowskie district, inspired by Karl-Marx Hof and the “Red Vienna” progressive housing policy, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-U-3831-1.

In the 1930s, polarization on the Łódź political scene reached its peak. This is illustrated by the course of the local elections in 1936 and 1938, which essentially became a head-on confrontation between the nationalist right-wing and the working-class left-wing which informally also included the Communist Party.¹⁴² In the 1930s, the temperature of the political battle was incredibly high in Łódź—there were clashes between the opposing parties not only in the streets but even in the chamber of the city council. It would be no exaggeration to say that Łódź was at that time one of the most fervent arenas of the “civil war” sweeping through Europe.

¹⁴¹ Maria Nartonowicz-Kot, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny w Łodzi w latach 1927–1939* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2001); Krzysztof Waldemar Mucha, *Obóz narodowy w Łódzkiem w latach 1926–1939* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Naukowe “Ibidem,” 2009), 383–84.

¹⁴² More details: Nartonowicz-Kot, *Polski ruch socjalistyczny w Łodzi w latach 1927–1939*.

The outbreak of the First World War triggered three decades of continuous political crises, military conflict and social upheaval in the history of Europe. They were accompanied by a constant polarization of positions, radicalization of political languages and general intensification of the means utilized in political battles between the parties of the class left and the far-right. The mid-1930s were the peak of the ideological conflict which at times transformed into an open war (e.g. in Spain between 1936 and 1939).¹⁴³ This is the moment when European societies, exhausted by the economic crisis, began searching for radical solutions to their social and economic problems.

The pan-European shift toward radical political ideologies was most noticeable in crisis-ridden Central and Eastern Europe. Indeed, fascism and its political corollaries may be interpreted as a desperate attempt to overcome the world division of labor. In states where unfulfilled expectations soared high, additionally stroked by the global crisis, formulas promising a racialized reordering of the economy easily took hold. Various forms of socialism and communism as well promised a fast-paced modernization leap able to overcome geopolitical hierarchies internationally, and class domination at home. They strove to finally meet the expectations triggered by images of more developed countries, but not possible to be meaningfully fulfilled in conditions of transregional dependency.¹⁴⁴

As illustrated by Łódź, the indicators or harbingers of resulting ideological conflicts were already visible in the debates and arguments of the first postwar years. Among the elements comprising the confrontational rhetoric which characterized the ideological war of the 1930s, a number of them can be found in a milder form in the discourse of the Łódź press between 1918 and 1923. This applies, for instance, to the emphasis on the formation of pronounced political identities, fomenting a sense of threat on the part of the groups defined as the enemy, refusing any legitimacy to the postulates forwarded by political competitors or the appeals to mobilize for the sake of obliterating the enemies and removing them from the public scene. The clearer it was that the end of the Great War brought a crisis of the modernizing promise, the more attractive this kind of rhetoric became. In Łódź, it seemed that the fulfillment of the modern promise of order and prosperity could only materialize via the triumph of one of the parties in the ideological war: socialism or nationalism. While the latter was to a growing extent able to set the stage for debate in the 1930s, it was the former which had a chance to develop more elaborate projects after the forthcoming Second World War.

¹⁴³ Stanley G. Payne, *Civil War in Europe, 1905–1949* (Cambridge University Press, 2011); Enzo Traverso, *Fire and Blood: The European Civil War, 1914–1945* (London, New York: Verso Books, 2016).

¹⁴⁴ Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*; Andrew C. Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary, 1825–1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Agata Zysiak, Kamil Piskala

THE POSTWAR: SOCIAL JUSTICE FOR THE PROLETARIAN CITY? 1945–1949

*There will be no war, so we will only build and build...*¹

New Reality

When Russian and Polish troops conquered the city on 19 January 1945, Łódź at first sight looked much as it had in autumn of 1939 when war broke out. Only at first sight. It was probably one of the best-preserved cities within the new borders of Poland. Factories were working (some had without a break throughout the war) but it was not the same city anymore. For Łódź, for Poland, for Central Europe and beyond, the old world had fallen apart, a new one was yet to be forged. A new state was to be built and a new identity was needed both for the surviving citizens and for this alien industrial city. The social and political revolution of the Second World War had redefined the future of the region. This concerned both Warsaw, which lay in ruins, and the seemingly hardly touched Łódź. The latter would have a particular role to play in the newly forged socialist reality. After all, was there any better place to launch a new statehood which legitimized itself through socialist values, industrialization and the working class?

The new reality never involved a direct implementation of an exact copy of the Soviet developmental model, as many scholars faithful to the so-called Sovietization model have argued for years.² What actually took place was a dynamic, multi-layered and sometimes contradictory process which in addition was often renegotiated with local actors when ideas implemented from above hit the ground. It encompassed making new social actors, massively changing social

¹ "Betonowe postoje dla dorożek konnych w Łodzi," *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 86 (1946).

² Robin Okey, *Eastern Europe, 1740–1985: Feudalism to Communism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986); Jacques Rupnik, *The Other Europe* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989); George Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945–1992* (Oxford; Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993).

practices and inventing new meanings about the surrounding world. The postwar period was a time of inventing and establishing a new paradigm of modernization.



Figure 32. The New Market during German occupation, postcard from Łukasz Biskupski's collection.

This time, what for decades had been seen as the main obstacle to the development of Łódź, became for a while its greatest advantage. The “red city”, the “proletarian capital”, the “chimney-town” was no longer depicted as alien, strange and unwanted. Industrial regions were now supposed to take a central place in the new state. What accompanied this status-switch was a long-desired symbolical advancement.

New Worldwide Order

The year 1945 brought to an end a six-year long worldwide conflict that had destroyed millions of lives and left societies, nations and cities devastated. Clearly, after a social catastrophe such as the Second World War there could be no return to the prewar order.³ It was indeed a social revo-

³ Frank Biess and Robert G. Moeller, eds., *Histories of the Aftermath: The Legacies of the Second World War in Europe*, 1st ed (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

lution.⁴ Among many one-way developments, two macro-processes seem to have been especially important for the postwar rebirth. First, the establishment of a new worldwide hegemony, split between the victors over Nazism. Previous colonial empires such as Great Britain and France were gradually losing agency in global politics. Instead, leadership was taken by the USA and USSR entangled in a dangerous equilibrium, which would soon become known as the Cold War. Secondly, a new paradigm of social order was established. There was no way back to *laissez-faire* rule as the principle governing economies and societies. Further, it was pretty clear that the roots of Nazism lay also in the Great Depression, which had severely undermined the economic and political status quo. There was a broadly shared consensus about the necessity for more active economic policies. The war had prepared the path to a new type of planned order marshalled by the state.⁵ Both shifts happened on a global scale, but nevertheless had a very direct impact on what happened in Łódź.

The postwar turn toward welfare systems: socialist, Scandinavian or corporate in the USA had their roots in labor movements, workers' share in the war effort and radicalization of the workers the world over.⁶ The working class entered the public sphere and found a political voice. Political programs had to take these new political actors into consideration. In the case of state socialism, this issue seemed to be even more complicated.⁷ The workers were officially praised but their scope for actual political agency remained limited. The plan was to build a new human and a new elite out of the working class. To do this meant fighting illiteracy, building schools, hospitals, cultural centers, improving living conditions,⁸ and providing social security: from crèches to a full employment policy to old age pensions.⁹ In the case of Central and Eastern Europe socialist modernization became the paradigm for reforms.

⁴ Padraic Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 2012); Michael Fleming, *Communism, Nationalism and Ethnicity in Poland, 1944–50* (London; New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁵ Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000); Müller, *Contesting Democracy*; James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Adam Leszczyński, *Skok w nowoczesność: polityka wzrostu w krajach peryferyjnych 1943–1980* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej; Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2013).

⁶ Beverly J. Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁷ Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland*.

⁸ Józef Sychalski and Edward Rosset, *Włókniarze łódzcy: monografia* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1966).

⁹ Marta Fik, *Spór o PRL* (Kraków: Znak, 1996); Agata Zysiak, "Socjalizm jako modernizacja – powojenna historia Polski w perspektywie rewizjonistycznej," *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 61, no. 2 (457) (2017): 135–45, <https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0010.4152>.

The rise of communism was not a random aberration of modernity; instead, it was one of its many possible articulations, a truly modern social project. Susan Buck-Morss has underlined what many scholars have earlier stated: “the historical experiment of socialism was so deeply rooted in the Western modernization tradition that its defeat cannot but place the whole Western narrative into question.”¹⁰ While the Soviet Union, thanks to its forceful leap to modernization and its victory in the war, established itself as a superpower competing with the USA, the Yalta Conference arrangements pushed Central Europe in its area of influence to form the Soviet Bloc. From its hegemonic position, the USSR refused to participate in the Marshall Plan and blocked any of its possible benefits to the Eastern Bloc countries. Instead, it declared its own reconstruction plan.¹¹ This path of modernization was built upon an intense mobilization of resources and a labor force system which took a heavy toll on local populations.

Reconstruction was imperative and the scale of rebuilding immense. Interwar Poland was irreversibly destroyed. The “blood lands” of Eastern Europe¹² composed the most devastated region after the war. Poland suffered tremendous social and economic losses compared to other countries, estimated to be the most damaged country in the whole region.¹³ Over 16% of the prewar population died because of the conflict. The losses were most dreadful among the Jewish population—90%;¹⁴ thousands of Polish Germans fled the country in 1945. For traditionally agrarian Poland, the devastation meant the loss of most of its urban inhabitants—5 million people.¹⁵ Another 3.2 migrated and 3 million were left outside the new Polish borders, which were moved west.¹⁶ The eastern borderlands with cities like Lvov and Vilnius became parts of Soviet republics. In turn, Poland was assigned considerably smaller, but better developed, formerly German territories in the West (Gdańsk/Danzig, East Prussia, Pomerania, Silesia).

¹⁰ Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), xii.

¹¹ Edward H. Judge and John W. Langdon, *A Hard and Bitter Peace: A Global History of the Cold War* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 72–73.

¹² Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2013).

¹³ Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (Westport: Praeger, 1961), 232–34.

¹⁴ Only in the Baltic States were proportions similar, Jan Tomasz Gross, *Upiorna dekada trzy eseje o stereotypach na temat Żydów, Polaków, Niemców i komunistów 1939–1948* (Kraków: Wydaw. Austeria, 2007).

¹⁵ Edward Rosset, *Oblicze demograficzne Polski Ludowej* (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne, 1965).

¹⁶ Krystyna Kersten, *The establishment of Communist rule in Poland, 1943–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 8–9.

A great migration of people began: Germans and Poles from eastern parts of the Second Republic headed west, thousands relocating, searching for their families and new places to live. The population was devastated on both physical and psychological levels.¹⁷

An enormous gap in the social structure appeared. Highly stratified, post-feudal Polish society was lacking its highest social strata. The entrepreneurs, the urban bourgeoisie, tradespeople (mainly of Jewish or German origin) were never particularly numerous. But now the entire foundation of the urban population was gone. At the same time the old landed elite, the nobility, was declassed and practically liquidated as a separate class. The property of Jewish and German inhabitants was retaken on a massive scale by the Polish popular classes, who now became socialist urban inhabitants. This problematic genesis left its imprint on their identity, confidence and attitude to anybody who posed a threat their new position—above all, groups associated with the willingly forgotten former owners.¹⁸ A new social structure emerged and new groups of people were needed to fill positions of power and influence. They were recruited through a spectacular promotion of popular classes, mainly from rural areas in central Poland, but also from the Eastern borderland. Peasants and the working class formed the base of postwar society—not only on a symbolic level, but chiefly thanks to sheer demography. This had tremendous consequences for cities like Łódź—the workers’ city, neglected by capitalism, was now to be cared for by socialism.

Postwar Cinderella

The social structure of the city changed profoundly during the Second World War. Łódź’s population was highly multinational at the outbreak of the war. The brutal events meant serious losses first among the Jewish and the later the German population.¹⁹ In 1940 a Nazi administration established a Jewish ghetto in Bałuty, the most underdeveloped part of the city and the historic area of Jewish settlement. The Łódź Ghetto was the biggest after that in Warsaw; it lasted the

¹⁷ Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka trwoga: Polska 1944–1947: Ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Wydanie I (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2012).

¹⁸ Jan Tomasz Gross and Irena Grudzińska-Gross, *Golden Harvest: Events at the Periphery of the Holocaust* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Andrzej Leder, *Przeżniona rewolucja: ćwiczenia z logiki historycznej*, Seria historyczna (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2014).

¹⁹ Leszek Olejnik, “Mniejszości narodowe w Łodzi w 1945 r.,” in: *Rok 1945 w Łodzi: studia i szkice*, ed. Joanna Żelazko (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej. Komisja Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu, 2008).

longest and became infamous for its unconventional and controversial productive role in the German war economy.²⁰ Despite the controversial efforts of the local Judenrat to convince the Nazis about their usefulness, most of the city's Jewish inhabitants were eventually deported and murdered. In the shadow of the Shoah, Łódź's Polish elites, including politicians such as Aleksy Rzewski, were arrested and often killed.²¹

Łódź was annexed directly to the III Reich and renamed "Litzmannstadt", in honor of a general who had led one of the main battles in the region during the First World War, and who later became a prominent Nazi. It was regarded by the Nazis as a "truly German city" and initially most of streets were renamed after Scheibler, Grohman and other members of the local German bourgeoisie. However, a significant part of local German community did not support the Nazis, and the occupying forces became arrogant and violent toward all. Prominent "Lodzermenschen" were replaced by Nazi leaders. An ambitious vision of the occupying administration saw the city center undergoing major reconstruction along the lines of Nazi urban planning. The need for far-reaching modernization was obvious.²² This forced a "germanization" of the whole city which finally cut the last remaining ties between the Poles and the Germans who lived in Łódź. When the occupation ended on 19 January 1945 desire for revenge was widespread. Although local Germans were not directly responsible for Nazi violence, almost all were brutally expelled from Poland in 1945.²³

²⁰ Isaiah Trunk and Robert Moses Shapiro, *Łódź Ghetto: A History* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2006). The tragic phenomenon of the ghetto is widely recognized by Western and Polish historiography, but its history has also triggered much controversy, see Andrea Löw, *Juden im Getto Litzmannstadt: Lebensbedingungen, Selbstwahrnehmung, Verhalten* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006); Gordon J. Horwitz, *Ghettostadt. Łódź and the Making of a Nazi City* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2009); Adam Sitarek, „Otoczone drutem państwo.” *Struktura i funkcjonowanie administracji żydowskiej getta łódzkiego* (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2015); Michal Unger, *Reassessment of the Image of Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004).

²¹ Tadeusz Bojanowski, *Łódź pod okupacją niemiecką w latach II wojny światowej, 1939–1945* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1992).

²² Tomasz Bolanowski, *Architektura okupowanej Łodzi* (Łódź: Dom Wydawniczy Księży Młyn, 2013).

²³ Leszek Olejnik, *Zdraycy Narodu? Losy volksdeutschów w Polsce po II wojnie światowej* (Warszawa: Trio, 2006); Benno Kroll, *Tak było: wspomnienia łódzkiego Volksdeutscha* (Łódź: Biblioteka "Tygla Kultury," 2010); Krystyna Radziszewska and Monika Kucner, eds., *Miasto w mojej pamięci. Powojenne wspomnienia Niemców z Łodzi* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo UŁ, 2014).

After 1945 only 30% of its former citizens remained in Łódź, that is fewer than 250–300 thousand inhabitants from the 672,000 in 1939. Considering Łódź as a metropolitan area this would give it just 300,000 inhabitants compared to a prewar population of 800,000.²⁴ In contrast, the city's material structure was relatively well preserved—owing to its incorporation into the Third Reich as a 'German' city and lack of direct air raids or an artillery-backed siege. Although it had preserved its industrial character, its production capacity decreased by 40%, because of war damage.²⁵ Remaining machinery was in most cases already outdated, although still working: producing goods and giving employment. The old, multinational Łódź no longer existed, though the chimney-stacks still stood.

Despite all these blows, at the end of the war, Łódź served as a vicarious capital of Poland and it was bigger than Warsaw with regard to its number of inhabitants.²⁶ After 1945, the city became a magnet for thousands of refugees. State institutions moved in from Lublin²⁷ and the intelligentsia flocked to the city as Warsaw lay in total ruins. Jewish survivors congregated there for safety reasons. The number of citizens began to grow extremely fast as newcomers from Warsaw and from territories annexed by the Soviet Union moved in. As one intelligentsia newcomer recalled:

After the Warsaw Uprising, half of Warsaw moved to Cracow, it was impossible to breathe there. And then my husband left me in Cracow and went on travelling (...). There was rubble everywhere he went. Wrocław—ruins, Gdansk—terrible. In a word, there was nowhere to stay, because everything was destroyed and it was Łódź that surprised us, because everything was in place, there was no rubble. It was something very strange.²⁸

After the biggest wave of migration, in 1945, the following years 1946–1950 saw another 125,000 new residents arrive. By 1948 over 200,000 more people

²⁴ Edward Rosset, "Stosunki ludnościowe," in: *Łódź w latach 1945–1960* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1962), 28.

²⁵ Wiesław Jażdżyński, "Życie społeczno-polityczne," in: *Łódź w latach 1945–1960*, ed. Edward Rosset (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1962), 83; Jerzy Rachwański, "Ogólna charakterystyka przemysłu," in: *Łódź w latach 1945–1960*, ed. Edward Rosset (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1962), 119.

²⁶ Joanna Żelazko, ed., *Rok 1945 w Łodzi: Studia i Szkice* (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008), 26.

²⁷ The Polish Committee of National Liberation officially proclaimed on 22 July 1944 by Polish communists under Moscow auspices, in opposition to the Polish government in exile.

²⁸ Krystyna Śreniowska, "Kartki z dziejów Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 1945–1989. Pamiętnik," *Tygiel Kultury*, no. 12 (2007).

had settled in Łódź.²⁹ In 1951 the registration of residents was made compulsory to deter any further influx of rural migrants to the city. Hopes were high despite a difficult situation and they were further boosted by dozens of leftists and liberal intellectuals coming into Łódź and making this strange city their new home.



Figure 33. View of the powerplant EC1 in the 1960s, author: unknown, ca. 1960 (Miastograf.pl digital collection).

From 1945 onwards, the city passed through a phase of rapid development that took it far beyond its former industrial past. Now it possessed an administrative apparatus of nationwide importance, and outposts of culture and scientific hubs emerged—for first three years after the war it was the most important city in the country.³⁰ During Łódź's 110 years of development (for most of that time as

²⁹ Rosset, "Stosunki ludnościowe," 33.

³⁰ Anita Wolaniuk, *Funkcje metropolitalne Łodzi i ich rola w organizacji przestrzennej* (Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1997), 46.

the second largest city of the Kingdom of Poland and later the Second Republic of Poland), it had neither central administrative functions nor any robust intellectual community. However, all this changed abruptly after the war. By 1946 five public higher education institutions were established, among them a University, a Technical University and a State Academy of the Arts, and later on, the famous Film School, founded in 1948.

Higher education was a completely new branch of development for the city, and it resulted in thousands of students coming to Łódź in a search of an education. Whilst they were looking for new opportunities, they also contributed to a rising research center that was focused on local peculiarities and problems.³¹ For example, in the decades to come, the sociology of work and mass culture was especially strong in this industrial city. Many editorial offices and publishing houses³² were founded in Łódź and local cafes were full of writers, artists, the literati, actors and intellectuals.³³ As one specialist of Łódź history noted, “Łódź, a half illiterate city with no proper material base, in just a few months became the center of cultural life and a respected academic center.”³⁴ The influx of intelligentsia resulted not only in the development of academic culture and higher education, but to a wide range of initiatives from open lectures, theaters, cabarets to preparatory courses designed to facilitate enrollment at universities.

Despite these favorable changes, the working character of Łódź did not adopt an apologetic attitude toward the new government. Yet another Łódź nickname, the “red city” also seemed to reflect its features. Factory workers started to organize themselves into factory councils and introduced cooperative management as soon as the Nazi forces retreated, but before the arrival of the Red Army. The widely supported Polish Socialist Party and Polish Workers’ Party dominated the local political scene. Certainly, political preferences in Łódź were located further to the left than elsewhere in Poland, but the seasoned local working class had its own established traditions of protest and felt strong enough to fight for its political agency.³⁵ Strikes took place in Łódź throughout the 1940s; in 1945 there were over 100, growing in 1947 when the political battles intensified and in 1950, the

³¹ Władysław Welfe and Uniwersytet Łódzki, *Łódź i ziemia łódzka w badaniach Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego w latach 1945–1970* (Łódź: Uniwersytet Łódzki, 1970).

³² Józef Kądziański, “Czytelnictwo gazet, czasopism i książek wśród dorosłej ludności miasta,” in: *Łódź w latach 1945–1960*, ed. Edward Rosset (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1962), 419–26.

³³ Krystyna Ratajska, *O niezwykłych łódzkich kawiarniach. U Roszka, Fraszka, Honoratka* (Łódź: Księży Młyn Dom Wydawniczy, 2018).

³⁴ Puś, *Dzieje Łodzi przemysłowej: zarys historii*, 9.

³⁵ Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland*.

number reached almost 500! With the growing efficiency of the system of control, the number of strikes only began to fall in the early 1950s.³⁶

Łódź's short-lived prominence as a vicarious capital boosted its plans for urban renewal. For a while the city seemed to be a perfect training ground for functionalist ideas and later socialist realism.³⁷ Soon, however, Łódź began to be considered as a city left intact by the war, and thus it was often suggested that other places needed investment much more urgently. This was partly true as its infrastructure was indeed well preserved compared with other Polish cities.³⁸ Nonetheless, most of its buildings dated back to the construction boom of the 1880–90s. The influx of people from rural areas soon caused an overpopulation of the 19th century downtown. Consequently, tenement houses designed for quick profit and shortages in the sewerage system and water supplies took their toll on the quality of life. Regardless of this, more damaged cities and regions took priority position on the investment list, and the politically charged project of rebuilding Warsaw took precedence. Łódź once again fell outside the core of urban change in Poland.

New Scope of Press Influence

New circumstances required a new discourse able to reflect and reconstruct social reality. The local press was an important pillar in such reconstruction—as a vessel for ideological content and as a forum in which to express local grievances and debate possible solutions. But the press system too required rebuilding. The war losses were especially harmful for urban residents and the intelligentsia, including the press industry: one-quarter of all printers and one-third of all journalists died during the war.³⁹ Most of the press infrastructure had been destroyed and printing houses had been closed down during the Nazi occupation. This eased the move toward the nationalization and monopolization of the press. The vacuum was filled by the state.

The importance of the press was growing and journalists were aware of this fact. First editions of newspapers or magazines sometimes included flamboyant declarations about their new mission. The Journalists Congress of 1945 proclaimed continuity with 18th century (sic!) revolutionary journalism.⁴⁰ This time, however, the press was a truly mass medium. From 1945 onwards, news-

³⁶ Krzysztof Lesiakowski, *Strajki robotnicze w Łodzi 1945–1976* (Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008), 156.

³⁷ Aleksandra Sumorok, *Architektura i urbanistyka Łodzi okresu realizmu socjalistycznego* (Warszawa: Neriton, 2010).

³⁸ “Łódź – miasto niezniszczone,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 94 (1946).

³⁹ Alina Słomkowska, *Prasa w PRL: szkice historyczne* (Warszawa: PWN, 1979), 47.

⁴⁰ Słomkowska, 136.

papers were cheaper and more available than ever before. Not only was political control still not too strict, but the outreach of the daily press was broadening. Hence, the impact of press discourses on public opinion and the social imaginary was stronger than ever before.



Figure 34. Textile worker, ca. 1960, author: Ignacy Płużewski, Muzeum Miasta Łodzi, MHML/1/4717/2 (Wikipedia Commons).

Enthusiasm for liberation and rebuilding was funneled to publishing. The number of titles rose—and in 1948 almost nine hundred different magazines were published in Poland.⁴¹ Furthermore, print runs increased significantly. Newspapers became ever more available simply because of the number of cir-

⁴¹ Rafał Habielski, *Polityczna historia mediów w Polsce w XX wieku* (Warszawa: WAiP, 2009).

culating items. For example, in 1938 the daily circulation of newspapers among over half a million Łódź dwellers stood at about 210,000 with the most popular title, *Express Ilustrowany*, at 100,000. After the war, in 1948 when the city's population was close to its prewar numbers, 234,465 newspapers were distributed daily.⁴² Many of these ended up in the newly open public libraries and reading rooms. An obligatory subscription was introduced in factories which boosted the papers' availability to working-class readers. In some factories, newspapers were read aloud at the plant to entertain workers. In addition, "the fight against illiteracy" was broadening the reading public.

How many workers were actually reading the press in Łódź? We have an insight into how newspapers spread among working-class readers thanks to sociologist Józef Kądziański and his research into worker readership from 1958. He notes that newspapers spread among working-class readers later than books or magazines, and mainly after the Second World War. His research compares readership rates among workers during the prewar and postwar periods. In general, as many as 87.7% of Łódź's working class read newspapers (in comparison to 61.7% in 1938); the percentage was the highest among skilled male workers.⁴³ Even if unqualified workers and women still remained backward, readership rates were higher than ever before.

The most important dailies in Łódź were *Dziennik Łódzki*, *Głos Robotniczy*, *Kurier Popularny* (published only until 1948), and *Express Ilustrowany*. The first title has shown up earlier on the pages of this book as its origins go as far back as the 1880s.⁴⁴ Although it was discontinued during the Second World War, it resumed operations in 1945 with a new profile, mainly discussing regional and local issues. It became a platform for debates between intellectuals such as writers Kazimierz Brandys, Mieczysław Jastrun and professors Józef Chałasiński, Tadeusz Kotarbiński, and Stefania Skwarczyńska. It was seen as a moderate and balanced voice on the local press scene. As famous Łódź journalist Adam Ochocki recalled in his memoirs written in 1989:

The newspaper's [*Dziennik's*—AZ.KP.] task was of a great importance—to attract to the project of rebuilding Poland readers from reactionary, Catholic, petit-bourgeoisie, undecided or even circles hostile to the new reality. In a way, *Dziennik* continued the traditions of *Kurier Łódzki*, a popular daily in the interwar period. It became a bridge between old and new times.⁴⁵

⁴² Kądziański, "Czytelnictwo gazet, czasopism i książek wśród dorosłej ludności miasta," 77–78.

⁴³ Kądziański, 80.

⁴⁴ Joanna Mikosz, "W czym tkwi sukces Dziennika Łódzkiego jako pisma regionalnego," *Media – Kultura – Społeczeństwo* 1 (2006): 57–65.

⁴⁵ Joanna Mikosz, "Narodziny prasy łódzkiej ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem Dziennika Łódzkiego," *Rocznik Historii Prasy Polskiej* IX, no. 1(17) (2006), 128.

It was published by the independent “Czytelnik” Publishing Cooperative – an important venture of an interwar communist, Jerzy Borejsza, officially unaffiliated to any political party, but with a strongly pro-democratic and leftist agenda.⁴⁶ The cooperative was one of the strongest cultural initiatives in the postwar years, running to almost forty press titles. Some of them ranked among the most influential titles, such as “Kuznica” and “Przekrój.” It also published books and vigorously fought against illiteracy. Its influence was so wide, that it was described by contemporaries as the fourth party in Poland, next to the pro-Soviet Polish Workers’ Party, the Polish Socialist Party and the agrarian Polish People’s Party.

If *Dziennik Łódzki* was the voice of the “fourth” party, the rest of the titles were related to particular political factions. *Express Ilustrowany* appears to be the only exception, with its focus on information and entertainment. It had been published in Łódź since 1923 and at that time it was a sensational afternoon daily of a nationwide range and with regional versions (for Cracow, Lviv etc.)—full of pictures, novels and comics. Its postwar edition took up the baton from January 1946. It was subsidized by the Polish Workers’ Party and proselytized a positive message about the ongoing changes.

Even more politically involved was *Głos Robotniczy*, which served as a main outlet for the Polish Workers’ Party in the region. Established in 1945, it had the highest readership in central Poland among newspapers with a nationwide range. Its profile was not set once for all. Especially in the first postwar years, “Głos” took rather a moderate stance on politics, which was a deliberate strategy of the Polish communists trying to gain a wider support.

In consequence, the most radical statements and propositions could easier be found on the pages of *Kurier Popularny*, published by the Polish Socialist Party. It was less afraid of words like “socialism” or “revolution”, as they were openly a part of the party’s identity, unlike in the case of the Polish Workers’ Party, trying to cater to undecided voters.⁴⁷ Among these titles *Express Ilustrowany* had the widest readership, *Dziennik Łódzki* follow suit, and *Głos Robotniczy* closed the list. This is not surprising given the local ground, as the latter journal had a national coverage but it was the urban topics which were the most eagerly read.⁴⁸

After a relatively open period of the first postwar months, political pressure on the press increased. Election fever affected the press from 1946 until January 1947. Political views presented on the pages of the press sharpened. Initial

⁴⁶ Eryk Krasucki, *Międzynarodowy komunista: Jerzy Borejsza, biografia polityczna* (Warszawa: PWN, 2009).

⁴⁷ Jerzy Myśliński, “Lata 1944–48,” in: *Czasopisma społeczno-kulturalne w okresie PRL*, ed. Urszula Jakubowska (Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2012).

⁴⁸ Kądzielski, “Czytelnictwo gazet, czasopism i książek wśród dorosłej ludności miasta,” 84.

polyphony was still present, but these were the very last months of the “gentle revolution.” Just as in the region as a whole, Poland entered the period of intense Stalinization. Culture was subsumed under planned governance, becoming a tool for building socialism just as electric cables were installed in a countryside. Many titles vanished when the Polish Workers’ Party merged with the Polish Socialist Party in 1948 to form the Polish United Workers’ Party. This meant the closure of *Kurier Popularny* and a fusion of *Dziennik Łódzki* and *Express Ilustrowany*. The print run of dailies in the country overall had by 1948 reached 1.8 million copies, with an additional 816 thousand periodicals.⁴⁹ However, printing and distribution of paper was now centralized and the spectrum of represented ideas fairly limited.

With a rising political control and ritualization of language, press discourses were changing. After 1948, the language shifted toward what is often called totalitarian newspeak.⁵⁰ The argumentative structures stabilized and the range of depicted themes narrowed. So-called soc-journalism⁵¹ focused more on class conflict, a fight against imperialism and the promotion of world peace. This shift was followed by changes in the perception of history: worship of socialist heroes was the agenda of the day, and the progressive People’s Republic of Poland was sharply distinguished from the backward Second Republic. Furthermore, other general features of this newspeak included a strict division between “them” and “us”, and the creation of evil powers that endangered modernization. False deduction was used to build argumentation studded with ritualized language, and many “isms” (such as Trotskyism or imperialism). Euphemisms and irony were widely deployed to malign external enemies. While analysis of this socialist language in terms of newspeak may be insightful, the limits of this strategy warrant remark.

First, this perspective does not apply neatly to the first postwar years when many meanings were still plural and contested. Secondly, the origins of some “newspeak” features are much older than Stalinism. Some concepts or collocations may be traced back to 19th-century socialist pamphlets and revolutionary speeches. It was not completely a product of some censor’s office or Moscow instructions. What may seem flagrant propaganda, was part and parcel of socialist agitation rhetoric and hence a natural language of expression in some work-

⁴⁹ Habielski, *Polityczna historia mediów w Polsce w XX wieku*, 186.

⁵⁰ John Wesley Young, *Totalitarian Language: Orwell’s Newspeak and Its Nazi and Communist Antecedents* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1991); Michał Głowiński, *Nowomowa i ciągi dalsze: szkice dawne i nowe* (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2009).

⁵¹ Tomasz Goban-Klas, *Niepokorna orkiestra medialna: dyrygenci i wykonawcy polityki informacyjnej w Polsce po 1944 roku* (Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR, 2004), 110.

ing-class milieu.⁵² Socialist language was directed at the proletarian reader, not the intelligentsia, even if it was often the latter who created it.⁵³ Interpretation of the situation in terms of totalitarian language universalizes the sensitivity of liberal intellectuals. It was the latter group which produced both academic discourses and dominant public memory about the period, while being the milieu most hostile to the modernizing project of state socialism. Thirdly, after all, the persuasive capacity of newspeak does not differ much from any other ideological language. Newspeak is, in other words, a language that claims hegemony in describing the world. This is the case for the revolutionary language of early socialism, communist propaganda as well as neoliberal “rationality.” As has been shown by other authors, so-called constitutive elements of newspeak can easily be found in liberal democracies.⁵⁴ Apart from such resemblances, newspeak was also highly context-specific and there were significant differences in its social resonance in different socialist states.

The press system and structure of readership in Poland were very different from in the Soviet Union. Thus, implementation of the so-called Soviet model differed in its outcome from that which resulted in the original context. For instance, prewar journalism and the former model of press circulation proved resilient and still shaped the situation in postwar Poland. As one scholar noted:

[T]he respect for the prewar national media which had long upheld national goals while operating under external political controls, helped to preserve the legacy of the Polish press traditions even in the Stalinist period.⁵⁵

Another important difference was the profile of audience. Despite the social revolution caused by the war, the ethos of the intelligentsia was preserved.⁵⁶ Any new policies had to confront the resilience of old symbolic elites. Secondly, the popular audience in the USSR was partly created by the socialist press—mass readership, modern press circulation and the fight against illiteracy took place

⁵² Samuś, *Wasza kartka wyborcza jest silniejsza niż karabin, niż armata...*; Wiktor Marzec, “Rising Subjects. Workers and the Political During the 1905–1907 Revolution in the Kingdom of Poland” (CEU, 2017).

⁵³ Igal Halpin, *Language and Revolution: Making Modern Political Identities* (Routledge, 2004).

⁵⁴ Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant, “Neoliberal Newspeak: Notes on the New Planetary Vulgate,” *Radical Philosophy* 105, no. 01 (2001): 1–6.

⁵⁵ Jane Leftwich Curry, *Poland’s Journalists: Professionalism and Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 5.

⁵⁶ Tomasz Zarycki, *Kapitał kulturowy: inteligencja w Polsce i w Rosji* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2008); Agata Zysiak, *Punkty za pochodzenie. Powojenna modernizacja i uniwersytet w robotniczym mieście* (Kraków: Nomos, 2016).

after the Bolsheviks had taken power. The situation in Poland was different. Even if illiteracy was still a grave problem, Polish readers, even from a working-class background, were relatively more educated. Therefore, existing institutional patterns, a surviving network of intellectuals, among them journalists, and readers having certain expectations resisted the verbatim implementation of the Soviet model.

All in all, the postwar press carried a strong performative component—creating social roles, prescribed codes of conduct, and a new order of things. No longer was the default audience urban intellectuals, and the medium had to adjust to its new role. Even if instructions on how and about what to write were common, the emancipatory potential of socialist language for the readers should not be underestimated.⁵⁷ The press was supposed to shape society, and so did it. Recreating visions of urban development and the dreams of a modern city, it is worth remembering that they were aimed at a new type of mass audience, and different goals were to be achieved than at previous historical moments.

Tempting Visions in Hard Times

The first regular daily established in Łódź after liberation was an officially independent *Dziennik Łódzki* catering to the local audience.⁵⁸ Its first issue was published only two weeks after liberation and the definitive end of the German occupation. No wonder that one opening article was full of pathos and hope. The editors underlined their pro-working-class identity and praised workers' contribution to the heroic national struggle against the German invaders. An initial editorial, which easily earns the status of an identity manifesto through its pathos, proclaimed boldly:

Łódź – the sound of this name touches every single Polish worker. Łódź was and still is the workers' capital of Poland, the largest industrial center in the country. (...) Łódź —city of work, cradle of the working masses. Łódź—workers' conscience of Poland. This city, covered in grey factory chimneys, shrouded in dark smoke, has been raising people with a bright outlook, beaming faces, people sensitive to social injustice and highly aware Poles. (...) There are great prospects and a great future ahead of Łódź. (...) Now Łódź is the largest Polish city. Not

⁵⁷ Igal Halfin, *From Darkness to Light: Class, Consciousness, and Salvation in Revolutionary Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000); Halfin, *Language and Revolution*.

⁵⁸ There was an ephemeral daily called *Wolna Łódź* (*Free Łódź*), but only few issues were published between 24 and 31 January of 1945.

only industrial life, but also cultural life will naturally focus here. Łódź will develop a network of cultural institutions and properly recognize their role. A true revival of the city's organism is happening now. Łódź—the working-class heart of Poland is starting to beat strongly.⁵⁹

This short piece, written and published in the new postwar socio-political framework, creatively collates many metaphors and themes that had related with Łódź for decades. It plays with themes that had been present—as was demonstrated in earlier chapters—in various local discourses since the 19th century. However, the author shifts their meanings. There was a noticeable change in the general tone—workers identity and the industrial character of the city were accepted with no ambivalence. Moreover, they were explicitly honored and appreciated.

This redefinition was quite explicit and disadvantages were becoming virtues. Many words were written to perform a similarly inclusive move in respect of the working classes. This practice did not need to be too sophisticated—subjects and objects of discourse are constructed by the pragmatics of language, by denomination. Therefore, a simple usage of words like “workers” or “working people” in a particular context and in relationship to other agents and objects was already part of the establishing of a new social order. The working classes, that is peasants alongside workers, become equal protagonists—heroes and heroines of the war effort:

Workers clenched fists, and hope entered their hearts [when] sounds of the giant Red Army offensive, in which Polish worker and peasant marched arm-in-arm in uniforms with a white eagle on their caps, introduced the great days of Red Łódź.⁶⁰

Similarly, in another article:

These are days when the white-red flags of reborn sovereignty triumphantly returned on the walls of Łódź. Red militant signs of the fighting proletariat proudly wave above the heads of the demonstrating working masses. These forerunners [announce] that the Łódź proletariat with its awareness of and affection for red banners will stand in the vanguard of those rebuilding Poland—workers and peasants.⁶¹

It was clearly suggested that promising prospects for the working-class city were directly connected with the still emerging political system. It was argued that this system alone could bring social justice to the working classes and incorporate class symbols or identities specific to Łódź into the core of the national symbolic universe.

⁵⁹ “Łódź,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 1 (1945).

⁶⁰ “Łódź,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 18 (1946).

⁶¹ “Robotnicza Łódź,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 21 (1946).

Thus, high hopes ran alongside indirect appeals for acceptance of the new political order. This opening article prefigured the logic that ruled discourses of modernization during the following years. Structures of argumentation, actors and their positions were defined anew. Several themes seem especially important: (1) the revalorization of the workers' identity, (2) Łódź's new status as a symbolic capital of Poland and (3) a promise of fast development within the new political order. In this new framework, press authors often concluded, the status of the city had been radically changed: "This is not only 'Polish Manchester', but something much more—a center of science and culture at the same time, with thousands of opportunities for development."⁶² The historical moment was diagnosed in a similar way in many editorials and commentaries.

In short, the underlying narrative can be reconstructed as follows: a city neglected for a long time, unlucky product of predatory capitalism, is now standing on a threshold of a well-deserved payoff after decades of misery and negligence. Politically, it was presented as a triumph of democracy, the beginning of true working-class self-government. Symbolically, it found expression in rhetoric of the "capital-like" position of Łódź and in the metaphor of the "city in the center" of the country, widely used in contemporary commentaries.⁶³ Because of the country's geopolitical shift, Łódź found itself in the geographical center. However, "centralism" was interpreted far more broadly:

Usually a word "center" is used with some adjunct, which makes this term more understandable and precise. We can speak about a cultural, economic, industrial, or artistic center; a particular city is treated as a "center" if it is concentrating a certain sort of human activity on a nationwide scale. In the case of Łódź we may say a 'central city' with no adjunct. We say it in order to underline that this city may play a major role in all areas of social life.⁶⁴

This was probably the boldest and most direct manifestation of widespread expectations. Similarly, another article from *Kurier Popularny* promised that it was to be anticipated that "the new Łódź will be a small model of a new Poland."⁶⁵ A vision of the dynamic and comprehensive development of the city was tempting. It was, however, a promise which could be achieved only in a distant and indefinite future.

⁶² "Łódź – największe miasto Polski," *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 106 (1946).

⁶³ "Łódź – największe miasto Polski," *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 106 (1946); "Przyszłość Łodzi," *Kurier Popularny*, no. 78 (1946); "Łódź – stolica świata pracy," *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 118 (1947).

⁶⁴ "Centralne miasto Polski," *Kurier Popularny*, no. 78 (1946).

⁶⁵ "Centralne miasto Polski," *Kurier Popularny*, no. 78 (1946); see also "Łódź miastem przyszłości," *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 296 (1946).

Meanwhile, the city was coping with a number of serious difficulties and shortages, which sometimes needed more attention or immediate solution. Pompous articles about the prosperous future of “New Łódź in a New Poland” abutted reports about mundane concerns of everyday life in the city. As we know from previous chapters, the urban infrastructure was underdeveloped on many levels. In addition to prewar inefficiencies, after the war the task-list of problems to be solved grew significantly. A lack of inhabitable flats loomed large after thousands flocked to Łódź, attracted by an image of a well-preserved city. The resulting shortage of provision spurred a black market, which operated continuously despite the end of the war. Coal for factories as well as for households was in short supply which hardly helped survival in harsh winters. There was also a high demand for proper buildings to host a range of newly established institutions, schools and offices. The lack was so severe that representatives of different institutions went as far as breaking in and squatting in buildings appropriate for their operations.⁶⁶

In these circumstances, the press avoided any emotional statements. The no-go area concerned calls for collective action aimed at removing the difficulties. Local journalists officially supported the new socio-political order. Hence mainly for this reason everyday shortages and problems—while meticulously recorded in newspapers—were usually discussed flatly, even with some distance. Local authorities were presented as single-handedly solving problems and eliminating postwar inconveniences. Backing up such a claim, dailies regularly published interviews with local government representatives. In fact, these interviews were often just extensive reports on governmental achievements.⁶⁷ The difficulties of everyday life in the postwar city were allegedly smoothly removed, and citizens were usually presented as completely passive in this process.

The sole agents of this change were the local authorities who acted in citizens’ best interest, but in fact without them. In this light, the local authorities seemed to be effective, skilled and hard-working. Numerous excerpts referred to statistical records (usually presented in a triumphant way), providing a scientifically valid proof of beneficial changes in different areas of social life. Statistical data helped to neutralize possible social conflicts typical of the postwar period. Due to impressive changes expressed in indisputable quantitative data, shortages

⁶⁶ Bohdan Baranowski, *Pierwsze lata Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1945–1949* (Łódź: Uniwersytet Łódzki, 1985).

⁶⁷ “Szkolnictwo, sprawy mieszkaniowe i aprowizacja. Konferencja prasowa u ob. Prezydenta Mijala,” *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 54 (1945); “Problemy Łodzi,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 5 (1945); “Łódź na nowych drogach życia i rozwoju,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 8 (1945); “Serdeczne życzenia prez. Mijala,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 344 (1947), 1947; “Największą wartością jest człowiek,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 18 (1948); “Dorobek samorządu łódzkiego w roku 1948,” *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 1 (1949).

were defined as temporary and under control. They could have not been interpreted otherwise: as a real threat or obstacle to the promised process of deep, comprehensive modernization. On the contrary, contingent difficulties and the authorities' successes in overcoming them made this promise even more believable. The gradual normalization of everyday life in the city testified to the fact that the authorities were efficient in their day-to-day duties, and also that they really were able to make Łódź a modern city.

Rhetoric of Appeasement

The press discourse about modernization in very first years after the Second World War did not stir emotional zeal and did not support confrontation. Modern political languages usually strive for mass mobilization in the name of proposed agenda. Examples of ferocious interwar debates show that in order to produce an effective emotional appeal, political languages are prone to radicalization, binarization and usually construct a figure (or figures) of a clearly defined opponent, or an obstacle to be forcefully overcome. However, the discourse of the “gentle revolution” utilized another strategy. It was striking that in discussions about the city and its modernization no image of an opponent was constructed. The reason for this was a general policy of the new government that aimed to gather the widest possible coalition and did not want to scare undecided potential voters. In this context, radical discourse of change was produced by the socialists and not the communists. The latter avoided words like “revolution” or “communism” which might discourage skeptical citizens and put an easy tool into the hands of the critical.⁶⁸

This rhetoric of appeasement concerned even such obvious opponents such as the Germans. While an anti-German resentment caused by occupational trauma was important for the legitimation of the new regime, in local discourse about the city and its future it played only a minor role. It was visibly limited to wartime experiences and was manifested mainly in verbal condemnation of the occupiers' brutality and calls for the deportation of *Volksdeutschen* still living in an essentially Polish—so claimed the press—city.⁶⁹ Other exceptions are a few articles demanding war com-

⁶⁸ Jerzy Mysliński, “Lata 1944–48,” in: *Czasopisma społeczno-kulturalne w okresie PRL*, ed. Urszula Jakubowska (Warszawa: IBL PAN, 2012), 24; Zysiak, *Punkty za pochodzenie. Powojenna modernizacja i uniwersytet w robotniczym mieście*, 111.

⁶⁹ See “Łódź na nowych drogach życia i rozwoju,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 8, (1945); “Komu są potrzebni Niemcy w Łodzi?,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 215 (1947); “Łódź,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 18 (1946); “Jeszcze o Volksdeutschen,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 161 (1946). For more details about politics toward the German minority in the first postwar years see Eugeniusz Mironowicz, *Polityka narodowościowa PRL* (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Białoruskiego Towarzystwa Historycznego, 2000), 69–83.

pensation. In general, however, Germans were not perceived as a real threat to the process of the city's modernization. In other words, removal of the relatively small population of Łódź Germans was not a condition of successful modernization.

All this was part and parcel of a more general tendency to avoid topics regarding the city's multinational heritage. The most distinctive example was the absence of any reference to the Jewish population of the city and its extermination during the barely finished war. This omission is even more striking against the backdrop of the fact that in 1939 the Jewish population constituted almost 35% of the city's inhabitants,⁷⁰ and the ghetto occupied a large part of the city. Although it covered no more than four square kilometers in the poorest district, Bałuty, the presence of such burned ground in a city center should have provoked many more voices to discuss how to redevelop this area. When it was imperative to mention the northern district of the city, where in 1940–1944 the ghetto had been situated, journalists would sometimes euphemistically refer to this area as an “unoccupied area left after buildings had been torn down.”⁷¹ The local press virtually by passed the tragedy of Jewish community of the city.



Figure 35. Ruins of the Litzmannstadt Ghetto, author: Ignacy Płazewski, 1946, Muzeum Miasta Łodzi, MHMŁ-I-4723-1 (Miastograf.pl digital collection).

⁷⁰ Rzepkowski, *Ludność miasta Łodzi w latach 1918–1939*, 113.

⁷¹ “Dworzec–gigant,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 284 (1948); see also “Więcej światła dla Łodzi,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 215 (1947).

The Jewish population of the city and its fate were ignored partly because of the clichéd anti-communist antisemitic views of the readers and not the anti-semitism of the journalists. Before the war, a stereotype of “Judeo-Communism” (*Żydokomuna*) was widespread and during the 1930s in particular it was an important rhetorical weapon in the National Democratic movement’s armory. Communism was generally perceived as “non-Polish”, and its supporters were—according to the popular anti-communist discourse—recruited mostly among Jews.⁷² After the war, communists sought various forms of nationalist legitimization⁷³ for their rule and did not emphasize the role of the Jewish population in the interwar communist movement. As a result, official enunciations were careful in their descriptions of issues related to the Jewish population in any context. It was an accepted notion, with tacit approval of both socialists and communists, that Poland had already become ethnically homogenous.

The rhetoric of appeasement was used in the context of ethnicity, too. Discussing the prospects of the city’s future development, the press generally avoided issues which could give rise to any negative emotion and cause political tension, potentially dangerous for the stability of the new order. This is why pairs of competing political identities were only occasionally constructed here. In other words, what had been the norm for interwar discourse, in the new reality was rather an exception. The new authorities had no interest in referring to ethnic antagonisms, which could have become a ground for an uncontrolled political turmoil. Silence about the extermination of Jewish co-citizens or the consequences of the complex national structure of the local population was a price worth paying for the appeasement of emotions. This killed two birds with one stone; it also effectively prevented virulent nationalism from holding sway over popular emotions.

The rhetoric of appeasement also worked in the context of class. The emancipatory rhetoric concerning the working classes was almost solely positive at that time. Current or potential class antagonism on the local ground were muted. Workers’ identity and the values of factory work were celebrated by the press instead. They were not contrasted with any current opponent or threat, however. Although it seemed that clear ideological premises existed, in the press discourse about the city and its future, the figure of the “reactionary”, a class enemy or a conservative who would decisively defend an old socio-economic order did not appear. Discussion about the possible return of the prewar regime was not allowed in official discourses. Thus, bearers of capitalist consciousness or conservative manners were rarely mentioned, at least in the local context. What is

⁷² Janusz Żarnowski, *O inteligencji polskiej lat międzywojennych* (Warszawa: Wiedza Powszechna, 1965), 187; Śpiewak, *Żydokomuna*.

⁷³ Marcin Zaremba, *Komunizm, legitymizacja, nacjonalizm: nacjonalistyczna legitymizacja władzy komunistycznej w Polsce* (Warszawa: Trio, 2001).

more, they were presented not as a social class or stratum with specific demands and a political subjectivity, but usually as an amorphous mass of, for example, depoliticized black market speculators. An author in *Kurier Popularny* concluded:

Hitherto, it is an illness of Łódź—markets, speculation, and all these twisted forms of free trade, inherited from a peculiar ‘isolated’ occupational economy. But these types of socio-economical phenomena are natural after every war and will vanish after some time.⁷⁴

Similarly, *Express Ilustrowany* in 1946 presented the problem of rising prices not as the deliberate speculation of greedy shopkeepers, nor even as sabotage targeting the newly established government, but simply as a conjuncture of factors typical of the difficult postwar reality.⁷⁵

In other words, black market merchants were imagined as a moribund relic of the old world, worthy of moral condemnation and proper countermeasures taken by authorities. They were not, however, taken seriously as a real political danger. This was guaranteed by history itself:

The late war turned a page in Łódź history: the world of exploiters has been silenced. It still lurks in the corners, still makes desperate efforts to take revenge, but nothing can reverse the iron logic of historical progress—the working class is now and will remain the master of Łódź.⁷⁶

Paradoxically, instead of exposing ideological opponents (the above cited passages were rare exceptions), it was more convenient to occasionally redirect discontent to the central government. This was accused of a poor understanding of Łódź’s needs, or of a too optimistic estimation of the city’s general situation. Łódź deserved more attention and more financial support from central government, journalists contended.⁷⁷ Certainly, it was a sympathetic criticism, assuming the government’s goodwill, but some impatience and even disappointment were noticeable. Paradoxically, a conflict between national policy and local needs was most present in the first postwar years, when Łódź was still a significant addressee of the government’s attention.

⁷⁴ “Centralne miasto Polski,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 78 (1946).

⁷⁵ “Dlaczego wzrosły ceny w Łodzi?,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 86 (1946).

⁷⁶ “Kućnica wiedzy w stolicy polskiego proletariatu,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 13 (1946); see also “Czas znaleźć inne nazwy dla łódzkich fabryk,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 71 (1946).

⁷⁷ See examples in “Łódź – największe miasto Polski,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 106 (1946); “Łódź czeka na pomoc,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 334 (1947); “Nie ignorujcie nas,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 50 (1948); “Mity, które trzeba obalić,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 292 (1947).

Patterns of Legitimization: Dark Past and Bright Future

The postwar discourse was not completely free of binary opposition organizing argument. A sense of fear, hate or anger constituted the negative but complementary side of the modernization vision. At the same time, as has been shown in previous chapters, an emotional appeal gives additional fuel to argumentation. Admittedly, the postwar local press unequivocally differed from this pattern. The axis of opposition shifted from ethnical or social ground to historical process. Accordingly, now the juxtaposition was temporal, and time started to be the important dimension of argumentation. Visions of modernization were constructed around an opposition between the prewar past and the postwar present. This division provided a key scheme of argumentation for the newly constructed chronology of the city's history.

In such depiction, the historical trajectory of Łódź was heretofore determined strictly by the capitalist mode of production and its inner logic of development. Above all, it meant a subordination of every sphere of social life to the imperative of maximal profit.

Łódź was developed at a rapid pace by private capital, which strove to build as many skimpy flats as possible in order to create a concentration of cheap labor for exploitation. The result: factory owners' beautiful palaces with spacious parks next to narrow backstreets and shoddy tenement houses. No one thought about the comfort of the residents; also sewerage, water pipes, cobblestones are lacking; squares and parks are a rare oasis in Łódź.⁷⁸

The capitalist principle of development produced spatial chaos, high-density housing and a general underdevelopment of urban structures.⁷⁹ In contrast to the misery of the interwar period, the heroic moment when workers resisted the German occupation paved the way for a bright future. The end of the war brought not only liberation from the Nazi yoke, but also a radical turn in the historical trajectory—liberation from an evil and unjust past. A similar conclusion was offered by the established journalist Anatol Mikułko in article about the nationalization of industry in 1946:

Liberation can be achieved only by strength of suffering and endurance. Freedom is won in fight. There is no barometer able to measure the scale of the Polish nation's

⁷⁸ "Przejmujemy parki pofabrykanckie," *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 58 (1947); see also: "Śmiałe plany regulacji miasta," *Kurier Popularny*, no. 336 (1947); "Witamy pocieszające zapowiedzi," *Kurier Popularny*, no. 77 (1948).

⁷⁹ "Centralne miasto Polski," *Kurier Popularny*, no. 78 (1946); "Witamy pocieszające zapowiedzi," *Kurier Popularny*, no. 77 (1948); "Łódź czeka na pomoc," *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 334 (1947).

suffering. (...) With stubbornness, with obstinacy, the Łódź worker has relaunched workshops and factories. He defended machines from dismantlement by the German occupier, and he has brought these machines back to life. (...) Indeed, workshops, machines, and factories are now the property of the working masses. Thanks to the nationalization of large-scale industry, they have been transferred into the hands of the workers (...) Today the Lodz worker has two reasons to celebrate: it is the anniversary of the end of the occupation and of the day when factory owners lost their power.⁸⁰

The oppositions constructed in this scheme—prewar past versus new, postwar order—were widely used to describe changes and plans occurring in very different areas.⁸¹ In the vast majority of cases the prewar period was described in unequivocally negative terms. At the same time, postwar reality was marked by evident positive changes. It was a time full of hope for a better future. The argumentative construction of articles was mostly based on this binary opposition. The singular exception was the housing program from the turn of the 1920s and 1930s organized by the socialist city council.⁸² One article from 1948 summarized a Christmas (sic!) celebration in a newly established kindergarten for working-class children:

The thoughts of many [workers, parents – AZ, KP] travel back to prewar times, to periods of strikes and desperate battles against living with foreign cartels, with the exploitation [performed by] factory owners. It was for them that the workers ruined their lungs, wasted their strength, for them that they produced wealth in [the shape of] millions of meters of textile, in millions of tons of coal and steel. The country was destroyed by war and haunted by hunger among the working masses. Today, although only four years have passed since the end of the most terrible of all wars, and still we need to overcome many difficulties, we can afford to celebrate in peace and joy in the company of our comrades at this rich table. This is how it is today, and tomorrow...it will be even better.⁸³

In the opposition of prewar and postwar, a personified villain—the factory owner—was reintroduced, resembling the earlier rhetoric of two opposite political camps. Yet again it proved effective, as only a vivid image of the enemy can be in political mobilization. But the temporal opposition also concerned broader civilizational issues.

⁸⁰ “Dwa wyzwolenia Łodzi,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 19 (1946).

⁸¹ Zysiak, *Punkty za pochodzenie. Powojenna modernizacja i uniwersytet w robotniczym mieście*, 110.

⁸² “Socjaliści zawsze przodowali w społecznej akcji budowlanej,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 296 (1946); “Przypomnienie,” *Kurier Popularny*, no 1 (1948).

⁸³ “Święto w przedszkolu robotniczym. Dzieci robotników przeżywają wiele radosnych chwil,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 353 (1948).

Basic workers' needs were not limited to running water and better housing. They included culture and education. Even more: higher education was supposed to become one of the basic needs too. Reformers planned that as many as 80% of every age cohort would be enrolled at universities. As the press vigorously reported, a whole education system was being reformed simultaneously. Additionally, an impressive press campaign encouraged working-class children to enroll at universities.⁸⁴

The city does everything to enable the development of higher education institutions, and to make education available to young workers, peasants and intellectuals. The establishment of preparatory courses gives young workers and peasants a real opportunity to get higher education. Not only should the municipalities support them, but also all social institutions and cooperatives as well.⁸⁵

In the first postwar years a variety of solutions were implemented, like the 'initial year', preparatory courses,⁸⁶ the special quota of registration indexes reserved for the Ministry of Education to distribute, and some positive discrimination for children of working-class origin.⁸⁷ In contrast to prewar reality, future socialist modernization was supposed to build a truly modern welfare state, taking care of all important aspects of human existence.

In conclusion, the prewar period was imagined as a time of social injustice, political dictatorship, economic instability and the proceeding degradation of Łódź. On the one hand, this dreadful past still refused to go away in certain aspects of postwar reality, like urban chaos or deficiencies in infrastructure. On the other hand, in most cases it was not presented as posing a real threat to ambitious modernization plans. It was only a minor obstacle, unable to slow down postwar modernization. Thus, an intensive exploitation of the prewar period's negative image was not aimed at a spur for political activity. Rather, this rhetorical scheme

⁸⁴ In comparison with the interwar period, not to mention the devastating impact of the wartime years, the change was already visible in the very first years: in the academic year 1938/39 there were about 14.4 students for every 100,000 citizens, while in the very first postwar academic year there were already 23.1 such students and the number was increasing rapidly reaching 50 students per 100,000 citizens in the academic years 1950–52, and 55.4 in 1960/61, i.e. almost four times more than before the outbreak of WWII: GUS, *Polska w Liczbach 1944–1964* (Warszawa: GUS, 1964).

⁸⁵ "Łódź – stolica świata pracy," *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 118 (1947).

⁸⁶ Both were designed to overcome gaps in education and allow students without a high school diploma to enter the university.

⁸⁷ An affirmative action program awarding additional points during enrollment was not implemented until the 1960s, when the effects of democratization turned out to be very moderate.

was deployed to enhance approval for the new, postwar order. The contrast between a past constructed in the articles and the achievements of the new regime served precisely this purpose.

Table 8. Examples of binary oppositions in the postwar discourse on Łódź and its historical trajectory, 1945–1949

| Issue/area of social life | Łódź in prewar period | Łódź after the War |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Role of the city | Neglected industrial hub | Metropolis, important center of scientific and cultural activities |
| Mechanism of development | Irregular, chaotic, uneven | Planned, organized, comprehensive |
| Political regime | Dictatorship (“native fascism”) | Democracy, freedom |
| Management in factory | Capitalist dictatorship | Workers council |
| Situation on the job market | Mass unemployment, instability | Full employment, stability, strong position of workers |
| General business model | Strenuous exploitation of the labor force, lengthen working hours | Modern technology, efficient management |
| Social moods | Social tensions, strikes, demonstrations | Rising welfare, social justice and peace |
| Housing | Small, tight, overcrowded flats, speculative construction boom | Modern (sewerage, running water, electricity), bright flats in newly-built estates |
| Culture | Elitist and expensive | Open, free and accessible – dissemination of culture |
| Education | High illiteracy, youth needed to work instead of learn | “Fight against illiteracy”, opening universities for the working classes |

Working Classes and Everyday Life

Contrary to intuitive expectations, it is difficult to find any direct appeal for action from the working class. Workers were venerated but not encouraged to directly participate in political action. While discussing the role of the working class, journalists usually used sublime rhetoric and zealously celebrated workers’ virtues. For example, *Dziennik Łódzki* explained:

For Łódź, the most important question is not where its inhabitant drinks black coffee or vodka. The real “life” of Łódź is on its outskirts, where at particular hours, dozens of factories flood the side streets with a rushing crowd of workers. This life is admeasured by the amount of earnest work.⁸⁸

An interesting attempt at redefinition occurred here. It was hard work and an industrial esthetic, not hectic social life in cafés and restaurants, which constituted the urban character of Łódź. Since the publication of the very first issue of a daily newspaper in postwar Łódź, diligence and dedication to factory work was strongly emphasized. The figure of the worker took central place in the new symbolic universe. This change found literal expression such as in this description of a kindergarten for workers’ children, which had been created in a former factory owner’s palace:

The palace of factory owner Biedermann, hidden in greenery, is humming with children’s voices. What is going on? Tens of children in a German millionaire’s palace? Yes, in “Herr Biedermann’s” palace, a kindergarten for children between the ages of 2 and 7 has been established. (...) Mothers who work in Biedermann’s factory bring their little ones at 7 am and take them home at 7 pm.⁸⁹

The press, especially *Głos Robotniczy* and *Kurier Popularny* published by the PPR and the PPS respectively, underlined a sense of the dignity of the working class.

They also praised the working classes as torchbearers of progress and democracy. Before the second half of 1948, “democracy” was the chief ideological term, widely exploited as a label for the new order.⁹⁰ However, the meaning of “democracy” was blurred. It was usually associated with the general political visibility of the working classes (primarily workers) and a symbolic appreciation of their significance, but not with any specific constitutional form or political procedure. “Democracy” was also defined by the absence of the capitalist class (which was associated with the past, thus with dictatorship and poverty as well), which meant that “democracy” was naturally becoming synonymous with prosperity and welfare.⁹¹ Stating the existence of a new democracy was a form of recognition for the popular classes, but not by any means an encouragement to greater political activity.

⁸⁸ “My i nasze miasto,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 77 (1948).

⁸⁹ “Nowe życie w salonach fabrykanta,” *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 54 (1945).

⁹⁰ “Problemy Łodzi,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 5 (1945); “Dwa wyzwolenia Łodzi,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 19 (1946); “Pełną parą – naprzód,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 4 (1946); “Łódź,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 18 (1946); “W trzechlecie Wolnej Łodzi,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 18 (1948).

⁹¹ Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland*.

Workers had to remain passive. This was a logical consequence of the figure of “double liberation” in 1945, from the German yoke and from capitalist exploitation. Political heroism was no longer necessary, because the most important battle had already been won. Prewar capitalist surplus value extraction had been abolished, thus the most important obstacle in the way of the improvement of working-class conditions had vanished too. This argument was presented in terms of general justice, not in the language of Marxian economic analysis. It was a source of particular emancipation—through wages, social services and investments in infrastructure, workers receive the entire (or almost the entire) product of their work. Therefore, regular, everyday work seemed to be a sufficient condition of future welfare. Any advance beyond the customary working-class socio-economical role seemed unnecessary.⁹² *Kurier Popularny* argued:

[E]very day brings new achievements in production, the state is reclaiming factories from the hands of capitalists in order to share fairly the best effort of millions among all citizens. Contrary to the well-known former rackets, which were founded on the privileged position of a handful of owners of the means of production. We are still far from the proper living standards for workers. (...) But, every step forward, every hour of our independent existence brings changes in this field. Workers’ Councils, whose role in our present economic life, and in the worker’s life too, is so important, are now becoming a tool in the working man’s hand. They are regulators of his work, his wage and his living conditions.⁹³

Belief in constant improvement as a result of the regular productive activity of the working class contributed to wider vision of progress. In a slightly different way, this vision was presented in an interview with two senior city officials: Mr. Nowicki, head of the Technical Department in the city hall and Mr. Frey, head of the Reconstruction and Planning Department, published at the beginning of 1946.⁹⁴ Referring to the deeply rooted image of an unaesthetic, chaotically built and simply dirty city, officials promised, that “Łódź will be a beautiful city.”

Future development seemed close to a dream or a fantasy—impossible even to imagine in the reality of the prewar world. In this case, as well as in many other articles concerning local policy before the end of 1948, no strictly ideological categories (varied *-isms*, for example) were used. Argumentation focused usually on a general improvement of the quality of everyday life and urban esthetics. Likewise, the vice-president of the city, Eugeniusz Ajnenkiel, who was also high-ranking official in the city hall during the interwar period, said to the interviewer:

⁹² “Nieznana Łódź,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 20 (1946).

⁹³ “Przed egzaminem Czerwonej Łodzi,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 13 (1946).

⁹⁴ “Łódź będzie pięknym miastem,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 32 (1946).

More attention has been paid and we will continue to fund the social services, healthcare, education and culture. People themselves, their health and happiness are of value to us. In order to provide people with decent conditions for life we do not spare any money, even at the expense of other issues.⁹⁵

Correspondingly, subsequent issues of the local dailies presented reportage about factory life, depicting almost bucolic images of efficient work and fully deserved joys.

Who instead of workers was supposed to get involved in vital political activity? Those who were city officials were in charge of postwar Łódź development. Nowicki and Frey focused on the development of the social infrastructure, on hospitals and schools, housing, recreational facilities and road network. To the question of how realistic their ambitious vision was, they simply replied that actually their plans were already becoming reality, listing all finished and ongoing investment. In another article, the conclusion did not leave much ambiguity:

The outer appearance of our city is changing more and more and thanks to implemented innovations, it will no longer be known as earlier, as “dirty and smoky” Łódź. One by one, all the old shortcomings that disfigured the city’s appearance will be overcome.⁹⁶

The article concerned the small innovation of the construction of parking lots for *droshkies*, admittedly not a particularly spectacular area of intervention. Proposed modernization was modest, tailored to needs and presenting a model of humble and simple workers’ lives in a clean and well-organized city. Many projects were proposed, such as the afforestation of the city for improved air quality,⁹⁷ the rational transformation of the downtown road network,⁹⁸ the expansion of public transport,⁹⁹ the renovation of public facilities (schools, hospitals etc.).¹⁰⁰ All these were expected to improve the quality of everyday life in the city for the local population. *Kurier Popularny* clarified:

For an average working person, the important things are: do they live in proper sanitary conditions? Is their roof rain-tight and no water leaking in? Do they have convenient transportation to their workplace? This is why the majority of credits

⁹⁵ “Największą wartością jest człowiek,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 18 (1948).

⁹⁶ “Betonowe postoje dla dorożek konnych w Łodzi,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 86 (1946).

⁹⁷ “Dymy na łódzkim niebie,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 18 (1947).

⁹⁸ “Problemy komunikacyjne Łodzi,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 136 (1946).

⁹⁹ “Zwyciężyli zwolennicy „okrągłej” Łodzi,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 19 (1946).

¹⁰⁰ “Łódź będzie pięknym miastem,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 32 (1946).

Table 9. Quality of everyday life in the discourse – examples of problems and projected solutions, 1945–1949

| Areas of interest | Diagnosis (problem) | Project (solution) | Examples |
|---|--|---|---|
| Public health and sanitation | Poor air quality | Afforestation, industrial fabrication of ozone | <p><i>In conclusion, Łódź with its enormous hatchery emitting carbon dioxide, should be afforested (...) We need to stop the negative and toxic impact of smoke through afforestation. Łódź's slogan needs to be: More greenery, less smoke!</i></p> <p><i>Artificial and electric ozone production at large-size plants needs to be considered!</i></p> |
| Road network | Non-functional system of the inner roads, lack of arterial roads | Rational regulation and rebuilding of the existing road network | <p><i>Facing increasing traffic, a stream of transit vehicles floods Łódź and having no other option – enters Piotrkowska Street, the only arterial road. This results in a high traffic density on this overloaded street, already carrying local traffic and trams (...) We need to find a solution based on the already-existing urban infrastructure.</i></p> |
| Car infrastructure (considered modern but hardly present) | Lack of downtown parking space | Creation of modern carparks | <p><i>The city center lacks parking lots. Because of that, cars occupy narrow streets, which diminishes their capacity and endangers public safety. A project of special parking was designed, which can accommodate at least a dozen cars at once.</i></p> |
| Housing | Shortage of decent flats for workers | Extensive housing programs | <p><i>A family spends most of its life in a flat, where it brings up children. A damp hovel without hygienic facilities is not only a source of infection, but also incessant worry (...) To meet the justified housing demands of the working class, we need to construct as much as possible.</i></p> |

Łódź recently received have been spent on the renovation of tenements or roofs and on the construction of comfortable streets or extension of the public transport network. Our city (...) is conducting the correct policy. It is doing what is possible to save tenements from ruination, to provide a textile or metal worker with a comfortable and healthy home. It is renovating public baths, finishing buildings for schools for workers' children, building new houses in workers' districts and trying to install a sewerage system on the outskirts as fast as possible in order to provide people with drinking water.¹⁰¹

All these everyday improvements are strikingly far from the project of deep, rapid modernization in a stereotypical Stalinist way. It did not encompass the revolutionary reconstruction of a whole city and did not contain any radical social engineering. This does not mean, however, that no wider and more complex vision lay beneath the modernization plans of local authorities. What seems to serve as the aim of reform at that time was the idea of "normal" and "decent" living.

Toward a Functionalist City

The general framework organizing postwar urban planning in Europe was functionalism. However, in Łódź this was neither implemented by a governmental reform, nor was it copied from Western urban planners. In the local context, functionalist ideas, part and parcel of a broader theoretical movement,¹⁰² were introduced by an international modernist artist from the interwar period, Władysław Strzemiński.¹⁰³

At the end of 1947, a monthly cultural journal *Mysł Współczesna* (*Contemporary Thought*), published a highly-contested article "Functionalized Łódź." Its author, Strzemiński, was an avant-garde painter and art theoretician, one of the most influential participants of the interwar modernist movement in Poland.¹⁰⁴ Strzemiński had lived in Łódź for over a decade and his article was part of an ex-

¹⁰¹ "Dla dobra robotnika łódzkiego," *Kurier Popularny*, no. 271 (1948).

¹⁰² Vladimir Kulić, "The Builders of Socialism: Eastern Europe's Cities in Recent Historiography," *Contemporary European History* 26, no. 03 (August 2017): 15, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0960777316000497>.

¹⁰³ Andrzej Turowski, *Budowniczości świata: z dziejów radykalnego modernizmu w sztuce polskiej* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2000); Helmuth Trischler and Martin Kohlrausch, *Building Europe on Expertise: Innovators, Organizers, Networkers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

¹⁰⁴ The „a.r.” artistic group („revolutionary artists”, „real avant-garde”), active in the years 1929–1936, was one of the most noted leftist Polish avant-garde groups of the interwar period.

tensive study started in the late 1930s. The fact that he decided to publish the article in the new postwar context indicates that he himself believed in the possibility of shaping the world anew. Like many other radical intellectuals, he believed that the postwar socio-political reality had the potential to create favorable conditions in which to realize modernist visions. There was a fairly common hope among radical intellectuals in the first postwar years that a centuries-old backwardness could be finally overcome. The publication of Strzemiński's article was definitely a consequence of this atmosphere. Contrary to the ideas debated in the daily press discussed earlier, it was not modest in its sense of the city's future.

Strzemiński was a member of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (*Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne*, CIAM) movement and remained under the influence of the "Athens Charter."¹⁰⁵ Thus, he opened his study with a systematic criticism of existing cities with their densely built-up parcels and concentric circles as a matrix of spatial development. In his opinion, no contemporary city was able to meet any of the seven basic requirements of a rationally planned city. He wrote:

A properly planned city should guarantee its inhabitants: well-planned housing space; clean air, sun and domestic peace; easy flow of air throughout the whole city; short and quick communication from the place of residence to the workplace; direct access from the place of residence to nature, which is a regenerator of health and strength; the easy and cheap delivery of raw materials to industrial factories; visual impact, which organizes the psyche toward increased optimism and the productive skills of every individual.¹⁰⁶

A right answer for the needs of the modern city-dweller was, in his opinion, a functional and rationally planned city. "The functionalized city", he explained, a "city with a consistent building plan, needs one, unified decision-making center which manages all urban terrain and its development."¹⁰⁷ Drawing his conclusion, Strzemiński noted that the best way to transform Łódź into a functionalist city is... to move it and built anew. He proposed relocating

¹⁰⁵ The Athens Charter (French: *Charte d'Athènes*) was a 1933 document about urban planning published by the Swiss architect, Le Corbusier. The work was based upon Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse* (Radiant City) book of 1935 and urban studies undertaken by the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) in the early 1930s. The Charter had a significant impact on urban planning after World War II. More on ideas of CIAM see: Eric Paul Mumford, *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁶ Władysław Strzemiński, "Łódź sfunkcjonalizowana," *Mysł Współczesna*, no. 11 (1947), 444.

¹⁰⁷ Strzemiński, 456.

the center northwards, and placing new, functionally diversified districts alongside the railway line between the “old” Łódź and the neighboring town of Zgierz. Toward the end of his study, Strzemiński described housing districts of the future, with evenly spaced and unified blocks of flats as well as a functionally divided road network (local roads, inter-districts roads, lines for road freight etc.). A perfectly connected organism in which every part served its purposes: production, living, recreation.¹⁰⁸



Figure 36. Widening of Zachodnia Street, ca. 1960.—once an elegant boulevard.
Author: Waław Kamiński (Miastograf.pl digital collection).

Not surprisingly, Strzemiński’s ideas were repudiated as too radical. “To replace the old downtown and split the city into dozens of settlements, virtually unconnected by common center, is equivalent,”—as *Dziennik Łódzki* argued “to

¹⁰⁸ Ciarkowski, *Łódź, która nie powstała*, 49–50.

divesting Łódź’ of its soul.”¹⁰⁹ However, *Dziennik’s* editor also claimed that Łódź indeed “needs reconstruction”, but on a much more modest scale. Strzeмиński’s vision may be considered as lying at a far end of the spectrum of the idea of a “modern city”, generally common in postwar debate. Its resonance triggered serious dispute, often in quite professional terms.

For example, popular dailies quoted figures such as the American theorist of urbanism, Lewis Mumford to support their arguments.¹¹⁰ Journalists agreed that what characterizes the truly modern city is rational organization and the division of urban spaces, as well as the harmonious co-existence of different social functions. Strzeмиński’s idea of the “functionalist city”, but in a more modest variant, seemed to fit such expectations. *Express Ilustrowany* explained to its readers: “The modern city should consist of dedicated districts: for housing, industry, offices and bureaus, academic institutions etc.”¹¹¹ Although Strzeмиński’s vision was rejected as unrealistic, the general concept of functionalist transformation became a matrix for further modernization plans.

Such plans were developed in various departments of the City Hall, and a separate, more visionary, debate took place among local journalists. It was commonly believed that the process might well take a couple of decades (for example twenty-five or thirty years).¹¹² In this vein, it was noted that functionalist reconstruction should be conducted gently and naturally, without violent interference with the existing urban tissue. This assumption allowed journalists to synchronize the more visionary plans with the day-to-day urban reforms discussed in the previous section. After all, no strict schedule of the reconstruction was considered, and any extraordinary mobilization of resources was not discussed. In other words, progress in different spheres would be apparent and constant, but it would not require more serious sacrifices.

Osiedle and beyond

The link bridging daily life and functionalist visions was the residential district. The new city was to be divided into functional districts, where the daily life of laboring people would reach a new quality. An overcrowded city center was not the place for a decent way of life and this space would meet other public func-

¹⁰⁹ “Rozparcelować Łódź na 16 osiedli? Nowe koncepcje urbanistyczne „miasta funkcjonalnego” (artykuł dyskusyjny),” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 351 (1947).

¹¹⁰ See “Łódź miastem przyszłości,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 296 (1946).

¹¹¹ “Łódź rajem na ziemi,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 240 (1946).

¹¹² “Łódź miastem przyszłości,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 296 (1946); “Łódź rajem na ziemi,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 240 (1946); “Łódź miastem ogrodów,” *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 19 (1947).

tions. The division of districts was mainly aimed at separating work from living spaces.¹¹³ The housing district was understood as a more or less independent and self-sufficient zone, where residents would sleep, spend their spare time, shop and raise children.

Many researchers dealing with Soviet planning or the concept of the socialist city underline a role of such a unit—micro rayon—in postwar urban planning.¹¹⁴ In contrast to a neighborhood, it was supposed to be an exclusively socialist invention.¹¹⁵ Researchers point out different essential features of the micro rayon. Mark B. Smith argues that it was not until the Khrushchev era that the micro rayon became a truly Soviet idea, distinct from its western equivalent. Its distinctiveness consisted of the idea of equality and the ambition to change the life of the local population as a whole and not only its lower strata.¹¹⁶ In comparison with failed American projects such as the Pruitt-Igoe housing estate in St. Louis,¹¹⁷ which focused only on the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, socialist urban planning provided a solution for all. Kimberley E. Zarecor noted another feature of the socialist city—the explicit ideological project inscribed in its construction:

The design of the micro rayon, with its choreographed series of residential blocks and community buildings of varied sizes in a composition without grids, exempli-

¹¹³ “Łódź musi być pięknym miastem,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 118 (1946).

¹¹⁴ A part of extensive literature about the socialist city not quoted later: Ellman, *Socialist Planning*; Ferencuhová and Gentile, “Introduction”; Christian Hess, “Sino-Soviet City: Dalian between Socialist Worlds, 1945–1955,” *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 1 (January 2018): 9–25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144217710234>; Christina E. Crawford, “From Tractors to Territory: Socialist Urbanization through Standardization,” *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 1 (January 2018): 54–77, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144217710233>; Daria Bocharnikova and Steven E. Harris, “Second World Urbanity: Infrastructures of Utopia and Really Existing Socialism,” *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 1 (January 2018): 3–8, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144217710227>; James H. Bater, *The Soviet City, Explorations in Urban Analysis* (London: Edward Arnold, 1980); Paul Stronski, *Tashkent: Forging a Soviet City, 1930–1966* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010); Brigitte Le Normand, *Designing Tito’s Capital: Urban Planning, Modernism, and Socialism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014); Kulić, “The Builders of Socialism.”

¹¹⁵ Juliana Maxim, “Mass Housing and Collective Experience: On the Notion of ‘microraión’ in Romania in the 1950s and 1960s,” *The Journal of Architecture* 14, no. 1 (February 2009): 7–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602360802705155>; Mark B. Smith, *Property of Communists: The Urban Housing Program from Stalin to Khrushchev* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

¹¹⁶ Smith, *Property of Communists*, 121.

¹¹⁷ Katharine G. Bristol, “The Pruitt–Igoe Myth,” *Journal of Architectural Education* 44, no. 3 (May 1991): 163–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10464883.1991.11102687>.

fies the underlying logic of the socialist scaffold that sets up the spatial relationships within the ensemble.¹¹⁸

A “micro rayon” was translated into Polish as “osiedle” and this became a crucial unit of postwar urban planning. In the vision of the evolutionary “functionalization” of Łódź, the figure of the resident-worker played a key role. His or her needs and comfortable life were defined as the most important criteria for planning and evaluating new investments. It was commonly held that those goals would best be served by *osiedle* located on the periphery of the city, away from the “big-city dust and factory smoke.”¹¹⁹ A model housing estate should be an autonomous unit able to satisfy all needs of its residents. Hence, it was usually emphasized that every *osiedle* needs both a well-developed social infrastructure and basic services as well: “According to the idea of the modern city, inhabitants of a district would satisfy all their everyday needs, material and intellectual, within the district.”¹²⁰ The concept of *osiedle* was purely residential. Not only did it exclude any industrial sites but likewise commercial and service buildings played a less important role than in the capitalist context.¹²¹ It was the idea of community and the quality of the residential experience that mattered.

Describing a model *osiedle* which was planned in a northern district of Łódź, around the Old Market,¹²² *Głos Robotniczy* stipulated: “In this housing estate a modern school building will be constructed, as well as a health center, two kindergartens, two nurseries, two clubhouses and a library for adults and children. The estate will be equipped with a vast network of general stores.” In addition, a swimming pool, a laundry and a department store were planned nearby.¹²³ Another article made an even more precise list of basic facilities:

Each unit (should have—A.Z., K.P.) from 5 to 10 thousand citizens, its own network of schools, and besides that, each unit should have its department store, cultural club, cinema, theater, café, laundry, administrative office with a post office, militia station and artisan center.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Kimberly Elman Zarecor, “What Was So Socialist about the Socialist City? Second World Urbanity in Europe,” *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 1 (January 2018): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144217710229>.

¹¹⁹ “Europeizacja Łodzi,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 113 (1946).

¹²⁰ “Łódź miastem przyszłości,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 296 (1946).

¹²¹ Zarecor, “What Was So Socialist about the Socialist City?,” 12.

¹²² “Rynek Bałucki zmieni wygląd. Domy, kino i PDT,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 272 (1946).

¹²³ “Budujemy miasto „szklanych domów”,” *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 200 (1949).

¹²⁴ “Jak będą wyglądały nowe osiedla w Łodzi,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 357 (1949).



Figure 37. The „Widzew-Zachód” housing estate, ca. 1965, author: Ignacy Płazewski, Muzeum Miasta Łodzi, MHMŁ/I/4710/16 (Wikipedia Commons).

For sanitary reasons, it was planned that factories be kept in the same place as before, the southern part of the city which was relatively sparsely built-up. Furthermore, housing estates would be separated from industrial areas by greenbelts (for example, parks).¹²⁵ The proper development of green areas was strongly emphasized, as in the in catchy title “There is nothing to breathe with in Łódź!”¹²⁶ Not only was this a problem for sanitary reasons, but also because of the recreational needs of the working classes and air pollution.¹²⁷

The separation of housing from industrial areas led journalists to pay special attention to the question of public transport. It was often stated that the street grid and the public transport system should be adjusted to the needs of workers,¹²⁸ and

¹²⁵ “Łódź przyszłości,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 305 (1949).

¹²⁶ “W Łodzi nie ma czym oddychać,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 91 (1946).

¹²⁷ “Dymy na łódzkim niebie,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 18 (1947); “Zieleń – najlepszy filtr skażonego powietrza,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 172 (1946).

¹²⁸ “W trosce o człowieka pracy dogodną komunikację otrzymają mieszkańcy peryferii miasta,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 20 (1948).

travel between housing estate and workplace.¹²⁹ The aim of the planners was to concentrate transit transport in a few specified arteries in order to make inner roads passable for public transport. Its extension and modernization would ensure the integration of different districts and enable convenient access to the industrial zones. Just as in Strzemiński's vision, this was considered prerequisite for the successful realization of the "functionalist" idea of the city. Road capacity became an important issue, so that even minor complaints about narrow roads led writers to consider serious new investments. *Dziennik Łódzki* explained that Łódź needed metropolitan avenues and boulevards, because "after Warsaw it is the biggest city between Berlin and Moscow" (a seemingly bold statement, but true), "it wants its avenues full of sun and greenery, as wide as the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris and as beautiful and well-planned as the East-West Route in Warsaw."¹³⁰ What was symptomatic in all plans of wider spatial transformation, was the focus on the practical needs of the work and life of working-class inhabitants.

In the same period, planners disregarded questions concerning political and public activity. This absence included forms of political activity that had characterized both the old, bourgeoisie and elite public sphere, and equally the mass political participation typical of socialist societies (rallies, demonstrations, political campaigns).¹³¹ Not only were workers not seen as active citizens, but even staged public participation, with its specific spatial requirements such as defilade squares or buildings representing the power of the state, was not debated. The city center, which conventionally had functioned as an arena for public and political life, according to the plans and press articles would simply be transformed into an "office and trade" district.¹³² It would be a modern public space, and most of its previously overcrowded population would be moved to the newly designed socialist units.¹³³ Genuine practices of democracy, a political system which was proclaimed in the press discourse as a general framework for a new, postwar reality, was a virtually nonexistent issue in projects of local modernization.

On a deeper level, the negligence of the political participation of workers in the functionalized city reveals a more general pattern. The activity of inhabitants

¹²⁹ "Łódź rajem na ziemi," *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 240 (1946); "Łódź zmieni wygląd," *Express Ilustrowany* no. 201 (1949).

¹³⁰ "Dlaczego tak wąskie," *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 292 (1949).

¹³¹ Gábor T. Rittersporn and Jan C. Behrends, eds., *Zwischen partei-staatlicher Selbstinszenierung und kirchlichen Gegenwelten: Sphären von Öffentlichkeit in Gesellschaften so-wjetischen Typs* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2003).

¹³² "Śródmieście – dla biur," *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 153 (1949); "Łódź przyszłości," *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 305 (1949); see also "Łódź rajem na ziemi," *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 240 (1946).

¹³³ "Przeludnione Śródmieście," *Express Ilustrowany*, no 6 (1948).

was restricted to the proper realization of assigned roles or tasks. In other words, inhabitants, regardless of their class, were perceived only as beneficiaries, but not active subjects of modernization. This was not announced explicitly, but in fact; this assumption was the general matrix for the postwar modernization discourse. This paradigm originates in a wider intellectual tradition of the Enlightenment. There we find the same link between progressive change and the rational, planned action of a well-prepared, bureaucratic elite armed with sufficient expertise. This was the agenda of the day after the Second World War in less developed countries regardless of the profound ideological differences between them.¹³⁴ It was widely assumed that the bureaucratic elite was capable of controlling the chaos of economic life by administrative means and with the authority of science. Harnessed social processes were to establish the desired order, social harmony and common welfare—the basic aims of modern socio-political visions, not only within state socialism.

Planning

Postwar visions of urban revival promised new infrastructure, modern urban planning and material development both in the West and in the East.¹³⁵ In Łódź, the new redevelopment zeal was not so much grounded in the need to rebuild a destroyed city, but in the will to get rid of the old urban environment.¹³⁶ The “chaotic buildings, a legacy of tsarist rule, fatally burdening the life of the developing and growing city”¹³⁷ had, finally, to be ordered. It was not an easy task to change “a city built without a plan and chaotically”¹³⁸ because of the functionally unspecified areas and a dense built environment, tropes already familiar from earlier commentaries. Such redevelopment required not only conscious steps into the future but also a profound intervention into the past. Unlike in the previous periods examined in this study, this time there was

¹³⁴ For more on postwar development politics see Charles Oman and Ganeshan Wignaraja, *The Postwar Evolution of Development Thinking* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* (London: Zed Books, 2010); Leszczyński, *Skok w nowoczesność: polityka wzrostu w krajach peryferyjnych 1943–1980*.

¹³⁵ Jeffrey M. Diefendorf, “Urban Reconstruction in Europe After World War II,” *Urban Studies*, no. 26 (1989): 128–43.

¹³⁶ On local urban development and architecture see Sumorok, *Architektura i urbanistyka Łodzi okresu realizmu socjalistycznego*.

¹³⁷ “Śmiałe plany regulacji miasta,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 336 (1947); see also “Łódź czeka na pomoc,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 334 (1947).

¹³⁸ “Śmiałe plany regulacji miasta,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 336 (1947).

allegedly no limitation of external state structure or high ideological polarization impeding effective government. “Daring plans of city regulation”¹³⁹ could finally be considered fully viable.

The vehicle for this new attempt to master historical development in time was the plan. The idea of the plan forms the conceptual core of the urban discourse of early state socialism. This involved not only a plan of economic development (as in the Six-Year Plan) but also the plan as a way of thinking about any form of human activity in time and space—a paradigm for orchestrating action. The “sins of the sad past” it was believed, would be abandoned when “a plan was [no longer] as foreign and unknown a thing as the moon.”¹⁴⁰ The imposition of a plan was a major historical challenge: “in front of us there is a task to be solved” proclaimed one of the journalists, because previous “development [...] was not shaped with any developmental master plan.”¹⁴¹ Such a master plan was seen as an ultimate solution for the decades-long struggle to reform the city and its image, to turn “its grey, ugly look into an ideal picture” of “the city of the future.”¹⁴²

The binary opposition of the prewar versus the postwar order again served as a core of argumentation. The development of the city in previous decades had been essentially chaotic, uncoordinated and above all driven by the profit motive, or worse, contingency: “Well, a large city ‘on the river Łódka’ is an accident” – claimed an anonymous author in *Dziennik Łódzki*.¹⁴³ In the postwar reality, there was clearly no longer any place for accidents. Future development needed to be rationally organized by a comprehensive plan for modernization efforts supported by an optimal utilization of all available resources. No wonder, when the news on planned investment within the Six-Year Plan reached the city, the press enthusiastically announced that: “Łódź will no longer be a proverbial Cinderella, it will no longer be ‘a dirty and ugly city’; it will be clean and nice instead. Łódź will be a template for a socialist class center.”¹⁴⁴

The corresponding mechanism of planning was to be both hierarchical and vertical. Journalist Władysław Orłowski in *Dziennik Łódzki* explained how “planning” actually works: “planning itself runs according to the a following procedure—it starts with Łódź issues considered in terms of nationwide aspects, then regional ones, and then it narrows down to the local, and then to the district level.”¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ “Śmiałe plany regulacji miasta,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 336 (1947).

¹⁴⁰ “Łódź będzie pięknym miastem,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 32 (1946).

¹⁴¹ “Problemy komunikacyjne Łodzi,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 136 (1946).

¹⁴² “Łódź miastem przyszłości,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 296 (1946).

¹⁴³ “Łódź – największe miasto Polski,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 106 (1946); see also “Witamy pocieszające zapowiedzi,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 77 (1948).

¹⁴⁴ “Całe miasto,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 52 (1949).

¹⁴⁵ “Łódź miastem przyszłości,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 296 (1946).



Figure 38. Skyscraper of the Textile Center (from 1956 TV headquarters), author: Waław Kamiński, ca. 1960 (Miastograf.pl digital collection).

Thus, after the publication of Strzeziński's study on functionalized Łódź, the press called explicitly for an extensive debate on possible transformations of the city's landscape.¹⁴⁶ Instead of serious dispute, however, plans for local investment were presented as a finished product, based on solid expert evaluation of social necessities. Usually they took the form of extensive, but only report-style articles (sometimes accompanied by drawings or maps) or interviews with

¹⁴⁶ "Rozparcelować Łódź na 16 osiedli? Nowe koncepcje urbanistyczne „miasta funkcjonalnego” (artykuł dyskusyjny),” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 351 (1947).

high-ranking officials, who simply described their intentions. For example, in October 1946, *Dziennik Łódzki* and *Kurier Popularny* published extensive articles about city's Office of [Spatial] Planning and its works.¹⁴⁷ In 1949 *Express Ilustrowany* presented a plan of spatial reconstruction drawn up at the city hall.¹⁴⁸ Against the backdrop of the previous history of Łódź, all these projects were presented as unique because of their rationality and planned character.



Figure 39. Construction of the Great Theater started in 1949, ca. 1950, author: unknown (Miastograf.pl digital collection).

¹⁴⁷ “Łódź miastem przyszłości,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 296 (1946); “Urbaniści przy pracy,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 299 (1946).

¹⁴⁸ “Łódź przyszłości,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 305 (1949).



Figure 40. Construction of the new building for the University Library which was completed in 1960, ca. 1957, author: Waław Kamiński (Miastograf.pl digital collection).



Figure 41. Sports hall constructed in 1957, ca. 1960 ks. Skorupki 21 St., author: Waław Kamiński (Miastograf.pl digital collection).



Figure 42. The „Party House”, headquarters of the Communist Party regional branch, ca. 1955, author: Ignacy Płażewski, Muzeum Miasta Łodzi, MHML/I/4710/11 (Wikipedia Commons).

Almost all projects, from functionalist city to simple *osiedle* redevelopments, discussed in the press, were marked by the common denominators of “the planned functional specification” or the spatial separation of different urban functions. Contrary to “the city built in a chaotic way and socially disorganized in respect to space” a truly “modern city should be composed of districts designated solely for living, industry, offices and institutions, universities etc.”¹⁴⁹ For instance, “in the center of the city a headquarters of central management” was to be created, “or to put it another way, an administrative and commercial district.”¹⁵⁰ The growing culture of the expert in urban planning developed a particular form of rationality regulating human conduct in time and offering criteria for a quantifiable evaluation of the planned progress. This rationality was also popularized among the press audience with one writer arguing that:

The rebirth of Łódź is not measured by the number of predatory speculators looking for prey or looters, and not by the variety of local bars. The development of the city is measured by the number of smoking chimneys and in meters of manufactured cloth.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ “Łódź rajem na ziemi,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 240 (1946).

¹⁵⁰ “Łódź przyszłości,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 305 (1949).

¹⁵¹ “Dwa wyzwolenia Łodzi,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 19 (1946).

This nexus between the speakable and the doable by means of the plan was supplemented by borrowings from the military domain. The resulting paradigm of thinking was grounded in a planned allocation of resources and step-by-step proceedings known from military regimes. In the words of one of vice-president, interviewed in the press:

Łódź went through a period of an offensive on the basis of planned economy with a hierarchy and a chronology of needs. We are in a period of regrouping our forces and means. We are working directly on an operational plan for the year 1949.¹⁵²

Such militarist parlance was a harbinger of a shift toward Stalinist orthodoxy and productivist imperatives after 1948. There was also an accompanying moral economy of a socialist producer and an ordered working-class productive society. The urban subject of socialism had to lead an ordered working-class life according to the incentives of production— thus, “the conviction about the value of work for the state is strengthened in individuals.” By developing canteens and children’s day care “the balance point is placed on the factory” and “the worker is even more integrated within the workplace.”¹⁵³ The reward for such a disciplined life was a share in an optimistic vision of history with a triumphant “will to improve” and a belief in the viability of bold endeavors, including those of more long term nature.¹⁵⁴ The plan was a device to rationally distribute resources and organize human action in a way approaching the designed goals at a regular pace and with an irresistible outcome. “The realization of the new area development plan can be accomplished in 30 years”—declared one journalist—and the “Łódź of the future will be a creation of our brains and our hands.”¹⁵⁵ The city and its discontents finally had to yield to human will.

Metropolitan Dreams and a Wake-up Call

The social composition of the city was profoundly changing. The inflow of an intelligentsia from ruined Warsaw and the transfer of numerous governmental institutions to Łódź brought about significant changes in the appearance of the city, unmistakably noted in the press.¹⁵⁶ Culture and higher education were devel-

¹⁵² “Łódź w oczach nietubylca,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 186 (1948).

¹⁵³ “Pełną parą – naprzód,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 4(1946).

¹⁵⁴ Li, *The Will to Improve. Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*.

¹⁵⁵ “Łódź miastem przyszłości,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 296 (1946).

¹⁵⁶ “Życie na ruinach Warszawy,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 18 (1946).

oping dynamically.¹⁵⁷ Becoming an important academic center and temporarily playing a role of the most important administrative center in the whole country, Łódź was changing its traditional identity. According to some more enthusiastic statements, old “workers’ Łódź” was becoming a new, “workers and intelligentsia Łódź.”¹⁵⁸ The local press expressed satisfaction with the changes occurring in the social structure of the community, even though the rising percentage of intelligentsia by definition meant a decline in the political strength of the ideologically privileged working classes:

Our city is not losing its character but changing its face. Former workers’ Łódź has become a worker and white-collar city (...). The number of industrial workers remains practically stable but compared with the prewar period the number of officials has almost doubled. (...) This is a normal balance, in contrast to the prewar situation that served as the best example of the poor intellectual life in the second biggest city in Poland.¹⁵⁹

The growth of the intelligentsia, a bureaucracy and the rise in number of white-collar jobs were defined as a kind of “recovery”, a step on the road toward a “normal” social structure, one proper for city of its size. As at many other moments investigated in this book, once again an imagined normality was contrasted with the existing, imperfect state of affairs.¹⁶⁰ The label of the “Polish Manchester”, a large and strictly industrial center, had for decades been a heavy burden for local elites. Changes in the social structure seemed to serve as proof that a favorable political “climate” would transform the general status of Łódź in Poland or even internationally.

The imagination of local planners and journalists was captured by a vision of a “full” city. In other words, a metropolis which in a near future would play a crucial role on a nationwide level. The main point of reference in these enunciations was Warsaw. There were numerous comparisons between both cities, which suggested that Łódź would become as important as Warsaw.¹⁶¹ This was possible chiefly because Łódź was abandoning its mono-industrial character: “The pulse of modern life,— *Dziennik Łódzki* explained—“requires from Łódź not only in-

¹⁵⁷ Krzysztof Baranowski, *Początki Łodzi akademickiej* (Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 1993); Irena Boltuć-Staszewska, *Tranzytem przez Łódź* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1964).

¹⁵⁸ “Łódź robotniczo-inteligencka,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 272 (1946); “Które oblicze Łodzi jest prawdziwe,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 6 (1946).

¹⁵⁹ “Łódź zmieniła się,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 327 (1946), see also “Łódź – największe miasto Polski,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 106 (1946).

¹⁶⁰ Porter-Szűcs, *Poland in the Modern World*.

¹⁶¹ “Życie na ruinach Warszawy,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 18 (1946).

dustrial production, but also culture and science.”¹⁶² Progress in domains such as science or artistic life was only one dimension of the desired metropolization, however.

Another was the development of an adequate and truly metropolitan infrastructure. The would-be metropolis needed for example a new and imposing railway station (planned near to Franciszkańska and Brzezińska Street, in the northern district) and a proper theater:

Łódź does not have and never has had any decent theater building. The few that do exist are just makeshift, and now Łódź has a new role as one of the main centers of Polish culture, it should have at least one representative theater!¹⁶³

Furthermore, Łódź needed to have motorways, proper buildings for institutions of high culture and science, skyscrapers,¹⁶⁴ a new airport (“in the very center of the city”, according to one proposition¹⁶⁵ and offer sky-trams¹⁶⁶) and last but not least a subway. The fastest and most convenient means of public transport would of course be a visible icon of the city’s true metropolitan status. Thus, “world capitals have subways, and Łódź will have one, too!”¹⁶⁷ — as one author optimistically concluded in *Express Ilustrowany*. What was exceptionally curious is that even though Łódź is located far from any navigable rivers, planners believed that thanks to a system of canals, the city might become a major river port.

In the consistent opinion of the press, prospects for the city were promising. Many bold forecasts predicted that the population of Łódź would reach one million in one or two decades.¹⁶⁸ The whole process of metropolization and the functional transformation of the city would — more moderate prognoses assumed — take about two or three decades.¹⁶⁹ After that, Łódź would become a modern metropolis, free of all the deficiencies diagnosed by the local elites over previous

¹⁶² “Łódź w oczach nietubylca,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 186 (1948).

¹⁶³ “Łódź musi mieć reprezentacyjny teatr,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 192 (1946).

¹⁶⁴ “‘Drapacz chmur’ w Łodzi,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 41 (1948).

¹⁶⁵ “Łódź miastem przyszłości,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 296 (1946).

¹⁶⁶ “Tramwaje powietrzne,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 91 (1948).

¹⁶⁷ “Łódź będzie pięknym miastem,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 32 (1946); “Łódź rajem na ziemi,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 240 (1946); “Dworzec-gigant!,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 284 (1948); “Łódź przyszłości,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 305 (1949); “Śmiałe plany regulacji miasta,” *Kurier Popularny*, no. 336 (1947).

¹⁶⁸ “Problemy komunikacyjne Łodzi,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 136 (1946); “Rozparcelować Łódź na 16 osiedli? Nowe koncepcje urbanistyczne „miasta funkcjonalnego” (artykuł dyskusyjny),” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 351 (1947).

¹⁶⁹ “Plany inwestycyjne Łodzi na najbliższą przyszłość,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 299 (1946).

decades. Overall, it would join a core of modernity and achieve the recognition it deserved. This was the heyday of the modernist dream.



Figure 43. Tenement houses and factory chimneys in city center, 1960, author: Ignacy Płażewski, Muzeum Miasta Łodzi, MHME/I/4717/6 (Wikipedia Commons).

This magic moment as a metropolis was as intense as it was short. As early as 1946 onwards, all state-sponsored efforts were focused on rebuilding the capital.¹⁷⁰ From 1948, the most creative circles of Łódź newcomers were moving back to rebuild Warsaw.¹⁷¹ In the end, Łódź was not included in the Six-Year Plan (1950-1955), the main developmental scheme aimed at the fast modernization of the country. Certainly, the plan focused on the industrial sector, but prioritized heavy industry, leaving out textile factories. The initially privileged position the city, left intact by the war, soon turned into a disadvantage, as central investment was redirected elsewhere.

The press lost its role as a local agenda setter. Tight control and propagandist content eliminated debate, and general centralization diminished the significance

¹⁷⁰ 85% of the Polish capital was destroyed. Initially there were even ideas about leaving the city in ruins as a WWII memorial, but Warsawians started to rebuild their city spontaneously and the government followed announcing a nationwide action to collect construction materials for Warsaw. From the start, the city's own rubble was utilized in the reconstruction process, but later under the slogan "the entire nation rebuilds it capital" material was imported from other ruined cities, mainly from the Western Territories, which is often interpreted as deliberate destruction of the German heritage.

¹⁷¹ Boltuć-Staszewska, *Tranzytem przez Łódź*.

of local policy makers. In line with the centralistic drive of the Stalinist regime, state government and administration became the real creators of developmental policies. Local investment plans were simply presented as an appendix to the centralized plan.¹⁷² This time comfort and daily needs played only a minor role in the designing and legitimizing of new investment. Now journalists were excited by the sheer scale and boldness of the planned investment. On a local level this also meant that Łódź became a terrain for state-wide policy, mere a client of the central authorities:

The central authorities are paying more attention to our city recognizing the needs of Great Łódź (...) We have to build, develop, reconstruct and when a need only has to appear for the Polish Council of State to support us with a new funds.

Modernization discourse became dominated by monumentalism. Leading adjectives describing newly emerging projects were now “gigantic”, “beautiful”, and “wonderful.” It is possible to detect a whole set of nouns invented to underline how remarkable the investments were. Collocations such as “hall-colossus” (*hala-kolos*) or the railway-station-giant (*dworzec-gigant*) also served as article titles.¹⁷³

At the same time, local discourse became much more ideological. “Socialism”, a word virtually absent during the first three postwar years (except for in *Kurier Popularny*), now became the term for a prosperous future and the direct goal of the modernization policy:

Łódź yesterday received a message, which must cause deep gratitude in every heart. Central government is going to pour huge investment into our city to improve the living conditions of the masses. This investment, included in the Six-Year Plan, will change the character of the city. Łódź will cease to be the proverbial Cinderella (...) but will become clean and nice-looking. Łódź will become a model socialist workers' city!¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² See “W każdym domu – dobra woda!,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 52 (1949); “Łódź zmieni wygląd,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 201 (1949).

¹⁷³ “Pomoc dla Łodzi,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 352 (1948); “W każdym domu – dobra woda!,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 52 (1949); “Potężna ciepłownia,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 153 (1949); “Rozbudowa Łodzi,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 44 (1949); “Wspaniałe perspektywy,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 44 (1949); “Łódź przyszłości,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 305 (1949); “Szybko wznoszą się nowe gmachy Łodzi,” *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 177 (1949); “Monumentalny teatr powstanie w tym roku na pl. Dąbrowskiego,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 12 (1949); “Gigantyczna inwestycja,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 87 (1949); “Hala-Kolos,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 321 (1948); “Duży ruch budowlany,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 280 (1948).

¹⁷⁴ “W każdym domu – dobra woda!,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 52 (1949); see also “Łódź zmieni wygląd,” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 201 (1949); “Budujemy miasto ‘szkła-nych domów’,” *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 200 (1949).

Łódź would be transformed into a real “socialist” city, not in a relatively distant future, as earlier plans had assumed, but within a couple of years, strictly according to schedule.¹⁷⁵ However, Łódź never became one of the renowned socialist cities, it was neither rebuilt like Minsk or (in part) Warsaw, nor even partly reconstructed like well-planned and coherent Nowa Huta or Sztálinváros (Dunaújváros) in Hungary. Soon it had to return to its marginalized status, whilst still remaining the second biggest city in Poland.

Nonetheless, it was still an important industrial center. Some investment was undertaken and new hospitals, public buildings, housing estates and schools were renewed or built.¹⁷⁶ A form of deglomeration was introduced in the early 1950s in order to slow down the city’s development and make governance of the industrial giant easier.¹⁷⁷ The whole landscape of the city had changed and living conditions started to get better. These improvements, however, lagged behind developments in other areas of the country.

Textile workers—a highly feminized group—were the least privileged working-class group under socialism, which now focused on heavy industry. Wages remained low in the textile industry and it was impossible to make ends meet with only a single family member working; living conditions were difficult.¹⁷⁸ Only after the post-1956 thaw did Łódź get additional funding. While there was an attempt to diversify local industry, and machine-production and chemical plants were supported, they were still part of the textile production commodity chain. The main pillar of the local economy—the cotton industry— was partially modernized in the 1960s, but the growth of production was achieved by creating completely new factories and employment growth.¹⁷⁹ What followed was a concentration of facto-

¹⁷⁵ “W każdym domu – dobra woda!” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 52 (1949); “Rozbudowa Łodzi” *Express Ilustrowany*, no. 44 (1949); “Budujemy miasto ‘szklanych domów’” *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 200 (1949).

¹⁷⁶ Sumorok, *Architektura i urbanistyka Łodzi okresu realizmu socjalistycznego*; Kacper Pobłocki, “The Cunning of Class: Urbanization of Inequality in Post-War Poland” (Central European University, 2010).

¹⁷⁷ Adam Ginsbert, *Łódź: studium monograficzne* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1962), 188.

¹⁷⁸ Władysław Welfe, “Dochody, płace i spożycie,” in: *Łódź w latach 1945–1960*, ed. Edward Rosset (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1962). Welfe; Leszek Próchniak and Janusz Wróbel, eds., *Łódź w latach 1956–1957* (Łódź: IPN, 2006), 12–13; Waldemar Michowicz, ed., *Łódź: wczoraj, dziś, jutro* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkiego Komitetu Wyborczego Frontu Narodowego, 1952); Kaja Kaźmierska, “Paradoksy ideologicznego uprzywilejowania – studium przypadku,” *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, no. 13 (2014): 135–70.

¹⁷⁹ Stanisław Liszewski, “Struktura gospodarcza Łodzi w latach 1918–1989,” in: *Łódź: monografia miasta*, ed. Stanisław Liszewski (Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2009), 315.

ries, because a smaller number of economic entities was easier for centrally-planned management. Over 60% of the working population was still employed in industry, which was the greatest proportion in Poland among cities of comparable size. At the same time, Łódź had the lowest proportion of people with higher education.¹⁸⁰ All higher schools and cultural institutions were located in the city center, which led to a strong spacial stratification—the intelligentsia lived in “town” and had limited contact with the workers.¹⁸¹ All these developments contributed to the scale of post-industrial decline, which belatedly came to Łódź after 1989.

From Modest Modernization to a Socialist City – Conclusion

During the first postwar years, press journalism covered a vast range of topics concerning the modernization of the infrastructure and functionalist planning. These contributions were highly entangled in building support for a new postwar political order. Often the bridging of different social milieux useful for the postwar reconstruction meant resignation from the rhetoric of class struggle or the defining of a clear enemy. Between social appeasement, striving for legitimization and a belief in progressive change, a discourse of modest modernization was forged. This was comprised of a promise of better living conditions, and a set of achievable goals addressing contemporary maladies. Press disputes were not so much focused on long-term goals and visions of a bright future, as on political speeches and intellectual debates published in weeklies or monthlies. In the daily press, material issues and economic problems absolutely dominated visions of the future.

The postwar press debates clearly demonstrate how diverse this period was. Seeing those years in terms of postwar terror, the hegemony of newspeak and totalitarian language domination does not describe socialist modernization sufficiently. The modest modernization corresponds with period of the gentle revolution—when various issues could be discussed. It was a modernization that met the needs of a country devastated by war and with an urgent longing for stability in everyday existence and a predictable future. Its modesty was defined by awareness of limited resources, involvement in local issues, and concerns about working-class inhabitants. It was a project limited to the here and now, sometimes boringly earthbound. At the same time, however, it was reasonable, prudent and well-adjusted to the situation.

The main purpose of the discourse of modernization was not any direct mass political mobilization. Postwar order was constructed at the local level as non-an-

¹⁸⁰ Rosset, “Stosunki ludnościowe,” 38.

¹⁸¹ Waclaw Piotrowski, “Z socjologicznych badań nad strukturą przestrzenną m. Łodzi,” in: *Życie społeczno-gospodarcze Łodzi i województwa łódzkiego*, ed. Jan Mujżel (Łódź: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Łodzi, 1964), 65.

tagonistic and free from engaging political conflict. Major political disputes conducted at the central level as well as global ideological tensions did not resonate in local debates. Argumentation schemes were devoid of explicitly named opponents, or clearly defined obstacles, which had been so common in local debates before the Second World War. Correspondingly, the collective “we” form, preferred in determined and direct appeals constructing political community, was rarely used. The “we vs. they” opposition, common at the beginning of the Second Republic was almost nonexistent. Articles referred more often to positive and non-antagonistic values, such as justice, social harmony, or safety. Expectations and announcements in the local press in the first postwar years were much more modest in comparison with the bold visions of the socialist city or Stalinist monumental modernization that were still to come.



Figure 44. View of a street parallel with Piotrkowska, just two blocks away, Wólczajska Street 162, ca. 1960, author: Waclaw Kamiński.



Figure 45. Piotrkowska Street, ca. 1960, author: Ignacy Płażewski, Muzeum Miasta Łodzi, MHMŁ/I/4721/6 (Wikipedia Commons).



Figure 46. Piotrkowska panorama, author: Grażyna Rutowska, Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe, Archiwum Grażyny Rutowskiej, 40-G-181-6.

The gentle revolution was over and so was the modest modernization. The Stalinist-like revolution took its turn. Slowly, from 1947, increasing in 1948 to culminate in following years, more explicit and “brave” visions of socialist modernization took the baton: spectacular, gigantic and even pompous plans and investments. Change in the political climate and the steady Stalinization of general public discourse had an impact on local press discourse, too. The final goal of local modernization policy—a comprehensively developed metropolis—did not change, but the rhetoric and substance of the project did.

Kamil Śmiechowski, Jacek Burski

TRANSITION: THE POST-INDUSTRIAL ORPHAN IN NEOLIBERAL POLAND 1989–1994

Despite the belief of the local elite, Łódź does not exist on the economic, social or cultural map of the country.¹

Re-inventing the City

The implosion of state socialism spurred on narratives of modern change again. After the failure of modernization during the People's Republic of Poland, a return to "the West" triggered high expectations that the city's fate would change. It could well have been imagined that the collapse of state socialism spelt a return to the logic that had once brought the city to its peak. In the face of these hopes, the shock therapy implementing a market economy and rampant privatization came as a particular blow. It was especially destructive in Łódź, which once again lost its eastern markets. Not many cities experienced such a severe economic collapse in such a short space of time. Discourses about Łódź that emerged after 1989 had to address the collapse of the industrial form of life.² There was no longer such a thing as the city of the textile industry. Instead of assuming the mantle of entrepreneurship and other capitalist virtues, Łódź came to be considered a residue of a bygone order, a backward textile colossus with feet of clay.

The transition and its social consequences are hardly an under-research topic. However, existing Polish research is skewed toward a macro-social perspective. For instance, Henryk Domański investigated the changes in social structure, the rise of the middle class and an evolving hierarchy of prestige.³ Mirosława Marody

¹ Wojciech Górecki, *Łódź przeżyła katharsis* (Łódź: Biblioteka "Tygła Kultury," 1998), 10.

² Alice Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community, and Place: Landscapes and Legacies of Urban Decline* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

³ Henryk Domański, *Na progu konwergencji: stratyfikacja społeczna w krajach Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej* (Warszawa: IFiS PAN, 1996); Henryk Domański, Andrzej Rychard, and Paweł Śpiewak, *Polska jedna czy wiele?* (Warszawa: Trio, 2005); Henryk

focused on the cultural dimension of the social change and the way social bonds were transformed after 1989.⁴ The macro-social outcomes of the new paradigm of work and corresponding changes in employment patterns were addressed by Juliusz Gardawski.⁵ However, there are some anthropological studies in English delving into experience on the ground. In new workplace realities, the status of workers shifted. Those who were able to remain professionally active in times when unemployment loomed large had to adjust to the capitalist working culture. Their position in the workplace often worsened, as a new managerial class took the baton of social prestige.⁶ The peripheral capitalism of a transitional economy created new inequalities and left many social groups behind.⁷

What was important in the local context was the general shift in the social recognition of labor and the position of the working class in the social imaginary. Their marginalization was not only economic but also symbolic. This heavily affected the status of industrial hubs and the self-perception of their inhabitants and local elites. This problem, crucial for modernization discourses in Łódź, has not been systematically researched. Although qualitative, interview-based research, addressed workers coping with change,⁸ and Łódź's vanishing working class was intensely investigated by local sociologists,⁹ studies oriented toward

Domański, *Polska klasa średnia*, Res humanae (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, 2012).

⁴ Mirosława Marody, ed., *Oswajanie rzeczywistości: między realnym socjalizmem a realną demokracją* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 1996); Mirosława Marody, ed., *Co nam zostało z tych lat: społeczeństwo polskie u progu zmiany systemowej* (London: Aneks, 1991).

⁵ Juliusz Gardawski, *Powracająca klasa: sektor prywatny w III Rzeczypospolitej* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo IFiS PAN, 2001); Juliusz Gardawski, ed., *Polacy pracujący a kryzys fordyzmu* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe "Scholar," 2009).

⁶ Elizabeth Dunn, *Privatizing Poland: Baby Food, Big Business, and the Remaking of Labor, Culture and Society after Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004).

⁷ Jane Hardy, *Poland's New Capitalism* (London: Pluto, 2009); Maria Jarosz, ed., *Wygrani i przegrani polskiej transformacji* (Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa, 2005); Maria Jarosz, ed., *Wykluczeni: wymiar społeczny, materialny i etniczny* (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 2008); Hanna Palska, *Bieda i dostatek: o nowych stylach życia w Polsce końca lat dziewięćdziesiątych* (Warszawa: IFiS PAN, 2002); Elżbieta Tarkowska, ed., *Zrozumieć biednego: o dawnej i obecnej biedzie w Polsce* (Warszawa: Typografia, 2000).

⁸ Adam Mrozowicki, *Coping with Social Change: Life Strategies of Workers in Poland's New Capitalism* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2011).

⁹ Łódź's former workers were systematically interviewed by local sociologists. What warrants consideration is that almost all of these studies were written by female scholars. See: Stefania Dzięcielska-Machnikowska, *Co myślą łódzcy bezrobotni?* (Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1994); Stefania Dzięcielska-Machnikowska, *Jak żyją bezrobotni łodzianie* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1994); Stefania

discourse, even if touching on the problem of changing social stratification, were focused on national debates and not local manifestations.¹⁰

In order to address this lacuna, we analyze local public debates, focusing on discourse about social change. Transition was a process about which initially only a few may have had vague preconceptions. Local journalists tried to understand what was happening and find their own way in the fluid reality. At the same time, they tried to reinvent the city anew and help their readers make sense of the world around them. Against the backdrop of all our previous investigations—they once again undertook, no less than a modern challenge.

The Socialist-Style American Dream

Eastern European urban discourses during the economic and political transformation of the 1990s was not entirely different from debates about cities in other regions of the world. Despite all the differences between West and East, “the socialist city”, built under Stalinism in the Soviet Union or its satellite states in Eastern Europe after the Second World War, was in many respects more a rhetorical device than a divergent form of life. As Henry W. Morton remarked while writing about Soviet cities:

Dzięcielska-Machnikowska, *Wpływ bezrobocia na sytuację materialną, czas wolny i oceny transformacji* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1995); Anita Miszańska, *Reakcje społeczne na przemiany ustrojowe. Postawy, zachowania i samopoczucie Polaków w początkach lat dziewięćdziesiątych* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1996); Wielisława Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, *Wielkomiejska bieda w okresie transformacji: zasiłkobiorcy pomocy społecznej* (Łódź: Instytut Socjologii Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1996); Stefania Dzięcielska-Machnikowska, *Pięć lat badań nad bezrobociem w Łodzi: 1991–1995* (Łódź: Omega–Praxis, 1997); Agnieszka Michalska-Żyła, *Psychospołeczne więzi mieszkańców z miastem. Studium na przykładzie Łodzi* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2010).

¹⁰ Marek Czyżewski, Sergiusz Kowalski, and Tomasz Tabako, eds., *Retoryka i polityka: dwudziestolecie polskiej transformacji*, Biblioteka Dyskursu Publicznego (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2010); Marek Czyżewski, Kinga Dunin, and Andrzej Piotrowski, eds., *Cudze problemy: o ważności tego, co nieważne: analiza dyskursu publicznego w Polsce*, Biblioteka Dyskursu Publicznego (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2010); Marek Czyżewski, *Dyskurs elit symbolicznych: próba diagnozy* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademickie Sedno, 2014); Wojciech Woźniak, *Nierówności społeczne w polskim dyskursie politycznym* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2012); Wojciech Woźniak, “From Underclass to Homo Sovieticus. Human Constraints towards Modernization,” *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, no. 3 (13) (2014): 171–99, <https://doi.org/10.14746/pt.2014.3.7>.

[T]he rapidly increasing urban population, whether governed by the representative multiparty system in a mixed economy found in most Western societies or by the one-party system in a state-owned and directed economy found in the Soviet Union, still had to be provided with housing, schools, water, electricity, sewerage, transportation, shopping facilities, medical care, police and fire protection, and recreational and cultural facilities. The difficulties of furnishing these services in quant and quality while trying to cope with negative sides of the urban life like crime, pollution, and overcrowding have all been part of Soviet, as well as Western, urban policy concerns.¹¹

Understandably, such parallelism concerns also change over time. Not only had socialist Łódź to address challenges similar to those found in any other modern industrial city, but urban discourse both before and after 1989 had much in common, too. Thus, to fully grasp the transition debate, one has to start by studying the modernization drive that took place in an earlier period, the 1970s.

The Past, Present and Tomorrow of Łódź was the title of a conference held on 27–28 May 1974, organized by almost all Łódź's academic institutions. Contributions presented during this two-day session were far from optimistic propaganda. For instance, according to the economist Władysław Piotrowski, the textile character of Łódź's industry was a serious problem, limiting opportunities for the city's development. As he pointed out, the textile industry was the branch of manufacturing with the lowest salaries and limited professional skills of the workforce. It was already clear that the employment structure was a problem in a city with the highest proportion of workers with only the most elementary level of education (72.3 per cent compared with 61.1 in the national industrial sector as a whole) and the lowest percentage of workers with a level of education higher than the elementary (27.7 per cent when the average was 38.9) worked. This not surprisingly had an impact on the level of salaries.¹² For Piotrowski there was no doubt that:

Over-dependence on textiles is a major problem for Łódź. It is necessary to transform the city's industrial structure through the intensive development of the electromechanical industry. (...) This will neutralize the over-employment of women. Moreover, in electro-mechanics salaries are much higher than in the light industries (about 24 per cent in 1971). In the specific conditions of Łódź, electromechanical manufacture has huge advantages. It is, in practical terms, the only solution to Łódź's future industrial development.¹³

¹¹ Henry W. Morton and Robert C. Stuart, eds., *The Contemporary Soviet City* (Armonk, New York: MacMillan Press, 1984), ix–x.

¹² Władysław Piotrowski, "Perspektywy rozwoju przemysłu łódzkiego," in: *Wczoraj, dziś i jutro Łodzi*, ed. Waldemar Michowicz (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 1979), 313.

¹³ Piotrowski, 313.

In the mid-1970s local journalists and power brokers were already convinced that the restructuration of local industry was a necessity. The former “Polish Manchester” was a city with a great history as a textile manufacturing hub, but its future needed to be otherwise envisioned. This was the message from the 1974 conference. This shift in thinking about Łódź and its future happened in a specific context.

A general change in the socialist paradigm of thinking about industrialization was taking place more widely. Initially, state-socialist regimes in the region as a whole preferred “heavy industries” with military potential such as metallurgy and shipyards. Later, a turn to socialist consumerism in the 1970s urged them to develop new branches such as car manufacturing and advanced chemical factories (plastics).¹⁴ Between 1956 and 1976 Polish cities and towns entered “the second industrial phase” perpetuated by more spatially dispersed investments under the aegis of the “scientific and technological revolution”, wherein “the urbanization process was more important than industrialization, despite massive investments into productive capacities.”¹⁵ The heyday of textile factories had passed, in East and West they were no longer the spearhead of industrial society. The turn to other industries and intense investment in their technologies rendered Łódź even more obsolete. The resulting conditions in local factories were aptly summarized by Małgorzata Mazurek:

In the economic system of Communist Poland, the place of the textile industry, which was part of so-called light industry, was clearly defined as supporting investments in the key sectors of heavy industrial production. As a result, on the one hand, light industry received meager financial means both for modernization of machinery and for social services for the employees. On the other hand, it made the most of its output capacity by sustaining three shifts of work and the exploitation of a cheap labor force. In that regard, postwar practices continued nineteenth-century forms of exploitation. They made the traditional separation into a badly paid textile industry and a privileged better-paying heavy industry even wider than before. This distinction, historically embedded and supported by communist ideology, was closely linked to the gender segregation of labor, which embraced a division of work within socialist enterprises as well.¹⁶

¹⁴ See: Leszczyński, *Skok w nowoczesność: polityka wzrostu w krajach peryferyjnych 1943–1980*.

¹⁵ Pobłocki, “The Cunning of Class: Urbanization of Inequality in Post-War Poland,” 150.

¹⁶ Małgorzata Mazurek, “From Welfare State to Self-Welfare: Everyday Opposition among Female Textile Workers in Łódź, 1971–81,” in: *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship Global Perspectives*, ed. Karen Petrone and Jie-Hyun Lim (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 283.

As a result, in 1970 as much as 87% of the city's female work force was employed in local factories.¹⁷ In Communist Poland Łódź became "the city of women" even more than it had been in the first half of the 20th century.

Not only did this situation allow the authorities to neglect the needs of the city and its feminized working class but it also triggered negative social consequences such as a low fertility rate. The development of the city was additionally slowed down by a politics of deglomeration that characterized the 1960s. Because of administrative measures, patterns of urban growth changed significantly—the largest and the smallest cities stagnated, and middle size townships took the baton of country-wide urbanization. Some researchers described this moment as a "real watershed in Polish post-war history", more important than 1989.¹⁸

While Łódź did not suffer severe war damage, its initial prosperity soon turned into stagnation and it was the slowest developing city among the major urban centers. The industrial engine of the local economy was running out of fuel. Up to 40% of machinery in local factories dated back to before the Second World War and 20% to before the First World War. Also, the building stock was heavily over-exploited.¹⁹ Even the partial modernization of the textile industry that was initiated after 1960 did not much affect Łódź because of the unfavorable allocation of investment funds, which were usually directed elsewhere. The negative coincidence of the city's economic, gender and social situations slowly turned in Łódź into a real time bomb. It first exploded in December 1970 when the authorities increased the price of meat. The great strike in Łódź erupted in January 1971, one month after the tragic December protests in Gdańsk and Gdynia and the fall of Władysław Gomułka as leader of the Communist Party. Back then it seemed that the authorities were able to handle the situation and they successfully prevented proletarian unrest spreading from the coastal cities to other industrial regions. As local Łódź industry was fairly feminized, the 1971 unrest was actually composed of striking women. For them, appalling living and working conditions and ever-deepening poverty were much more important than any explicitly political aspects. The purely economic character of the action completely shocked the authorities. Unlike before, they could not use the army or police force to confront the strikers, as it was estimated that at least 80% of them were female. Even for some party leaders, such as Józef Tejchma, who took part in the negotiations with strikers, the working conditions proved to be completely unacceptable. Furthermore, the authorities were not prepared to negotiate with female workers. For them, the women's demands were exaggerated and their line of reasoning

¹⁷ Lesiakowski, *Strajki robotnicze w Łodzi 1945–1976*, 261.

¹⁸ Pobłocki, "The Cunning of Class: Urbanization of Inequality in Post-War Poland," 149.

¹⁹ Lesiakowski, *Strajki robotnicze w Łodzi 1945–1976*, 262–63.

“hysterical.”²⁰ On 15 January, when the number of strikers grew to 55,000, the government, completely helpless, decided to back off and it withdrew the price increases. The Łódź January strike, now almost forgotten due to its gendered and peaceful character, was actually the greatest working-class success in challenging the state authorities in postwar Poland prior to 1980.²¹

The successful strike of 1971 in one way announced the future economic and social collapse after 1989. After 1971 the weakness of local industry had to be acknowledged by the authorities. Even the hardliners had to realize that the city needed deep modernization and that the dominant role of the textile industry had to be urgently reduced. In a confidential report the Łódź Committee of PZPR stated:

There are two groups of unsolved issues (...). Various needs of the city have not been addressed by the central authorities, there has been underinvestment in the urban economy and industry, and salaries are disproportionately low in the textile industry (...). The second problem are errors, shortcomings, a lack of system and tenacity in presenting the city's needs to the central party and government authorities.²²

No one could forecast that the entire economic system would crash before any program of modernization could produce results. The incentives of the late socialist modernization were highly consequential for the miserable fate of the city after the transition. In contrast to Gomułka, who was an old-type communist promoting austerity in the name of the state-led accumulation of resources, the new leader of Communist Poland, Edward Gierek, was relatively liberal and pro-Western. He understood that in order to maintain a high level of legitimacy and social peace the state had to address rising consumerist aspirations. The 1970s modernization of Poland's economy was based on huge loans that were invested in building new, modern factories and a general improvement of housing conditions. Before the 1979 energy crisis hope for a successful, “Western-paid” aggregated modernization was justified: the cost of Western debts were to be paid for through the export of Polish-made goods to both capitalist and communist countries.²³

²⁰ See: Michał Matys and Piotr Lipiński, “Kto pokazał tyłek Jaroszewiczowi?” in: *Absurdy PRL-u* (Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy PWN, 2014).

²¹ Lesiakowski, *Strajki robotnicze w Łodzi 1945–1976*; Piotr Franaszek, “Poland,” in: *The Ashgate Companion to the History of Textile Workers, 1650–2000*, ed. Lex Heerma van Voss, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Els Hiemstra-Kuperus (Ashgate, 2010), 414–15.

²² Ewa Mianowska and Krzysztof Tyłski, *Strajki łódzkie w lutym 1971. Geneza, przebieg i reakcje władz, wybór* (Warszawa–Łódź: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2008).

²³ Michael D. Kennedy, *Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland. A Critical Sociology of Soviet-Type Society* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 37–40.

Łódź's local politicians, still reeling from the 1971 strike, wanted to minimize the chance of further female contention. The general redevelopment of the city was to eliminate basic social grievances but also to limit the possibility of massive resistance. In a book tellingly titled *Łódź 2000* Lucjusz Włodkowski, a local journalist and the editor of *Głos Robotniczy*, the official newspaper of Łódź's Communist Party Committee, wondered how the city would look in the year 2000. The book, published in 1977, was an informal manifesto of rapid modernization. Włodkowski argued that:

[F]or many years after the Second World War the city developed too slowly and industry suffered from underinvestment. (...) There was widespread opinion about inefficiency, minimalism, the lack of vision and consequence intensified. This belief comes into play even now when the rate of the city's development is very fast. We have to fight against this wrong belief, while creating bold projects and set clear and far-reaching goals for society in the city.²⁴

The new Łódź was planned as a faithful copy of a Western metropolis, with skyscrapers, a subway and wide streets. Although two huge newly built housing estates, Retkinia to the west part and Widzew to the east helped to reduce the housing problems responsible for the 1971 strike, the main area of intended intervention was the city center. The point where a new highway linking Retkinia to Widzew crossed the spine of old Łódź, Piotrkowska Street, was designated to be the location of *Śródmiejska Dzielnica Mieszkaniowa* (*the City Center Residential District*). However, it was not designed for workers, but the professionals desirable in modern city: artists, engineers and doctors.²⁵ Because the complex consisted of skyscrapers housing both apartments and offices it was soon dubbed "Manhattan" and even the local authorities accepted this name. As Stanisław Liszewski and Szymon Marcińczak pointed out, the building of Łódź's so-called "Manhattan" was a "socialist gentrification", surprisingly similar to processes familiar in capitalistic urban reality. Analogously, the new district was intended to transform an old working-class area into a middle-class one.²⁶ Near "Manhattan" a cultural district with a large concert hall and a gallery was planned, but never built.²⁷ Włodkowski was a great admirer of the redevelopment program. The idea of building an American-style center for the city was for him uncontestable. He

²⁴ Lucjusz Włodkowski, *Łódź 2000* (Warszawa: Książka i Wiedza, 1977), 10.

²⁵ Pobłocki, "The Cunning of Class: Urbanization of Inequality in Post-War Poland," 270.

²⁶ Stanisław Liszewski and Szymon Marcińczak, "Geografia gentyfikacji Łodzi: studium dużego miasta przemysłowego w okresie posocjalistycznym," in: *Procesy gentyfikacji w mieście*, vol. 1 (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2012), 71–87.

²⁷ Ciarkowski, *Łódź, która nie powstała*, 77–81.

could not understand why “the idea, which reaches the long-term dreams and aspirations of society, was greeted surprisingly coldly.”²⁸ He was firmly convinced that everyone in Łódź should take part in the building of the new, modern city.



Figure 47. The “Manhattan” housing estate in Łódź, author: Edwin Dekker, 1991, Miastograf – digital collection.

²⁸ Włodkowski, *Łódź 2000*, 103.

This logic of the westernization of a socialist city was typical of urban policies in the Soviet Bloc in the 1970s and 1980s. While Eastern European cities ever imitated the West, the unavoidable accompaniment was increasing consumption. The gap between material aspirations and the possibility of satisfying them within a socialist economy grew significantly.²⁹ As Elizabeth Dunn noted:

Central planning and the economy of shortage gave workers political power that workers in Fordist enterprises could not have marshalled. The Communist Party premised the legitimacy of one-party rule on the notion that through rational planning it could provide worker-citizens with what they needed, including food, housing, and medical care. Polish workers used it to their advantage. Because the source of the state's power was its ability to reallocate what workers made, workers gained considerable leverage over the party/state. Unhappy with the state's incapacity to provide basics, like bread and meat, and displeased by the state's continual attempts to wrest power away from the shop floor, workers sometimes coordinated large-scale strikes (such as those under the banner of the Solidarity movement), which threatened the party's ability to rule society.³⁰

Without a doubt, the unsatisfied aspirations of local populations during the crash of the food and goods supply in the late 1970s were the most important reasons for the 1980 revolt. In the face of burgeoning social dissatisfaction, all programs for the modernization of local industry, housing investments and city center redevelopment, were too little, too late. When workers from Gdańsk initiated their famous movement, Łódź was still a construction site with outdated industry and a poor, uneducated and feminized working class.³¹ The city witnessed several waves of strike in 1980 and 1981. However, most of them were very similar to the 1971 strike and had simply an economic character without a political impact. Their predominantly economic and social dimensions can be traced to the women workers. However, although these women represented a huge social force, this was not matched by a force in social perception and social narration.

The best example of this is the most widely known event in Łódź's experience of Solidarity, the so-called "hunger march" of women protesting against worsening food supplies on 30 July, 1981.³² The protest remained parochial, did not man-

²⁹ See: Jacek Kurczewski, *The Resurrection of Rights in Poland*, Oxford Socio-Legal Studies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

³⁰ Dunn, *Privatizing Poland*, 16–17.

³¹ For instance, on the photomap from 1978 most of Łódź's biggest block settlements including Widzew, Retkinia and Manhattan are still under construction.

³² More about the characteristic of strikes in Łódź can be found in: Stefania Dziecielska-Machnikowska and Grzegorz Matuszak, *Czternaście łódzkich miesięcy: studia socjologiczne sierpień 1980 – wrzesień 1981* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkie, 1984).

age to attract country-wide publicity by entering the mainstream of social unrest. Solidarity was a class alliance between marginalized intellectuals and the relatively qualified section of the working class.³³ When Warsaw-based dissidents travelled to support shipyard workers, they secured public support for the strike, taken already as a general, political event. In contrast, “workers in Łódź did not manage to jump scales in 1980 in the way the Gdańsk shipyard workers did” as Pobłocki noted.³⁴ Anita Miszalska in turn stressed the composition of Łódź’s working class as an important reason for the weak resonance of the protest, because “women, who were a considerable percentage of the workforce, are generally—due to their family and domestic duties—less ready for radical action.”³⁵ Strikes in Łódź also had little impact because they did not have overtones of a political rebellion. Padraic Kenney describes this phenomenon as the “gender of resistance.”³⁶ The power of workers’ protests (even though their origins were in economic and social dimensions) was usually measured by the system in terms of political rebellion. As a result, Łódź did not play a leading role in the Solidarity movement.

The city entered a phase of deep lethargy in the next decade. Whereas other cities experienced more investment, which swung the pendulum of their fate a little in the direction of the new developmental paradigm, Łódź remained a proper industrial city. Unlike in Gdańsk or Wrocław, the local middle class was weak, composed mostly of different milieux of provincial intelligentsia. In 1989, when the state-socialist economic and political order became entirely obsolete, Łódź with its retrograde industry tightly-knit with Soviet markets had to pay its toll. Bitter awareness that the city as they knew it was about to come to an abrupt end was beyond reach of the imagination of the majority of local authority and the city’s inhabitants.

Shock and Helplessness

When state socialism ended after the famous elections of 4 July 1989, the new government, formed by members of Solidarity, had to cope with a far more dramatic situation than anybody had expected. It was no less than a state of shock; in words of Naomi Klein:

³³ Kennedy, *Professionals, Power and Solidarity in Poland. A Critical Sociology of Soviet-Type Society*.

³⁴ Pobłocki, “The Cunning of Class: Urbanization of Inequality in Post-War Poland,” 290–91; See also Doug McAdam, Sidney G. Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, *Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

³⁵ Miszalska, *Reakcje społeczne na przemiany ustrojowe. Postawy, zachowania i samopoczucie Polaków w początkach lat dziewięćdziesiątych*, 30.

³⁶ Padraic Kenney, “The Gender of Resistance in Communist Poland,” *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 2 (1999): 399–425, <https://doi.org/10.1086/ahr/104.2.399>.

[T]he government was paralyzed by indecision. The speed of the collapse of the old order and the sudden election sweep had been shocks in themselves: in a matter of months, Solidarity activists went from hiding from the secret police to being responsible for paying the salaries of those same agents. And now they had the added shock of discovering that they barely had enough money to make the payroll. Rather than building the post-Communist economy they had dreamed of the movement had the far more pressing task of avoiding a complete meltdown and potential mass starvation. Solidarity's leaders knew they wanted to put an end to the state's vise-like grip on the economy, but they weren't at all clear about what could replace it.³⁷

The urgent need for reforms made the government susceptible to any coherent offer which was on the table. Two young Western economists, Jeffrey Sachs and David Lipton, contracted as economic advisers of Solidarity, drew up the program for Poland's economic shock therapy, intended to reduce the huge debts from the Gierek period. This was eventually accepted by the government even though it was entirely different from any earlier economic program proposed by the Solidarity movement. As a result, the idea of cooperatives run by workers was replaced by "competitive capitalism." Privatization became the political fetish of the new post-communist government. The corresponding mindset was aptly summarized by Dunn:

Leszek Balcerowicz, the minister of finance and architect of economic reform, believed that if Polish enterprises had private owners and if firms were subjected to competition with other strong firms, owners would automatically act in market-rational and self-interested ways. That, in turn, was supposed to build the kind of market economy described by classical economists like Smith, Friedman, Hayek and von Mises. Balcerowicz's neoliberal perspective on reform, like other forms of neoliberalism, depended on the curious view of personhood and human nature to achieve logical coherence and to justify the political and social inequality it implied.³⁸

This change had direct repercussions when new ideas and realities hit the ground. Factories were restructured or closed and their employees sacked or subsumed under new managerial relationships. In Łódź each year the economic condition deteriorated as more and more factories discontinued their operations and fired workers. Initial hopes connected with political changes appeared elusive. This situation found expression in the local press. To illustrate this, it is worth comparing a sequence of articles about the condition of the textile industry, published between 1989 and 1993.

In September 1989 the new government headed by Tadeusz Mazowiecki abandoned the program of modernization of the textile industry signed in Łódź

³⁷ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine. The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books. Henry Holt and Company, 2007), 175.

³⁸ Dunn, *Privatizing Poland*, 34.

by Mieczysław F. Rakowski in 22 May that year. The new government explained that wide-reaching plans for Łódź's industry and huge investment in the city were impossible because of lack of funds. *Głos Robotniczy* commented on this situation with great dissatisfaction. In a long article, there once again appeared the now familiar and oft repeated complaint about state negligence toward the city:

Just four months ago it was hard to find skeptics and for most of us it seemed that after years of oblivion and blindness Łódź and light industry had been given an opportunity to develop. Now all signs indicate that this was not a chance but simply an illusions (?), or possibly promises that were never intended to be kept (?), or maybe just good intentions (?).

Proverbs are common knowledge. One of them says that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. This proverb fits the situation of Łódź like a glove. Did the former government really have to pave the way with good intentions for so many years when people from Łódź have been waiting for changes to its hellish living conditions, which is what the Łódź agglomeration is?

It is so difficult to find good cards dealt in the history of this city. Łódź has nearly always been neglected, exploited and forgotten by the government. Yes, much was built after the war. However, the scale of these changes have always lagged behind the real needs and expectations of society. This is sad, but true.³⁹

Although this statement was truly depressing, there were not yet any signs of the forthcoming catastrophe. Public opinion in Łódź was accustomed to the reality of shortcomings that were typical of the whole of the socialist economy. "In spite of the agenda of the new government, conditions in Łódź are bad and they will continue to be bad," the author argued. It was almost unimaginable that things could be even worse. Nonetheless they were when a lethal crisis hit the textile industry. The local market was flooded by imported textiles, while export was gagged by high duties. The main contractor, the Soviet market, had gone, and internal demand deteriorated because of declining wages. Local, outdated industry was unable to adapt. Companies systematically limited their production and took out loans that they could not pay back. One by one they declared insolvency and sacked their workforces.⁴⁰

Just a few months later, the same newspaper, now significantly rebranded as *Głos Poranny* [Morning Voice rather than Worker's Voice], published interviews with the management staff of several factories and a clerk from the local statistical bureau. Marian Kwiecień, the head manager of ZPP Feniks confirmed that situation was "very hard" and he had to announce two weeks' lay-off. Elżbieta

³⁹ "Jeśli nie przemysł lekki, to co? Jeśli nie teraz, to kiedy?" *Głos Robotniczy*, no. 223 (1989).

⁴⁰ Franaszek, "Poland," 418.

Bednarska from the statistical bureau added: “We will have data in few days’ time, but even today it can be said that if the fall in light industry production was 28 per cent in January, in February it will be much greater. Generally, the textile industry and all market producers are suffering from the deteriorating conditions.”⁴¹ If the situation in the spring of 1990 was dramatic, one year later the history of Łódź’s textile career was finished. The decline of local industry had happened was so fast that it became clear that the future of Łódź as the industrial center had to be redefined. Conclusions were grim but still full of hope:

Łódź is losing its basic advantages. Without a doubt it will be considered by authors of the regional restructuration program. The first stage of this should be finished in June. The final version will be prepared in the autumn. First of all, the tasks of this program will be an evaluation of conditions in Łódź industry, then preparing initial steps and defining future goals. This will define whether the city should still be the center of regional industry or if its character should be radically changed. The authors (two consulting companies from Warsaw) are stressing that the program will be prospective, so its introduction may take many years.⁴²

In two years, between 1989 and 1991, the situation changed dramatically. The state’s approach to the economic condition of Łódź evolved accordingly. From a protectionist program of a budget-financed modernization of industry it shifted to casting doubt over the entire industrial character of the city. This testifies to how deeply and radically systematic transition happened in Poland after the collapse of communism. It not only involved a shift from a centrally-planned economy to market capitalism, but an accelerated farewell to industrial civilization.⁴³

There were not many places where the shock of transformation was as overwhelming as in Łódź. Piotr Franaszek estimated that at the end of 1996 and at the beginning of 1997 the level of employment in the textile industry amounted to half the number of workers employed in 1989, and in 2000 it went down to 31%. In the late 1990s unemployment in Łódź reached 100,000, that is 20% of the professionally active population. Adding insult to injury, it soon turned out that the city had the highest death rate in the country, including the highest infant mortality rate and the highest rate of deaths due to cancer and cardiovascular disease.⁴⁴ In these challenging circumstances neither the city nor the region received any state support which would enable the restructuring of the economy. In sharp contrast to coal mining there was no government plan for modernization and the

⁴¹ “Recesja puka do fabrycznych bram,” *Głos Poranny*, no. 27 (1990).

⁴² “Łódź bez fabryk,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 103 (1991).

⁴³ On parallels and divergences between East and West during post-industrial decline see Mah, *Industrial Ruination, Community, and Place*.

⁴⁴ Franaszek, “Poland,” 420.

restructuring of light industry.⁴⁵ However, the public in Łódź still waited for help from Warsaw.

One by one these hopes were shattered. In January 1991 the city was visited by the retiring prime minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, one of the most prominent proselytizers of privatization and the new neoliberal order. During his press conference he claimed that Łódź's miserable situation was the result of years of neglect by the communists and not an effect of the shock therapy. To illustrate his point, Bielecki used the example of housing stock to explain the situation in the city in general:

When I look around Łódź, I can see many different things. Among others, many tenements which stay on the ground only because they are braced by big pillars. It is so easy to lament this now. But, first of all, we should remember that these houses became damaged over decades, not today.⁴⁶

Bielecki also commented on the strikes organized by women who were losing their jobs in the textile industry. Hunger strikes, which were the main weapon of the local working class under communism did not earn his sympathy as they breached “the limits of law”, were “extremely dangerous to health” (sic!) and lead “only to stalemate.”⁴⁷ Nonetheless, even for him direct confrontation with the local realities must have been eye-opening. Marek Markiewicz, a notable right-wing politician from Łódź described how shocked MPs from Warsaw were on visiting Łódź in 1992 when they were confronted with a “hard to imagine, open-air exhibition where all the mistakes, and results of reforms were visible.”⁴⁸

One year later *Dziennik Łódzki* reported the parliamentary debate about the restructuring of the textile industry. “MPs from Łódź (...) were mostly unsatisfied with the explanations of the deputy minister of labor, Michał Boni” regretted the journalist.⁴⁹ The report was titled *Who will be the Napoleon for Łódź?* The reference to the French emperor who restored the Polish state in 1807, made by one of the visiting MPs, strengthened the conviction about external, state-supported economic help as the only way to save the city's economy. In reality the city was left alone.

So were its inhabitants, often falling out of the safety net of workplace centered welfare, and later any institutional support.⁵⁰ Many of them lived in run-

⁴⁵ Aleksandra Jewtuchowicz and Andrzej Suliborski, “Gospodarka Łodzi na przełomie XX i XXI wieku,” in: *Łódź. Monografia miasta*, ed. Stanisław Liszewski (Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2009), 401.

⁴⁶ “Łódź na podpórkach,” *Głos Poranny*, no. 22 (1992).

⁴⁷ “Łódź na podpórkach.”

⁴⁸ “Łódzki skansen,” *Głos Poranny*, no. 226 (1992).

⁴⁹ “Kto Napoleonem dla Łodzi?,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 34 (1993).

⁵⁰ Inga B. Kuźma, *Domy bezdomnych. Badania sytuacji kryzysowych* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo UŁ, 2015).

down districts near closed factories, which were soon called “pockets (enclaves) of poverty” by local sociologists.⁵¹ How, then, did the local press try to make sense of the new reality, console their readers and perhaps find some anchor in soothsaying about the future?

New Press and New Politics

People tried to get by using various means. While some used their cultural capital to build spectacular careers as new professionals, others tried to set up a garage workshop or became involved in shuttle trading to make ends meet.⁵² Apparently, members of the local population did not wait to be described as victims of transition by worried sociologists and took matters in their own hands, just as was recommended by advocates of the market.⁵³ A sense of lacking the means to master the new situation dominated, however. Paradoxically, among those responsible for offering a more comprehensive picture of the situation and charged with taking decisions about municipal policies, a feeling of helplessness held sway. History slipped out of their hands. It was only for a few younger professionals that the new reality was more an opportunity than a total disaster. It was this division which appeared in the local press and to a large extent made the classic distinction of left vs. right, or even post-communist vs. dissident, obsolete on the local ground.

The local press market reflected this division.⁵⁴ *Dziennik Łódzki* and *Głos Poranny*, run mostly by older journalists, catered to groups composed of the disappointed and those fearful about the future. *Dziennik Łódzki* was the biggest daily and despite turbulent changes in its ownership structure, from a state-owned company, to a right-wing party outlet, to various multinationals, it retained a stable, critical attitude toward the city council and policies of the state during the transition in general. In *Dziennik Łódzki* voices sympathizing with factory workers, and the poorer and weaker inhabitants of Łódź overall, were aired more fre-

⁵¹ Wielisława Warzywoda-Kruszyńska, “The Poor of Large Cities: Is an Underclass Forming? The Example of Welfare Recipients in Łódź,” in: *Poland beyond Communism. “Transition” in Critical Perspective*, ed. Michał Buchowski, Carole Nagengast, and Edouard Conte (Freiburg: University Press Fribourg, 2001), 225–39.

⁵² On processes of creation of the capitalist class from these two groups see Gil Eyal, Iván Szélenyi, and Eleanor R. Townsley, *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: Class Formation and Elite Struggles in Post-Communist Central Europe* (London: Verso, 2000).

⁵³ Pobłocki, “The Cunning of Class: Urbanization of Inequality in Post-War Poland,” xiv–xv.

⁵⁴ Joanna Mikosz, “Nowe tytuły, stare nawyki. Prasa łódzka po transformacji ustrojowej,” *Kronika Miasta Łodzi*, no. 3 (2009).

quently. Moreover, *Dziennik Łódzki* did not avoid subtler diagnoses of the difficult situation in the city.⁵⁵

Gazeta Łódzka, the local branch of the liberal *Gazeta Wyborcza*, established in 1989, became the advocate of a radical break with the industrial monoculture of Łódź and a readjustment to the requirements of the market economy. From the very outset “*Gazeta*” served as a forum for discussion about the condition of Łódź, delivering news about economic, social and political life, comments on local problems, and conducting interviews with politicians and scientists about the city’s future.

Whilst *Gazeta Łódzka* and *Dziennik Łódzki* triumphed on the new press market, *Głos Poranny* had trouble adjusting to the changed situation. Although in the 1990s it had been the city’s third most important newspaper, it gradually collapsed due to maladjustment. As stated above, it had been founded in January 1990 as a follow-on to *Głos Robotniczy*, the official press organ of the Łódź PZPR Committee. Initiated as a social democratic outlet, *Głos* abruptly became conservative and close to the Catholic Church when Gustaw Romanowski, a right-wing dissident journalist, took office as its editor-in-chief in August 1990. However, shortly after that, *Głos* was taken on by a motley crew of politicians from left, right and peasants parties. Romanowski was dismissed and the new head editor described the newspaper as “based on common sense.” The title became the informal press tribune for the post-communist and allied peasant party during the municipal election campaign in 1994. After the election, the newspaper was closed down. *Głos Poranny*, contrary to *Dziennik Łódzki* and *Gazeta Łódzka*, focused on news rather than stories. As with *Dziennik Łódzki*, it was run by older, professional journalists and voiced criticism of the neoliberal reforms.⁵⁶

Despite these differences, the field of debate was not much polarized, and respective titles did not represent very clearly delimited political camps. There was no pronounced conflict between political forces. After the “fall of communism” it was widely accepted that political power in Poland would be taken by post-Solidarity activists. Łódź was no exception. The first democratic local elections in 1990 saw the landslide victory of Łódzkie Porozumienie Obywatelskie (ŁPO)—a local committee established by former members of Solidarity. Paradoxically, in the first years after 1989, the opposition in the city council was composed not of post-communists but post-Solidarity politicians (e.g. WKO, Wyborczy Komitet Obywatelski).⁵⁷ In any case, voting turnout was exceptionally low and hence the legitimization of local government limited.

⁵⁵ Mikosz.

⁵⁶ Mikosz.

⁵⁷ Maria Nartonowicz-Kot, “Zarys dziejów Łodzi po roku 1989,” in: *Łódź. Monografia miasta*, ed. Stanisław Liszewski and Kazimierz Badziak (Łódź: Łódzkie Towarzystwo Naukowe, 2009), 369–70.

The political situation deepened the impression of chaos, and politics as a domain of practice lost its capacity to manage the everyday. It was sometimes suggested that the market economy was the new principle of social organization.⁵⁸ This was contrasted with the highly fractured political scene and improvised programs of the newborn parliamentary democracy which also impacted on the local elections. Instead of debating political visions or even partial solutions to urban problems, *Gazeta Łódzka* denounced the electoral chaos and expressed a longing for an apolitical expert government:

In front of astonished Łódź inhabitants, an initially ridiculous and later embarrassing “electoral struggle” [was performed] (...). Embarrassing, not because of the competition of programs it orchestrated but the accusations and personal slanders. Chaos and the boring repetitiveness of the programs, and abuse of the “Solidarity” logo (...) weakened any interest in this ungainly tournament. Ordinary people want to see in a municipal council candidate an apolitical professional who will help them walk through the city safely, rather than a poor fellow of the “right” shaking his fist in the face of a poor fellow of the “left.”⁵⁹

The political turmoil was directly juxtaposed with the goals of economic recovery. For Mirosław Drzewiecki, MP from the liberal Kongres Liberalno-Demokratyczny party, it was obvious that the political situation in Łódź endangered potential economic revival:

The authorities of Łódź should focus on attracting some big investment, which would serve as a signpost for other foreign investors and which would prove that Łódź is a city in which it is worth making investments.

(...) Everyone is horribly tired of these political fights. In my opinion, everyone with a pro-state attitude should be invited to the table. In my opinion, the political scene in Łódź and the country as a whole should be divided into those who are for reforms and those who want to turn everything backward. For me this is the line of the division, a line which is based not on political affiliation but on mindset.⁶⁰

This reshuffling of political division indeed took place. The next municipal election of 1994 was won by the post-communist Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej. However, a coalition formed by the ŁPO and Unia Wolności achieved more seats in the city council and was able to elect a new liberal mayor, Marek Czekalski. Only 24.6% of inhabitants took part in the election.⁶¹ As *Dziennik Łódzki* noted,

⁵⁸ “Miasto jak firma,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 210 (1994); “Wszystko dla inwestora,” *Gazeta Łódzki*, no. 70 (1990).

⁵⁹ “Na peryferiach Europy,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 40 (1990).

⁶⁰ “Každy, kto ma pomysł na Łódź...,” *Głos Poranny*, no. 244 (1992).

⁶¹ Nartowicz-Kot, “Zarys dziejów Łodzi po roku 1989,” 370.

in his opening speech Czekalski compared managing the city to managing a large company.⁶² Neoliberalism became the official language of city governance.

Political conflict is hard to voice when the main division is one-sidedly imposed on the other side. Forces of progress can hardly enter into discussion with those who want to turn the clock back. The dramatic economic and social situation, and the degradation of social life were frequent topics, but they did not galvanize any political debate. Possible alternative programs were not framed as a competition of political ideas or even representative of group interests. At the same time, politicians abdicated from making explicit political statements.

Local agency was heavily limited by state policies, and it was often the state government which was perceived as in charge of reactions. However, even if some state-level consultations regarding the local crisis were launched, there were no solutions on the table and the press lamented that “the discussion of economic problems in Łódź was unfortunately chaotic.”⁶³ This either served the accusations fired by political opponents or assisted the legitimization of market reforms by pointing to a higher necessity. For instance, local MPs stressed in many interventionist interviews that they represented the entire nation, hence they could not act in favor of local interests.⁶⁴ In order to overcome their helplessness, politicians resorted to citing external factors, the necessity of unavoidable historical processes, to explain the world and their own decisions.

When the city council was confronted with harsh economic conditions, local community and rival politicians often voiced criticism.⁶⁵ Although the city mayor, Grzegorz Palka, enjoyed being interviewed and tried to engage in communication with citizens of the city, many of his associates were annoyed by the fact that they had to answer questions about their performance in urban administration. In an article from 1992, Andrzej Ostoja-Owsiany, the chairman of the city council, expressed his impatience with those trying to reverse the unavoidable, of which he felt a legitimate representative:

– But your voters are frustrated by the difficulties. Sometimes you hear: ‘The Communists will be back!’ How do you find this?

– A sign of primitive thinking and a symptom of a very short memory. For me—as a former oppositionist and a man who lived in that system for fifty years—it is frightening. That regime enslaved people, we lived with our mouths shut, immersed in a lie. Economically, there is nothing to go back to. Now we have a chance. We are on our way to Europe, to the world. There is no other path.⁶⁶

⁶² “Miasto jak firma,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 210 (1994).

⁶³ “Jeden dzień,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 167 (1992).

⁶⁴ “Łódź w parlamencie,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 238 (1991); “Powiedzieli nam,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 167 (1992).

⁶⁵ Konrad Frejlich, “Miasto to ja,” *Odgłosy*, no. 31–32 (1991).

⁶⁶ “Ziemia obiecwana,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 225 (1992).



Figure 48. Small business after transformation (street food), author: Edwin Dekker, 1991, Miastograf – digital collection.



Figure 49. Small business after transformation (street food), author: Edwin Dekker, 1991, Miastograf – digital collection.



Figure 50. Small business after transformation (street trading), author: Edwin Dekker, 1991, Miastograf – digital collection.



Figure 51. Small business after transformation (street trading), author: Edwin Dekker, 1991, Miastograf – digital collection.

When Ostoja-Owsiany was asked about a demonstration of unemployed women, who demanded the reorganization of the municipal employment agency, he just answered:

They do not have the basic information. For instance, they often visit me with problems which don't fall within the remit of the city council and its chairman. I do not allocate flats! There are many things like that that I do not do. I am only able to direct people to the appropriate clerks.⁶⁷

Local politicians refused agency—and responsibility—to act, justifying their inaction in terms of needed expertise, which in fact disavowed the political dimension of the actual course of action. At the same time, however, these explanations often resonated with a patronizing attitude toward those who were not able to easily come to terms with the new reality. The local working-class population was treated as “human constraints to modernization”, to use Wojciech Woźniak’s expression,⁶⁸ and was lumped together with the obsolete urban structure as an obstacle that prevented the city from finally leaving its troublesome condition behind. The means to do so was believed to be the free market.

⁶⁷ Bogda Madej, “Samorząd czy demokracja?,” *Odgłosy*, no. 3 (1992).

⁶⁸ Woźniak, “From Underclass to Homo Sovieticus. Human Constraints towards Modernization.”

The Market as a Principle of Social Organization

The press, with *Gazeta Łódzka* the most influential paper, played an important role in legitimizing the economic transition. It reported on the chaos of local government and its inability to act but it did not offer any specific way out of the predicament. Not only was the economy in disarray but also any conceptual apparatus able to assist in grappling with reality. In these circumstances, the idea of the free market was adopted as a non-teleological principle of social integration. Correspondingly, problems and remedies were now framed differently in the broader context of urban discourse.

In order to legitimize the harsh reality of the shock therapy, a ruthless critique of the state of affairs in the past had to be undertaken. A socialist disorder of false economic incentives was widely blamed for the city's present crisis, and any other course of events than that actually taken was declared to be impossible. One article explaining the new reality stated:

The socialist economic system exempted us from the fierce struggle over the markets. It was an element of the unspoken economic contract that “You pretend to work and we pretend to pay you.” (...) And it appears that industry as a whole, including in Łódź, is completely unprepared for the new conditions. (...) Finally, we have to say that without radical and socially painful changes in the Polish economy we will only head toward further chaotic downfall.⁶⁹

Such liberal parlance was stylized as a parhessia, candidly speaking out the truths which nobody was happy about. Begging pardon for doing so, it simultaneously cut short any discussion. However, the liberal press did not offer many possible remedies. With very limited resources, attempts to make the city an attractive and equal business partner for much wanted investors were unfortunately doomed to fail, and journalists were aware of this:

Unfortunately, all these plans and intentions are still in a phase of complementing offers, declarations and—at best—very preliminary agreements. Although we got “our” president, a democratically elected city council for six months, although the number of contacts with foreign partners is impressive, there is no signed agreement stating what we are demanding from our partners and what they are demanding from us. A majority of talks are based on an exchange of niceties during official meetings and unofficial cocktail parties, declarations of good will and—at best—signing letters of intent.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ “Nie machać łopata,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 206 (1991).

⁷⁰ “Fatamorgana,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 118 (1990).

While the author was diagnosing the mirage-like nature of the rapid growth in foreign investment, he was also looking for a solution to improve the situation. The solution offered was establishing a “professional company” responsible for conducting negotiations which would replace “officials and politicians” in talks with investors.⁷¹ The authorities tried to actively look for investors and please them in any way possible. President Palka admitted the need for more coordinated action, but there was no guarantee of success.

If there is no change in the way our authorities act in their contact with foreign partners, our relations with developed countries will be limited to the International Łódź Fair, courteous visits, direct contacts established by a few factories and companies, a few ex-German trams and various goods brought in by private importers and sold at local markets and on pavements. And Europe will remain a mirage for us.⁷²

While some regretted the ineffective action of the city council, or just their clumsy negotiations, others drew ultimate conclusions from the new market principles. The servile attitude to foreign capital was even more explicitly explained by architect and local activist Marek Janiak:

Every time somebody wants to develop an enterprise, he has to subsidize it. We, citizens of Łódź, don't have anything we can give back. But we can solve this problem indirectly—we just don't need to take. At the present moment, attracting investment—life!—can only be achieved one way: it all has to be for the investor—cheap land, minimal—or simply no—taxes, no requests, no requirements, no conditions.⁷³

This radical submissiveness toward foreign capital had as its background an uncritical attitude to private property in general. There was hardly any debate about different forms of mixed property or the prospective value of assets currently owned by the state (factories) or the city council (housing stock). The singular solution for troubles was seen in rapid and smooth privatization. Private owners were envisioned as capable of removing the maladies of the city. Private ownership was not only a technical means of coping with budgetary constraints, it was a comprehensive vision of the new social order and general principle regulating social interaction. One *Gazeta Łódzka* journalist was pretty plain speaking when he wrote:

The more private property [you have], the more personal freedom. Whoever owns something is independent of the state, of the community, they are really free. Privat-

⁷¹ “Fatamorgana.”

⁷² “Fatamorgana.”

⁷³ “Wszystko dla inwestora,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 70 (1990). Today Marek Janiak is official Architect of the City of Łódź.

ization is not only building a new economic order but a social one as well, it is not only an administrative action but a constitutional one.⁷⁴

Ironically, this quote comes from a commentary on the visit of Janusz Lewandowski, the Minister of Ownership Transformations, who confronted with the dramatic situation in the local economy, was just able to propose further privatization. However, the first large privatization in Łódź, the case of the Bistona factory, ended in the complete closure of the relatively modern enterprise and it caused a massive scandal.⁷⁵ During the wave of bankruptcies and privatizations that ended in drastic cuts in employment, countless people lost their jobs. There were no other positions available that matched their qualifications. Their fates, hopes, tragedies and struggle were rarely presented in the press, however.

Ordinary men and women were presented as passive victims of the transition at best, and uneducated masses at worst. In any case, they were ushered onto the scene as a collective body without names and unique stories, let alone agency.⁷⁶ Individual agency was denied but at the same time collective mobilization was feared. Even Ostoja-Owsiany was concerned about possible social unrest:

What I am afraid of the most is a movement of desperate people, who could only bring destabilization and worsen the situation, even though it is already tragic now, because they cannot change anything. It could cause a tragedy.⁷⁷

Those who didn't rule had to remain passive and speechless. Those who ruled lost the capacity to generate a convincing diagnosis of the situation and a strategy for further action.

The local press addressed the new social question but it was no longer called by this name. A capitalist reality had yet again produced a population that faced destitution. This time it consisted of sacked female workers and males who had gradually fallen out of the safety net of social institutions. The social costs of industrial decline appeared in the press as numbers showing drastic unemployment or increasing crime rates.⁷⁸ Different aspects of the problem were mentioned and printed next to each other, but the dominant frame for comprehending it remained the economic challenge that had to be faced. Just as in the debate at the turn of the century, workers were conceptualized as an almost natural factor. They had to be addressed for humanitarian, sanitary or prestigious reasons, as mass, generic categories, but not as names, biographies or political subjects.

⁷⁴ "Przez własność do wolności," *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 99 (1991).

⁷⁵ "'Bistona' na kłódkę," *Głos Poranny*, no. 16 (1992).

⁷⁶ A telling exception is for instance "Zaradny radny," *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 15 (1990).

⁷⁷ Bogda Madej, "Samorząd czy demokracja?," *Odgłosy*, no. 3 (1992).

⁷⁸ "Łódzki Harlem," *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 191 (1991).

However, all human and infrastructural imperfections ceased being only an issue of esthetic concern for the local intelligentsia. Now, they were the conditions of possibility for market success.

City in Crisis

The urban space and the population inhabiting it were equally marked by the intransigent legacy of the industrial city. Not only did it make the transformation harder, but also cast the urban space in a way even less acceptable in the new reality, no longer appreciative of industrial production but rather the service economy and the creative sector. Urban chaos and the struggle with the label of the “bad city” were an issue again.

The city was confronted with its bad image. Many tropes familiar from earlier periods were repeated, interestingly most strongly resonated with 19th century debates. It seems as if capitalism, when not counter-balanced by any strong program for social change, generated the same negative assessment of the proletarian city as it had one hundred years before. The harshest critique and a strongly negative vision of Lodz was published in the nationwide edition of *Gazeta Wyborcza*; it uncannily evoked the frightened travelogues of Warsaw positivists presented in Chapter 1. Łódź was presented not only as a poor city, but a place truly impossible to live in:

Łódź is a city with the highest death rate among children and infants. In Łódź there are the most miscarriages. In Łódź there are the most single mothers, the most abortions, the most broken families, the most divorces. It is like this because it can't be any different.⁷⁹

In order to find an explanation for this unavailability (a repetitive trope as will already have been noticed), historical facts were used to create an image of a damaged community dependent on a mono-industrial economy and with very limited prospects for a better future:

Modern elites are not attached to Łódź. Older ones— if still alive—want to forget their ties to their home city. Postwar migration has brought new inhabitants to the city— mostly from the countryside, with traditional, peasant culture; but instead of a better life Łódź gave them only hard, poorly paid work. Nowadays, this former capital of the textile industry has sunk into crisis—not only economic but also social.⁸⁰

As so many times before, this dark image triggered responses from local journalists. They yet again tried to counteract it with self-assertion. This time,

⁷⁹ “Łódzki syndrom,” *Gazeta Wyborcza*, no. 364 (1990).

⁸⁰ “Łódzki syndrom.”

however, they had fewer arguments at their disposal. There was little that could be rewritten to transform vice into virtue. A response to this particular article was made by a journalist from *Dziennik Łódzki* who did not even try to see the positive side of living in Łódź; instead he attempted to rework the local identity in order to face the challenge:

I remember reading the article and agreeing with some of the facts. However, I was unable to, and did not want to agree with the conclusion: It is like this because it can't be any different. How is this possible? It has to change! – I wrote a polemic against the text. It has to change. Because we won't leave. Maybe yet another actor, director, professor will leave the city—but we, ordinary people of the city—attached to flats we waited for so long, to work, which is so hard to find these days, to allotments, to these streets with changed names but not appearance. We are going to stay. Because no matter what else is written about Łódź, this ugly, poor city is ours. It is part of us—our ugliness, our poverty. We did not choose it and we will not deny it, but we cannot just agree with it.⁸¹



Figure 52. Author: Edwin Dekker, 1991, *Miastograf* – digital collection

Confrontation with a bad external image renewed the wave of inward critique, which resembled the ritualized arguments familiar from previous periods. Yet once more the very status of the city as an urban space was put into question.

⁸¹ “Dwa miasta,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 245 (1991).

According to some anxious journalists, no area apart from the main street featured the “basic elements of urban composition (...) decisive for the standard of the city.” Instead, this urban space was “filled with traffic, adding to the spatial disorder.” This spatial disintegration again radiated and affected the inhabitants because “the everyday monstrosity was already universally accepted.”⁸² Journalists believed in a close relationship between people in the city and their environment. Just as bad surroundings were believed to poison the minds of city’s citizens, it was imagined that a more positive attitude toward the city on the part of its inhabitants was the necessary first step on the long hard road out of misery.



Figure 53. Unfinished hospital. Author: Edwin Dekker, 1991, *Miastograf* – digital collection.

⁸² “Na odsiecz Poznańskiemu,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 23 (1993).

Journalists understood that the construction of a viable local identity is an important factor in recovery. For instance, they launched an initiative called the World Congress of Citizens of Łódź to promote positive affiliation with the city. On this occasion, local identity was actively reshaped:

Someone called Łódź the “bad city”, however for others it was the “promised land.” Reality in Łódź came in different colors, it was created by Poles, Germans, Jews and other nations: Czechs, the French, Belgians, the English, Russians, Greeks, Armenians. This international character of Łódź, stronger than in any other Polish city, is an exceptional asset in forging contact with the world.⁸³

This article illustrates the difference between *Gazeta Łódzka* (and *Gazeta Wyborcza* in this case) and *Dziennik Łódzki*. It lay not in the diagnosis of the current situation but in divergent visions of coping with it. The latter title concentrated more on identity problems, whereas the former focused mostly on putting pressure on the local authorities to be more active within various realms: the economy, the infrastructure, culture, or privatization. The solution to economic problems was seen to lie in Western capital and investment. When the city started to be considered as a company, it needed to compete on the market, as well.

In order to attract foreign investment it was believed the city needed to look better. Journalists were not concerned with how well Łódź was prepared for investment, but they did fear the impact its appearance made on representatives of foreign companies on their arrival. A lack of hotels and appropriate infrastructure were frequently mentioned:

[C]ontact with foreign countries was intensified. More frequently than ever the French, Americans, Brits and Germans come to Łódź. Representatives of the city and voivodship go abroad to establish new contacts (...). In June President Grzegorz Palka promised the guests of the international fair “Interfashion 90” that next year they would be able to book a room in high standard hotel and in the next two years the city would build a modern trade hall.⁸⁴

Łódź was never a tourist city and after the Second World War it also lost its position as a business hub. There was no need (or the authorities did not recognize it) for high standard hotels, a modern infrastructure, or effective public transport. Investors did not need to be pleased because there was only one crucial investor—the state. Ambitious modernization plans from the 1970s remained just what they already were: plans. After 1989 the lack of hotels became a real

⁸³ “W 568 urodziny miasta „DŁ” proponuje Światowe Spotkanie Łodzian,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 173 (1991).

⁸⁴ “Fatamorgana,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 118 (1990).

problem – at stake was the city’s image. The problem was not only the shortage of rooms or the low standard of service. Journalists were unsure what impression would be made when foreign guests came face to face with some of the locals.

The old trope of the particular characteristics of the vernacular business spheres was back. This time the problem was not the curious manners of the Lodzermenschen, but a new type of transitory “lumpencapitalist”, transgressing the established boundaries about who could afford conspicuous consumption. Shabby local businesses that bordered on illegality, and outright mafia-structures, were visible in the local cafes. This might lead to unexpected encounters, such as one journalist described:

Dr. H. Wienholt, a merchant from West Germany, stopped business talk and discretely asked his partner: “Would you be so kind and tell me who these young men at the next table are? They look weird.” (At a small table sat eight, unshaven men with bloodshot eyes, as alike as Siamese siblings, a type who had lately been described by TV as “merchants with troglodyte faces.”). The interlocutor of the German merchant stuttered while looking for a convincing explanation. Finally, he said: “It’s hot. They are drinking beer...” Hence an answer for a hotel guest: “Every city has its social margins, but such people keep to different places, on a periphery, they don’t trouble peaceful people in the best hotel.”⁸⁵

In the new circumstances, traditional social barriers and rules were suspended. Journalists admitted that “manners have changed very much.” The problem was not directly the fact that “people come to elegant cafés wearing a shirt without a tie”; but nevertheless, the world standard still held close to that of the established elite, and did not acknowledge the new fashion among commercial elites. For many there was still a “strictness of some places which need to guarantee a style and standard close to other cities of Europe.”⁸⁶ The image and style of the emerging commercial elite had yet to be defined.⁸⁷ Also urban spaces were subject to rebranding and refurbishing, which often offered a ray of hope and even some pride in moderate achievements.

Projects of Breaking Through

The total dislocation of the transitory period where no constructive projects could emerge because of disorientation and a shortage of funds could not last forever. The first shock after the implementation of neoliberal reforms was fol-

⁸⁵ “Hotelowi goście,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 195 (1990).

⁸⁶ “Hotelowi goście.”

⁸⁷ Magda Szcześniak, *Normy widzialności: tożsamość w czasach transformacji* (Warszawa: Fundacja Nowej Kultury Bęc Zmiana; Instytut Kultury Polskiej, 2016).

lowed by recovery, and journalists not only interpreted what surrounded them but also started to think how to change it. However, they did not generate complex visions of reform or projects embedded in elaborated political worldviews. New circumstances, lost agency and a lack of a strong political center led to local programs with a low profile. They were not grandly all-embracing but instead concentrated on specific ideas and tasks. The modern will to improve assumed a mantle of modest corrections which it was hoped would initiate a more general sequence of change. Two main projects of urban reform concerned the transformation of the city center. One was the renovation of the city's main thoroughfare, Piotrkowska Street. The other concerned the fate of the biggest factory complex located in the city center "Poltex" (formerly Poznański's factory).

The idea of the reconstruction of Łódź's main street was carried out in 1990. This endeavor entailed not only refurbishment but also a broader transformation of its function. Motorized traffic was minimized to enable it to become a pedestrian zone thereby contributing to the much-needed invigoration of the downtown area. Piotr Biliński, the official architect of the city, admitted that this redevelopment "was a great problem." However, he firmly insisted that it should be pedestrianized, and customers of the local shops transported by tram:

I dream about the reconstruction of a tram line between "Central" (a department store in the heart of "Manhattan") and Wolności Square. I hope that the MPK (public transportation company) will agree with me. The heritage tram would be free and owners of shops located on Piotrkowska would contribute to the cost in their own interests. After all, Piotrkowska is a great shopping mall. (...) For us Piotrkowska is the same as Wawel for Kraków. If we do not care for our heritage, we will lose the identity of this city.⁸⁸

In the end, the idea of the restoration of the tram line was abandoned, but two years later the renovation started. *Dziennik Łódzki* reported that "plans to close Piotrkowska Street to motorized traffic and make it a pedestrianized commercial thoroughfare had been discussed for years" and finally the city administration decided to go ahead. The problem was that "renovation will cost 12 billion zloty and for now there is no such sum in the city budget."⁸⁹ After a few months the newspaper returned to the topic describing a public fund-raising scheme dedicated to finding the missing money.⁹⁰ Finally, renovation started in 1992 and finished in 1997. It triggered intense debate about the goals of the redevelopment project and the protest of shops fearful of falling sales and profits with the removal of motorized vehicles.

⁸⁸ "Lepiej później, ale porządniej," *Głos Poranny*, no. 177 (1990).

⁸⁹ "Piotrkowska deptakiem," *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 45 (1992).

⁹⁰ "Zrzutka na deptak," *Dziennik Łódzki*, no. 85 (1992).



Figure 54. Piotrkowska Street, author: Edwin Dekker, 1991, Miastograf – digital collection.

Nonetheless, just as the early modest visionaries assumed, this was one of those crucial infrastructural projects which, even if not spectacular as such, triggered broader processes of change. Turning Piotrkowska Street into an attractive pedestrian zone reshaped the identity of the city—from a purely industrial hub to a market and service center with at least one attractive space where inhabitants could meet.⁹¹ Piotrkowska Street was definitely the heart—or better the spine—of the city’s public space, at least until the construction of Manufaktura—a huge, privately managed post-industrial leisure space containing a shopping mall, museums, a cinema complex, and restaurants.

This redevelopment project can be traced back to the debate about the possible future of the vast post-industrial wasteland—the Poltex factory, which would later be transformed into Manufaktura. In the 19th century, Izrael Poznański’s factory was one of the biggest textile enterprises in the Russian Empire. Throughout the years of state socialism (under a different name) the plant had employed thousands of women and men. After 1989 production declined and the factory hovered on the verge of bankruptcy. A huge stretch of industrial land covered with impressive buildings standing in the heart of the city awaited a new function. It could easily have been sold for real estate redevelopment; and then it would have just vanished.



Figure 55. Marchlewski Factory (former I.K. Poznański Factory) devastated, author: Edwin Dekker, 1992, *Miastograf* – digital collection.

⁹¹ Julia Sowińska-Heim, “A Post-Socialism City. A ‘Turn’ in Shaping the Architectural Image of a City at the Turn of the 21st Century. The Case of Łódź,” *Art Inquiry. Recherches Sur Les Arts XVII* (2015): 254–55.

This did not happen because of the vision of one man. Mieczysław Michalski, the last manager of Poltex was, without a doubt, the biggest fantasist in 1990s Łódź. When all managers of bankrupting factories were focused on supporting their existence artificially, Michalski closed Poltex and started searching for a new function for this great industrial plant. He explained his mission in unambiguous terms: “In this place we will create a lively city within a city which will be a window onto the world, or a place of degeneration.”⁹² Other voices were rarely that outspoken, but there was much speculation about what would happen with this area. At the beginning of the following year *Gazeta Łódzka* published a comment by architect Jacek Wesolowski. He wondered about the potential of the former factory:

The Poznański complex, turned into buildings with an open, public function, wouldn't be panacea for Łódź's panorama, but it would be a steppingstone in city renovation. The spectacular charm of factory buildings, subtly strengthened by modern architecture, surrounded by one of the most historically valuable neighborhoods in Łódź, composed of the oldest churches in the city and a factory housing development, could be one of the symbols of the city. It would be attractive for business and cultural institutions. One can imagine more ideas for redevelopment. Maybe it would include a trade and cultural center, a housing estate, or sports center?⁹³

Michalski, supported by voices like this, did not want to waste time. This appeared in *Głos Poranny* in 1994:

Here, where formerly ten thousand people worked, an industrial town which contained its own streets, railway and even houses for workers, he (Michalski) now wants to erect a huge, 4-star hotel, a conference center, a cultural, entertainment and leisure center, exhibition facilities and a shopping hall with pedestrian paths.⁹⁴

This was perhaps too much of a vision for the Łódź public. Michalski's projects were treated with caution compared with the Piotrkowska redevelopment project. Michalski was alone in his efforts to find Western investors for the state-owned Poltex. Moreover, for most people living in Łódź, it was still just a factory. Although projects that transformed industrial heritage sites for new purposes became popular in Western Europe in the late 1980s, in Poland and in Łódź they were almost unknown in the wake of the fall of state socialism.⁹⁵ Poltex was the biggest, most concentrated factory area, but the industrial heritage of the city was by no means limited to this site. Other similar spaces had less luck.

⁹² “Nowa ziemia obiecana?,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 122 (1992).

⁹³ “Na odsiecz Poznańskiemu,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 23 (1993).

⁹⁴ “Wschód obiecany,” *Głos Poranny*, no. 146 (1994).

⁹⁵ See: Sylwia Kaczmarek, *Rewitalizacja terenów poprzemysłowych: nowy wymiar w rozwoju miast* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2001).



Figure 56 Entrance to the main building of ŁZZB im. Obrońców Pokoju (the former Scheibler factory), author: Edwin Dekker, 1991, Miastograf – digital collection.

There were also lively debates regarding the reconstruction of other industrial sites. The owners of the former Ramisch factory, located in the heart of downtown Łódź, were conflicted about its future redevelopment. While one of them wanted to create a “Chinatown” there, others preferred a trade center. The first concept ran as follows: “between Piotrkowska and Sienkiewicza Streets a complex of Chinese restaurants, cafes, natural medicine clinics and art galleries would be created.” The second idea preferred “shops, offices and galleries located in renovated buildings covered by a glass roof.”⁹⁶

What lay at the core of the debates about these redevelopment projects was the reconstruction of identity. These were flagship projects offering inhabitants something to believe in, and simultaneously embedded in the city’s past. While there was much to be done in forthcoming years, which lies beyond the scope of this study, thanks to these projects some visionaries started to believe that the industrial city had something to offer. This recognition slowly spread to the population at large as well. What accompanied this change was a radical reconstruction of urban historical memory.

The factory owners of the pioneer years of Łódź industry, such as Poznański or Scheibler, were in socialist Poland unsurprisingly presented as “bloodsucking” capitalists. However, after 1989 they quickly received more neutral attention, and soon explicit positive affirmation. It was not working-class heritage which was to become the overarching theme of the city’s new identity but rather the innovative spirit of the city’s capitalist forefathers. Jerzy Grohman, the successor of one of Łódź’s oldest bourgeois dynasties, would soon claim openly: “my surname is still a brand.”⁹⁷ The process of the “resuscitation of Lodzermenschen” took many years and it was possible not only along with the reevaluation of market principles, but also due to the rediscovery of industrial heritage. The city of female textile workers became the city of great businessmen. There was hardly any place for workers in this new story about the city. They were able to find a place in this reconstructed narrative only as members of the German, Jewish or Polish communities, which built the city under the leadership of the Lodzermenschen.

Table 10. List of main topics of the modern discourse with diagnoses and projects, 1989–1994

| Areas of interest | Diagnosis | Project |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Economy | Decline of textile industry, rapid growth of unemployment, drastic pauperization | Privatization/ restructuration/ marketization |

⁹⁶ “Chinatown czy McDonald?,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 170 (1993).

⁹⁷ “Moje nazwisko to nadal ‘firma,’” *Głos Poranny*, no. 238 (1990).

| Areas of interest | Diagnosis | Project |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Local infrastructure | Underdevelopment and poor infrastructural conditions (roads, estates, public transport, etc.) | Limited modernization (transformation of Piotrkowska Street)/ idea of modern transportation (underground and motorways) |
| Identity | Lack of symbolic frame (i.e. lost working-class city identity) | City of trade fairs/ reinterpretations of the externally applied image, vices into virtues (re-description) |
| Local authorities | Lack of competences | Outsourcing to private (or semi-private) institutions/ looking for support from central authorities |
| Community | Local community in crisis | Looking for new leading social class (entrepreneurs/business executives /emerging middle class)/ objectification of lower classes (especially former workers) |
| Gender | City of poorly educated and unemployed women | Promotion of male-dominated patterns and strategies (e.g. the businessman as a personal template, self-made man) |
| Local political debate | Lack of real political conflict | Acceptance /transformation of political elites into local managers |
| Vision of future | Lack of agency in present circumstances | New images, rebranding: trade city/film city/transit city/creative city |

Bringing Capitalism back in – Conclusion

The history of Łódź is one of rapid change. As in most former “Manchesters”, the neoliberalization of the economy brought deindustrialization and social decline—the vicious circle of history revived the ideology that had made the industrial centers grow, but this time its return brought about their ruin. Events were particularly dramatic not only because they came after years of negligence, but also because of a lack of any supportive programs for either the textile industry or former textile workers. Poverty, frustration and social derailment were framed as the unavoidable costs of modernization. Once the socialist era had come to an end, working-class heritage was denied legitimacy. Thus, a desperate struggle to

build a new identity began.⁹⁸ This involved the shibboleths of Łódź the fashion city; Łódź the trading city; and Łódź the center of international fairs. The economic situation fueled an identity crisis.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the post-1989 debates most resemble the discourse of the late 19th press. There is no strong polarization of ideological languages as in the interwar period and no strong future-oriented ideology, as in the years following the Second World War. Once again the city was confronted with its uneasy past and deficiencies challenging the urban identity of its inhabitants. Again, the stress was laid on infrastructure and making the city properly modern, adjusted to the standards of the European city. Instead of plural ideological languages grappling with modern changes, what is visible is a process of learning the rules of new world. The press assumed a mantle of a parhessias or a soothsayer rather than an active actor shaping the surrounding reality. The management of the city in turbulent circumstances slipped out of the hands of the press and there was no agency which the local press was able to conceptualize and summon to action. There was an overwhelming feeling of losing control, being burdened with old legacies, and threatened by the raging contingencies of present reality.

Newspapers still played an important sense-making role. They facilitated communication between various sections of the local elites, offered space for debate about the city and delivered their readers resources to find their way in the new reality. This time these were not newcomers looking for guidance about overwhelming urban life, but the settled population lost in the upheaval of the reorganization of social, political and economic life. Two titles above all, *Gazeta Łódzka* and *Dziennik Łódzki*, became the main opinion leaders due to their print runs and position in local society. Their varied profiles and will to cater to slightly different publics should not mask their similarities. They both attempted to justify ongoing changes and offered ways to get by, without essentially questioning the course of events.

The diagnoses they made were similar to those known from the outset of the urban debate in the local press. Nonetheless, possible remedies were now much different. There was no stable reference to the desired future. Previously, there had been solutions proposed but impossible to be implemented because of the foreign yoke (Russian autocracy), or political opponents who prevented the desires about urban community from coming into fruition. Later, with the reins of the economy allegedly in the hands of rational socialist planners an end was supposed to finally be put to spatial disorder and social misery. Now, even if socialist

⁹⁸ Joanna B. Michlic, "Łódź in the Postcommunist Era: In Search of a New Identity," in: *Cities after the Fall of Communism: Reshaping Cultural Landscapes and European Identity* (Washington; Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Agata Zysiak, "Trudne dziedzictwo – w poszukiwaniu tożsamości Łodzi," in: *Wokół nowego centrum Łodzi* (Łódź: EC1 Łódź – Miasto Kultury, 2010), 103–20.

planning could be turned into a “business plan”, the dislocatory moment bred doubt and disorientation.

Attempt was made to trace a future path, epitomized in concepts such “developmental plan”, “investment” and “restructuring.” In the initial years of the capitalist order they were used to fan the zeal of reform despite its costs. Almost all known recipes failed and hopes for steering in new directions (the West, Europe, capitalism) were only weak ones.⁹⁹ It soon appeared that what was anticipated to follow the necessary sacrifice was hardly satisfactory. The factories which were to be “restructured” just collapsed. Abandoned buildings were every day crumbling into debris in the middle of the city. Tentative ideas of reform gave way to an overwhelming feeling of a loss of control. Unspecified claims were issued to central government but few visionary ideas for local policy. Only moderate infrastructural projects were initially proposed, but their successes slowly changed the situation.

Beyond the time scope of this study, the post-industrial lore began to be re-evaluated. It was variously depicted—either as precious heritage or as an unbearable burden. In the former shape it was believed to boost new potential—both in terms of personal ideals of an entrepreneurial spirit and infrastructural stock that offered an unparalleled chance for spectacular revitalization projects. Many believed in the resurrection of the golden age of the city with the assistance of the “animal spirits” of the local bourgeoisie and their material presence embodied in commemorative bronze statues. This curious time bridge was forwarded by president of the city Czekalski in one of the later interviews:

Local traditions are one of the city’s best assets. Present inhabitants of Łódź have inherited the memory of an urban center which developed in a rapid manner, was inclusive of people of various nationalities, and was open to foreign capital. . . . I think that those traditions are good for our times.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, the city council attempted various rebranding strategies to invent a new urban identity. Subsequent developmental strategies envisioned new vehicles for urban development, from fashion and film to the creative industries and biotechnology. None of them was a great success. One local commentator diagnosed the situation harshly:

⁹⁹ See for instance articles suggesting getting back to Europe, American benchmarks and similar: “Czy Łódź wejdzie do Europy,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 23 (1990); “Na peryferiach Europy,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 40 (1990); “Łódź stolicą Europy,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 69 (1991), “Dlaczego w Łodzi nie jest jak w Ameryce,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 202 (1992); “Z kaliskiego do Europy,” *Gazeta Łódzka*, no. 221 (1992).

¹⁰⁰ “Nieznaną ziemią,” Interview with President Marek Czekalski, *Magazyn Rzeczypospolitej*, no. 12 (1996).

Łódź, once called the “Polish Manchester”, became during its forty-five postwar years just a city of female textile workers. No one had a concept for it and until today there has been no great idea for it. (...) The slogan of the “promised land again” is a misconception. There is no way for multicultural Łódź, as described by Reymont, to be restored. It is necessary to rethink the city from scratch, without, however, forgetting our roots. So, should we be the crossing between East and West, (...) the trade center, (...) the business back office for Warsaw? Or, (...) the “media metropolis of the East?” Great courage and imagination are necessary to create a future vision of a city. However, both are lacking in Łódź. Our city cannot sell itself although it has emerged as a trade center, it cannot show itself, present its best people (it does not appreciate them either).¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, the material heritage was often neglected and fell victim of predatory land speculation—the massive demolition of historic structures. Local populations had trouble with positive affiliation with their city and its external image remained wanting.¹⁰²

As an epilogue, it is worth noting that the pendulum swung from humble moderation trying to secure anything out of the city’s identity, to flamboyant megaprojects organizing the vision of change. Enormous investment in infrastructure has taken place in recent years. This has been connected with a general swerve toward neoliberal urban management through huge public-private investment, and access to EU funding which has enabled large-scale investment.¹⁰³ A new city center, the renovation of Piotrkowska Street, the reconstruction of the W-Z route and Łódź Fabryczna railway station were the flagship projects of Hanna Zdanowska’s presidency, albeit that some of them had been started before, sometimes initially conceived in a different form.¹⁰⁴ These infrastructural projects address the needs and desires nurtured for years in the local discourses of the modern. The vision of the modern changed its scale, but in a new mode it again attempted to make the city complicit with the demands of the day. Its actual outcome for future urban life is still unknown but the underpinning vision may one day be explored within a research project similar to this.

¹⁰¹ Górecki, *Łódź przeżyła katharsis*, 10.

¹⁰² Zysiak, “Trudne dziedzictwo – w poszukiwaniu tożsamości Łodzi.”

¹⁰³ Bent Flyvbjerg, Nils Bruzelius, and Werner Rothengatter, *Megaprojects and Risk: An Anatomy of Ambition* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); For Polish context see Magdalena Rek-Woźniak, “‘Anatomia ambicji’ a polityka publiczna. Cztery wątki debaty o miejskich megaprojektach,” *„Problemy polityki społecznej. Studia i dyskusje*, no. 37(2) (2017): 117–37.

¹⁰⁴ Kamil Brzeziński, “Nowe centrum jako remedium na problemy Łodzi,” *Przegląd Socjologiczny* 60, no. 2–3 (2011): 393–422.

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A CITY LOST IN SPACE IN A COUNTRY LOST IN TIME – CONCLUSION

Struggling with the Modern Challenge

Once art is placed in the museum, the history of art may begin as a discipline. When modernity is over, it may be scrutinized with the careful eye of a historian. The modern striving to urge human action and stimulate longings for emancipation have marked the last centuries of human history. This energy lost its momentum, however. Not only did a critical self-awareness remove previous confidence of modern discourses. Political narratives programmatically opposed to the main promises of modernity successfully challenged their further dissemination. This has been the case in Poland as well, where for many years the dominant cultural configuration has had an uneasy relationship to modernity.

When Polish modernizers reached their goal and plugged Polish society into European polity, with all its present challenges, it suddenly became clear that the Polish cultural substance is unable to nurture the intellectual tools required to face these challenges. The collective consciousness of the West is a multi-layered outcome of struggle with nationalisms, capitalism, secularization, subsequent waves of the political and social emancipation of different social groups, mass migration and urbanization.¹ The modern challenge has been worked through and reintegrated, while in the Polish case it has been rejected many times.

The intellectual history of Poland of the last two centuries can, in a somewhat reductionist nutshell, be summarized as follows. The modernists were confronting the self-appointed wardens of traditional community. This binary division had many permutations, as in the classic late-19th century controversy between

¹ Gerard Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity: A Historical and Political Sociology of Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Peter Wagner, *A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994); Peter Wagner, *Modernity as Experience and Interpretation: A New Sociology of Modernity* (Cambridge, Malden, MA: Polity, 2008).

the conservatives and the positivists.² More complex ideological figurations tried to productively overcome this dichotomy, always paying lip service to one of its poles but implicitly yielding to the other. Such skewed attempts to construct an integral but moving community may be traced in the modern nationalism of the early 20th century or the conservative modernization advocated by the liberal consensus of the 2000s.³ None of them was able, however, to let the Polish collective consciousness dwell on modernity in a durable way.

A rising awareness of this discrepancy urged many Polish authors to reconceptualize local struggles with modernity. This multi-register discourse produced on the margins of academe is in itself an interesting testimony to the most recent phase in the intellectual journey of the Polish community. The specific trajectory of Polish state formation, namely not passing through the Western-type absolutist monarchy, which facilitated the birth of modern capitalism and statehood, has been claimed as one of the reasons for the failed “struggles with the modern form.”⁴ Others have pointed to local collective identity being attracted to figures who artificially reinvented a noble-class past. In the second half of 20th century this was generalized in a way that offered a more inclusive, but fictitious, notion of citizenship, which at the same time maintained a local, homely specificity, epitomized in the spectral presence of the “childish” Sarmatian myth.⁵ The study of such early-modern residues was supplemented by insights into the recent non-history of emancipatory struggles.

Local political constituencies were allegedly deprived of historical agency. They were thrown into the whirlwind of violent social transformations against their will. This deprived them of sense-giving capacities, such as during the period of war, genocide, and revolution-from-above performed between 1939 and 1956. The result was a deep alienation from modern social forms.⁶ While other authors attempted to redeem various occurrences of bottom-up agency, such the 1905 Revolution or the first Solidarity movement of 1980, possibly to build a working myth of popular self-assertion, they nevertheless agreed that there had

² Jaszczuk, *Spór pozytywistów z konserwatystami o przyszłość Polski 1870–1903*; Kizwalter, “Nowatorstwo i rutyny”: *społeczeństwo Królestwa Polskiego wobec procesów modernizacji, 1840–1863*.

³ Tomasz Kizwalter, *O nowoczesności narodu: przypadek Polski* (Warszawa: Semper, 1999); Porter, *When Nationalism Began to Hate*; Rafał Matyja, *Wyjście awaryjne. O zmianie wyobraźni politycznej* (Kraków: Karakter, 2018).

⁴ Jan Sowa, *Fantomowe ciało króla: peryferyjne zmagania z nowoczesną formą* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2011).

⁵ Przemysław Czapliński, *Resztki nowoczesności: dwa studia o literaturze i życiu* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2011).

⁶ Leder, *Prześlona rewolucja*.

been a failure to transform these events into feasible political arrangements.⁷ The post-transition weakness of the state structure and its present encroaching disintegration under the auspices of national revival once more testify to the deficiencies of modern political establishments.⁸ Regardless of the historical accuracy of all these accounts, there is little doubt that Poland and the Poles, seen as a state, society, cultural identity or collective consciousness, were troubled when negotiating their status as objects of the modernization process and subjects mastering modern social, cultural and political agency.

Observing this struggle, we have been curious how modernity was actually negotiated on the ground. How the day-to-day polemics and down-to-earth social responses were forged, before they came to form the backdrop for the aforementioned intellectual exorcisms of the collective soul. Our interest has a specific, localized context. All of us at some point were confronted with an urban space that uncannily testified to a very specific attitude toward modernity as a historical experience and as a present challenge. Observing a city that embodied the vagaries of early industrial capitalism, and uneasy about a way out of it, we wanted to see how modernity was lived in such a place, in a city where modernity was not imagined, longed for and contested in advance, but where it certainly occurred, spurring on an uneasy attitude toward its various emanations. At the same time, local conditions stimulated many to seek solutions, a way out of the city's imperfect modernity.

There is no single narrative, let alone explanation, of modernity. Being and becoming modern is contested and renegotiated over time and there is no widely accepted understanding of what it means to be modern.⁹ Modernity carries a multi-dimensional potential—perpetuated by a never fully actualized promise of freedom as its “groundless ground”, only stimulating competing yet never complete programs that attempt to give meaning to the experienced world around.¹⁰ It seems likely that this world has been consciously designed; however, it is less predictable than ever. Thus, modernity remains on an “endless trial”¹¹ in which the actors involved face different possibilities and choose diverse ways of reach-

⁷ Wiktor Marzec, *Rebelia i reakcja. Rewolucja 1905 roku i plebejskie doświadczenie polityczne* (Kraków; Łódź: Universitas; Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016); Jan Sowa, *Inna Rzeczpospolita jest możliwa! Widma przeszłości, wizje przyszłości*, Warszawa (Warszawa: W.A.B., 2014).

⁸ Matyja, *Wyjście awaryjne. O zmianie wyobraźni politycznej*.

⁹ Jonathan Flatley, *Affective Mapping: Melancholia and the Politics of Modernism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Heller, *A Theory of Modernity*.

¹¹ Leszek Kolakowski, *Modernity on Endless Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

ing the goal, simultaneously using the concept of modernity as a narrative, and as a prospective framework.¹²

Such modern programs can have many emanations, often with contradictory ideological taints. Ideologies propelled by the communist project,¹³ technocratic lethal regimes, synthesizing regressive myths with mass destruction,¹⁴ forceful industrializations on the peripheries,¹⁵ ideas of a united Europe,¹⁶ or the welfare state (in both capitalist and socialist variants)¹⁷ were all generated by the overwhelming influence of the modern will to improve. All of them could be legitimately considered as actualizations of the desire to become modern. All of them constitute rather amorphous constellations of multiple modernities.¹⁸ Correspondingly, the plural struggles for sense and contested definitions of key concepts such as “progress”, “backwardness” or “civilization” for us have been a subject of scrutiny.

From this perspective, debates on the modern in Łódź display widely spread tendencies. The experience of urban modernity put European societies to a very difficult test, regardless of their peculiar contemporary situations and divergent historical experiences. As Eric Hobsbawm noted, “still, industrial work itself, in its characteristic structure and setting, and urbanization—life in the rapidly growing cities—were certainly the most dramatic forms of the new life; new because even the continuity of some local occupation or town concealed far-reaching consequences.”¹⁹ Against this backdrop, the case of Łódź at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was, despite all its specificities, quite typical. Later, however, the history of the city followed a distinct path of a rising nation state, state socialism and an abrupt transition in 1990.

¹² Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London; New York: Verso, 2002).

¹³ Augustin Stoica, “Communism as a Project for Modernization: The Romanian Case,” *Polish Sociological Review*, no. 120 (1997): 313–31; Johann P. Arnason, “Communism and Modernity,” *Daedalus* 129 (2000): 61–90; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*.

¹⁴ Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism* (Westport; London: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2003); Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

¹⁵ Leszczyński, *Skok w nowoczesność: polityka wzrostu w krajach peryferyjnych 1943–1980*.

¹⁶ Delanty, *Formations of European Modernity*; Göran Therborn, *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies, 1945–2000* (London; Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995).

¹⁷ Hennock, *The Origin of the Welfare State in England and Germany, 1850–1914*; Swaan, *In Care of the State*.

¹⁸ Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities*, 2002.

¹⁹ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848–1875* (London: Abacus, 1977), 246.

In four chapters we have travelled over one hundred years of urban history. In a series of vignettes we studied the discourses of modernity in an Eastern European industrial hub. Our guide through negotiated modernity on the ground was the local press, which always took the baton of being a counsellor and a sense-giving agency for the local population, albeit in varying registers, addressing the context of the day. This journey allowed us to see what modern experience really meant for the local polity and how it struggled to find its place in a changing world. This is an attempt to understand modernity in Eastern Europe, often seen solely through the lenses of capital-city-based urban reformers or clashes between occidental modernists and self-appointed wardens of traditional communities. This multi-temporal case study is to some extent a reversed mirror of the main current of this struggle. It offers a counter-picture, simultaneously allowing us to revisit the general framework of thinking and writing about modernity in Poland.

City from Cotton and Smoke

We have tried to rewrite the history of Polish modernity via local discourses in Łódź. We have reconstructed the urban modernity that was actively created in the process of making discursive self-descriptions. There are few cities in Europe in which historical development was so paradigmatic. Łódź encompassed crucial dimensions of the macro regional experience of the last century. Starting as an industrial city within the imperial framework, it passed through the inter-war national revival, post-Second World War state socialism and finally the post 1989-transition. Despite historical thresholds, brakes and significant population movements, its local urban history has been relatively continuous, allowing for cross-temporal comparison.

By no means was it homogenous, however. The local population was highly diversified and changed over time, epitomizing the inter-ethnic mixture typical for the region. The city was plugged in to the global spaces of flows, and re-plugged along with the profound geopolitical changes. As Stanisław Liszewski argued: “the impact of historical factors on the development of industrial Łódź is clearly visible in two aspects. The first is the city’s location, and its exposure to both Western and Eastern civilizations in the 19th century. The central location of Łódź enabled its inhabitants to quickly adopt technical improvements from the West and use them for competitive production destined for Eastern markets.”²⁰ The West and East met together not only on the ground of economics, but also in

²⁰ Stanisław Liszewski, “The Origins and Stages of Development of Industrial Łódź and Łódź Urban Region,” in: *A Comparative Study of Łódź and Manchester: Geographies of European Cities in Transition*, ed. Craig Young and Stanisław Liszewski (Łódź: Łódź University Press, 1997), 19.

the everyday life of the city. Considered a German city in the second half of the 19th century, Łódź was predominantly Polish and Jewish in the interwar period, only to become relatively homogenous, and Polish, after the Shoah and the post-war political changes. The turbulent history of the city is also a history of class.

For many years Łódź was considered the “Red City”, the bastion of the Polish working-class and socialist movements. Due to heated class conflict in the age of capitalist development in the 19th century, Łódź became known for its proletarian traditions after the Revolution of 1905.²¹ These traditions withered away firstly during forced Stalinization²² and secondly after the collapse of communism in 1989. Although the city was the site of one of the biggest worker protests in 1971, when women, the majority of the workforce in Łódź’s industry, forced the government to reduce food prices,²³ this success was completely forgotten in the tradition of the Solidarity movement. This is probably one of the reasons why the city, which lost its Eastern markets after 1989, did not receive any serious state support program in the 1990s, in sharp contrast to the shipyard workers from Gdańsk or miners from Upper Silesia.²⁴ This class and gender composition had its consequences for the built environment of the city and its image.

For a very long time the specific feature of the city was the contrast between different aspects of urban life. Without a doubt this was caused by the different temporality of most of the factors that determined the condition of the city. This is the city of asynchronous modernity. For instance, in the 19th century Łódź was where the first steam engines and electric streetcars in the Kingdom of Poland were introduced. At the same time the city was the biggest European urban area without a sewerage system, and local intellectual life was fairly limited too. As a result, it was characterized by Warsaw’s press as an “abominable concentration of factory buildings and warehouses,” without any cultural needs.²⁵ Amazingly, just two decades later in the same city the first museum of contemporary art in this part of Europe was established by Władysław Strzemiński. Nonetheless, not until 1945 did the state-level administration bother to open any public university in this the second biggest city in the coun-

²¹ Blobaum, *Rewolucja*; Marzec, *Rebelia i reakcja. Rewolucja 1905 roku i plebejskie doświadczenie polityczne*.

²² Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland*; Pobłocki, “The Cunning of Class: Urbanization of Inequality in Post-War Poland,” 118–20.

²³ Lesiakowski, *Strajki robotnicze w Łodzi 1945–1976*.

²⁴ Iza Desperak, Grzegorz Matuszak, and Marta Sikorska-Kowalska, *Emancypantki, włóknarki i ciche bohaterki. Znikające kobiety, czyli białe plamy naszej historii* (Pabianice: OMEGA Praksis, 2009).

²⁵ Stanisław Koszutski, *Ogniska przemysłowe*, “Prawda” 1900, no. 13.

try.²⁶ During state socialism this industrial city, with the smallest proportion of the population with higher diplomas became the informal capital of Polish cinema. It was also an important academic city with a significant group of leftist intellectuals who worked at the University of Łódź.²⁷ However, even then it was still considered as more provincial or simply less cultured than Warsaw or Cracow. If the status of a city in the nationwide imagination can be legitimately described in *longue durée* terms, then Łódź has been a place of ethnic, economic and cultural otherness.

This sense of inadequacy was established and reproduced by specific discursive practices. This “city from nothing” has generated a feeling of dissonance many times throughout the last two centuries. Established as a factory-town in the 1820s, the “city of cotton” as it was soon baptized was a “shock city”—a great urban center with all the problems that rapid capitalist urbanization triggered.²⁸ First considered as a “non-Polish town” by Polish authors,²⁹ the city was baptized as “the bad city” at the beginning of the era of modernity.³⁰ The curse of “bad city” and the trope of “otherness” in particular were often recirculated in Polish public discourse. There are dozens of novels, articles and papers reinforcing the city’s bad reputation written by different authors, journalists and researchers, from Noble prize winner Władysław Stanisław Reymont’s *Ziemia obiecana* [Promised Land] to more recently published lampoons, for example those by the young writer and columnist Tomasz Piątek,³¹ which were widely commented on by the local public. Some of the patterns that reappear in his descriptions are strikingly similar to those that have been in circulation for now over a hundred years.

These features may be referred to as a particular form of “unconscious” modernity within Polish historical self-awareness. Correspondingly, our goal has been to analyze how this discursive presence of Łódź as a modern city changed at four different historical moments, and how modernity was understood and contested within each of them. We have read the Polish struggle with the modern experience through these lenses.

²⁶ Agata Zysiak, *Punkty za...*

²⁷ Kaja Kaźmierska, Katarzyna Waniek, and Agata Zysiak, *Opowiedzieć Uniwersytet. Łódź akademicka w biografiach wpisanych w losy Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2015).

²⁸ Śmiechowski, *Z perspektywy stolicy. Łódź okiem warszawskich tygodników społeczno-kulturalnych (1881–1905)*.

²⁹ Oskar Flatt, *Opis miasta Łodzi pod względem historycznym, statystycznym i przemysłowym* (Warszawa: W drukarni Gazety Codziennej, 1853).

³⁰ Bartkiewicz, *Złe miasto: obrazy z 1907 roku*.

³¹ Tomasz Piątek, “Nie Łódźmy się,” *Dziennik Opinii* (2010), 20 September; <http://www.krytykapolityczna.pl/TomaszPiatek/NieLodzmysie/menuid-215.html>, accessed on 29.12.2017.

The Press is Back in Town

This four-fold panoramic view sheds light on the changing role the urban press played in local societies in the 20th century. The early press was an important vehicle of urban modernity as such. Its form expressed the fragmented urban experience and its content allowed urban dwellers to build new structures of sense, mapping out the dynamic world around them. Journalists demonstrated how the modern city works and what kind of infrastructure or institutions could accompany modern urban life. Catering mainly for a local economic and intellectual elite, the press connected local processes with objectivized forces present in the outside world, such as economic fluctuations or challenges posed by migration and urbanization. Even if the popular classes were not its main target, it also helped many to find their way around in the new environment and become modern subjects capable of understanding the surrounding world, or at least such were the ideas perpetuated by local journalists. In this respect the press in Łódź was not too hampered by censorship and assumed the same role as in other urban spaces in Europe.³² The newspaper as a material carrier of modern discourse was also an important part of the new urban lifestyle – the willingly bought subscription press regulated the days of the local bourgeoisie and papers displayed in coffee shops generated debate among their customers. The audience of the press was not very polarized politically and all titles promoted a form of modern metropolitan citizenship as the assumed community of their readers.

This convergence slowly dissolved with the emergence of the stronger presence of modern ideological languages. In the Polish case this change was more abrupt because of the abolition of censorship, but it was noticeable also in contexts with a more indiscrete state structure.³³ Rising modern political languages and emerging mass audiences contributed to the growth of an ideologized press that catered to mass political constituencies. The press adjusted to the “politics in a new key” when mass parties bid for the support of large groups of mobilized voters.³⁴ It ceased being a detached voice for the urban elite becoming instead a weapon to launch “fighting words” and mobilize active political communities on the spot. The press was also much more active in direct urban policy— legitimizing current decisions of the city council or harshly

³² Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*.

³³ Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic*.

³⁴ Carl E. Schorske, “Politics in a New Key: An Austrian Triptych,” *The Journal of Modern History* 39, no. 4 (1967): 344–86; Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848–1914* (Washington; Baltimore: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

criticizing them, and also serving an often inaccurate barometer of the popular mood for local politicians. Even if the press was obviously not written by the voters but by professional journalists, it was nevertheless treated as a proxy of popular mood by local notables.

This dynamic was to some extent reversed after the Second World War. The press assumed the mantle of a sense-giving device for the war-tormented population. Now, politicians no longer read the press to adjust their steps to the popular mood, but instead they tried to make journalists write things legitimizing the new ideological edifice. The new role of the socialist press was not only the result of an ideological grip executed by administrative power from above—it was also an outcome of a reopening of the future and hopes for an entirely new mode of social organization. Just as the 19th century press explained capitalism, now journalists were responsible for explaining socialism. This was a time of heightened historical agency—many had a feeling that they held the historical process in their hands. Thus, far more daring modernity projects could be debated with a reasonable hope of their forthcoming implementation.

This grip over reality had been completely lost by 1989. Just like the local population, journalists were puzzled by the new situation. Hope soon turned into disappointment, if not panic. The press became a soothsayer, trying to give some framework of action and consolation to people lost in the historical transformation. This time journalists were responsible for explaining capitalism; however, its coming was even more rampant than in the first analyzed period, and hardly negotiable. They tried to regain agency, or at least to understand their own inability to do so. Now, the political scene was more fractured and voices in the press seemingly plural. They shared a very broad consensus, however. All writers looked for a new regulatory mechanism of the municipal reality and social life in general. They found it mostly in the barely scrutinized logic of the free market. If they looked for improvement of an admittedly harsh reality, they leaned on a broader, very abstract narrative of historical necessity. This allowed them to justify the current state of affairs and believe that, if hardships were unavoidable, in the last instance there would be some improvement. The changing general role of the press corresponded with severe ideological shifts.

The composite presentation on the graph below indicates broader shifts of the ideological terrain. While initially modern narratives were limited to a broad, metropolitan discourse with its liberal and nationalist varieties, later a polarized conflict opened the way for more comprehensive and radical visions of nationalism and socialism. After the Second World War consensus shifted to the left which was additionally strengthened by socialist-communist domination. The post-1989 consensus, in turn, was marked by universal acceptance of a market economy and private property, with differentiation in respect to cultural liberalism.

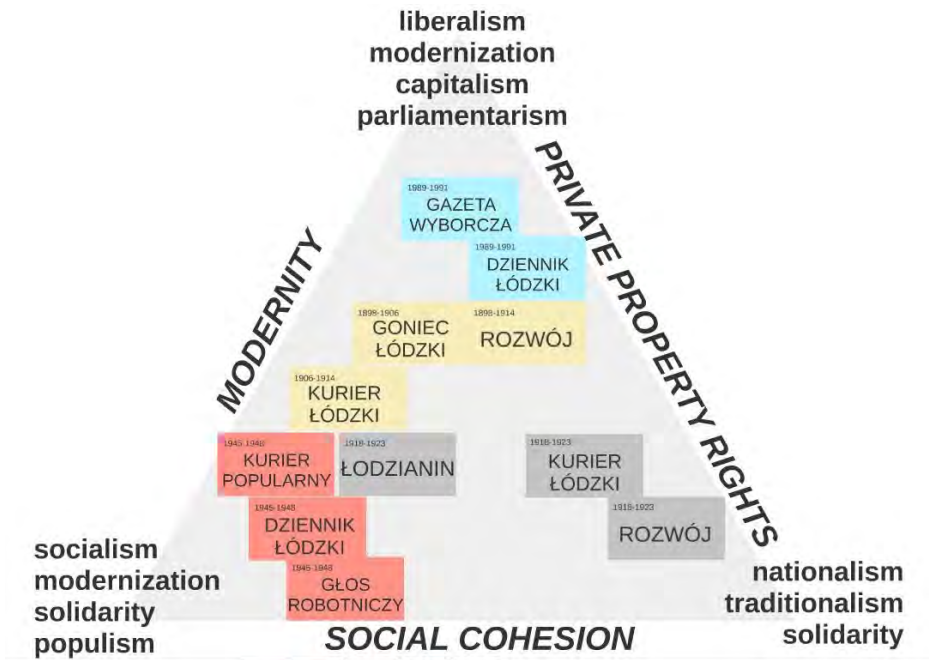


Figure S7. The ideological positioning of the local dailies in Łódź in the four periods investigated in the paper. Colors indicate contemporaneity (author: Agata Zysiak).

Narratives of Modernity

It was within those limits that narratives of modernity were forged, combining broader ideological visions, characteristics regarding the assumed mode of agency, a structure of time, and the will to improve in local circumstances. It is possible to observe a shift taking place in the 20th century from unspecified visions focused on urban space to community-focused projects. Later this incentive was seized by socialism, which aimed for a productivist urban community developed in time, an idea that would only be completely abandoned after its collapse. Whereas various domains of social reality were addressed by the discourse of the modern, its various instances were each very equally zealous in promising harmonious modernity – the state of fulfillment of the modern promise and keeping up with its cutting edge.

The subsequent graph summarizes how the domains of social reality addressed changed. Facing rapid industrial growth, early journalists attempted self-assertion as local elites via critique and construction. They diagnosed an “anarchy” of production, social relationships and spatial layout of the city. They envi-

sioned a community healed through infrastructure and ordered urban and social space in a manner that would make the desirable liberal, but also “Polonized” order and local citizenship, durable, just as the Victorian city had secured the values of British liberalism.³⁵ These narratives were underpinned by a nexus of a frightened diagnosis of the present and a tentative project of correction which produced a relatively unified *modern metropolitan discourse*.

As the new Polish state was crafted, highly antagonized, nationalist and socialist visions of the “good city” were grounded in very different narratives about the ordered community, as a highly policed nation, and an urban social community, respectively. Those visions were already more prospective, bold and all-encompassing. This corresponded with an assumption of a malleable reality finally under control and outspoken ambitions of “political languages in the age of extremes” as Willibald Steinmetz dubs it.³⁶ “Big” ideologies when hitting the ground had to adjust to local possibilities, however. Even if their local proponents could not transform urban reality at will, they tried at least to pay lip service to their broader agendas. This situation gave birth to the *discourse of antagonized urban communities*.

After the Second World War, the crafting of social and urban order was performed with a clear view of the socialist future. By anchoring their visions in a strong repudiation of wartime chaos and prewar capitalist disorder, local socialist journalists attempted to master time and reorganize vast arrays of urban life. Ordering it according to the paradigm of the plan, they aimed at a step-by-step advancement of the *transformative socialist vision*. Such a mode of reasoning staggered on for several subsequent decades only to unequivocally collapse after 1989.

Initially, a desired return to “the West” triggered high expectations that the city’s fate would change. This was for long comprehended in terms of a necessary dissolution of socialist irrationality and state-imposed disorder. It soon became clear that many of the partial solutions offered to save the urban economy and social tissue came to naught, however. There was no longer a place for any explicit narrative of order and its mantle was assumed by history itself, as a sequential “narrative” offering a sense for subsequent events just because of their occurrence. Regulation of urban polity was left to the market. Broader urban vision succumbed to a *market-based weak historical agency*.

In the broader overview presented above one can observe shifting areas of intervention over time. While critique of the deficient urban infrastructure and the spatial layout of the city are almost constant topics, there is also a temporal

³⁵ Otter, “Making Liberalism Durable: Vision and Civility in the Late Victorian City”; Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom*.

³⁶ Willibald Steinmetz, ed., *Political Languages in the Age of Extremes* (London: Oxford University Press, 2011).

variety. Some dimensions withered away along with an actual solving of historical challenges, epitomized by improvement in sanitary conditions. Not surprisingly, historical events such as wars and profound system changes intensified the experience of chaos (periods II, III and also IV). The threat of social unrest and reactive policing were significant in periods I and II when the labor movement was strong and radical, and conspicuously absent in periods III and IV, which signifies either consensus or domination, or both.

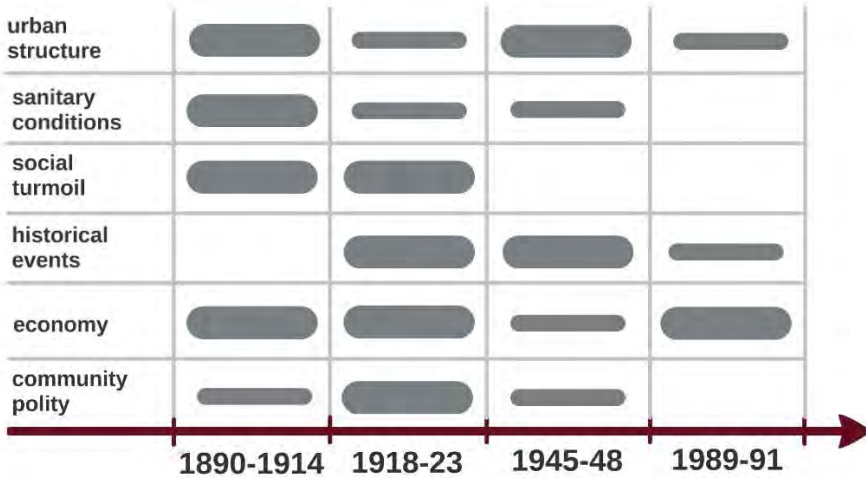


Figure 58. Domains of intervention. Areas of interest and activity which were scrutinized, subjected to critique or projected within the discourses of urban modernity in the four investigated periods. The size of the bar indicates their relative importance (author: Agata Zysiak).

The numerous domains addressed at any particular moment signify either high polarization of discourse (period II), or all-encompassing visions of change (*modern metropolitan discourse* and *socialist transformative vision* in periods I and III respectively). In turn, the low number of active domains in period IV corresponds to partial solutions and the disorientation of the *market-based weak historical agency*. Reading both graphs against each other adds to our knowledge of the profiles of dominating political languages. For instance, market liberalism from period IV clearly did not address the question of community, but revived economy as an important point of reference. This happened, however, with another vector than in period I. The economy was no longer a domain of chaos but a paradigm of social organization able to remedy discontent. Also, ideas of time change significantly.

Journalists perpetuating these succeeding narratives of modernity operated within different regimes of historicity. Writers at the turn of the century were faithful to a unilineal idea of progress and driven by the will to keep at the fore-

front. In the interwar period, however, there were a variety of attempts to envision alternative timelines. These would allow the aspiring newcomers to bypass developmental stages, and offered them new, more promising world hierarchies or simply allowed local populations to maintain what had been dear to them, but which was endangered by ruthless modernization.³⁷ Both integral nationalism, lurking behind the ideals of national capitalism, and socialism in its municipal version, offered some corrections to unilineal time.

Admittedly, in the Łódź press more radical corporatist ideas did not hold sway, but nationalists envisioned some form of alternative to global modernity. Even if they were virulently antisemitic, in terms of economic policies they remained on the center-right, not questioning the foundations of the capitalist order. Nevertheless, capitalism perpetuated by the moral solidarity of the nation promised to achieve prosperity and national strength beyond the vagaries of cosmopolitan markets. This did not involve jumping over historical stages but rather taking an alternative, side path, carefully weeding out unwanted elements, associated with ethnic otherness.

In turn, socialism not only promoted an alternative form of social organization, but also offered the promise of leaving behind the maladies of the peripheral condition. It is often assumed that Second International Marxism imagined a flat and homogenous time within which progress would take place. Nonetheless, what might have been the actual charm of socialism in Eastern Europe, especially after the Soviet project had taken off, was the promise of rapid, short-cut modernity.

This promise was put into practice after 1945. The postwar period saw a revival of the idea of linear progress, but now in two competing emanations—“modernization theory” of the decolonizing capitalist world and socialist alternative modernity. The local press embarked on the ideological project of renewal grounded in a prospective vision offering a straight path to the future. If in the first years it was a much more moderate idea, still busy with promising a simple renewal after wartime destruction, later it sped up to foster forceful industrialization.

It failed to deliver its promise and the “end of history” revived the occidental, unilineal thinking. Now, however, enthusiasm for “regained” liberal capitalism dissolved into resignation. The road was longer than expected, and the destination less flamboyant. Belief in time collapsed after 1989, what remained was awaiting the improvement to come after necessary predicaments.

³⁷ Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*; Dimou, *Entangled Paths towards Modernity*; Balázs Trencsényi, “Transcending Modernity: Agrarian Populist Visions of Collective Regeneration in Interwar East Central Europe,” in: *Regimes of Historicity in Southeastern and Northern Europe, 1890–1945 Discourses of Identity and Temporality*, ed. Diana Mishkova, Balázs Trencsényi, and Marja Jalava (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

METHODOLOGICAL APPENDIX

The book presents a cultural history of modern imaginations. It combines language-oriented approaches (conceptual history and elements of historical discourse analysis) with the social history of a particular city. Revealing the underlying structure of specific modern discourses and relating them to the process of modernization, it constitutes an attempt to build a historical sociology of urban modern discourse. Because of the interdisciplinary character of this project, we resigned from a coherent exposition of theory and methods. Relevant debates in modernity studies, urban studies and discourse theory were presented in the introduction, along with our understanding of language, the role of the press and its underpinnings in modern urban life. Whenever particular theoretical inspirations are important, they are indicated in footnotes within the text.

The empirical material for this book is the Polish-speaking press (mostly dailies) published during a period of just over a century. The chronological span of this work ranges from 1889 to 1994. The book focuses on a single language-based communicative space, which was by no means the only one in this multi-ethnic city, at least not until 1939. Such a decision enables us to read the single-language debate from within and uncover layered cultural imaginaries and a history of particular concepts active in shaping the debate. Unavoidably we present here an incomplete picture of a highly complex communicative situation, initially unfolding in the medium of at least four languages, with Yiddish playing for a while almost as prominent a role as Polish.

The origins of the polonophone sphere of debate, however, are worth studying because it became dominant throughout this area after 1918. While Yiddish and Polish might have had a similar status before the First World War (although there was no Yiddish press in Łódź before the 1905 Revolution), their relative weight certainly shifted afterwards. Relatively insignificant Russian debate vanished from the picture after 1915, too. Although the first daily press was published in Łódź in German, this language lost its significance along with the changing national composition of the local population in the 20th century, and entirely vanished after 1945. Thus, in order to allow us to coherently present the unfolding discursive space and directly compare periods, focus on one language (Polish) was indispensable. This by no means downplays the role of inter-discourse with other language-based spaces of debate – German and Yiddish in Period I and Yiddish in Period II. A multi-language analysis of the entangled modern debate would require another, differently profiled study. Admittedly, however, the presence of explicit inter-discourse in the Polish-speaking press is

relatively small. German and Yiddish papers and their coverage are very rarely made points of reference, even if there were certainly people with sufficient language competence among the editors, and sometimes even an inter-language mobility of journalists (especially of those of Polish-Jewish descent). At the same time, even if Polish journalists might have been intellectually socialized within multinational milieux such as Russian gymnasia or German-speaking coffee houses, they were not too eager to openly admit this indebtedness while assuming the mantle of national identity.

These interesting entanglements notwithstanding, we resigned from detailing authorship and personal and institutional matters, treating instead the press lore more as a Foucauldian archive, a set of utterances characterized by the patterned dispersion we tried to describe. Thus, we look for certain regularities, utterances that are homologous functionally, structurally and topically, constituting a regional discursive formation. We did not look for continuities and coherence in authors, opuses, or particular intellectual milieux.¹

Instead, this study presents the results of an extensive, systematic research into the Łódź local press. The research procedure included comprehensive press query of the major local dailies (2 or 3 titles for each period) and in addition weeklies for some periods. The queries covered four periods in the history of a single city. We focused on the years following major historic dislocation when debate on the future of the city and various projects of reform were most intense. Only the first period is broader, as this was the crucial time of the forging of the basic framework for the forthcoming urban debate. The periods of research were as follows: (I) 1897–1914, (II) 1918–1923, (III) 1945–1949 and (IV) 1989–1994.

The research team was composed of eight people, representing different research disciplines – history, sociology and cultural studies. The research team was split into sub-groups and for every period there were three people involved in the press query. At the first step, the major dailies were preliminarily studied day by day, in order to choose relevant articles. The chosen articles were those referring to projects of reform, of imagining the future or ideas of the modern city. The pre-selected articles were photographed and initial, broad sets of articles were built for each period. This group consisted of around 300 articles for each period – detailed numbers are presented below. Later the articles were read by three independent coders and assigned ranks, assessing their relevance for the research problem. Such cross checking assured intersubjective control over which articles were selected for the final stage of the analysis.

After summing up the ranks given by each coder, narrower sets of articles were selected. This group, ranging from 60 to 100 articles for each period, was

¹ Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” in: *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981); Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge Classics (London; New York: Routledge, 2002).

scanned and recognized to plain text (OCR procedure). The text files were checked against the originals to eliminate common typos and errors inhibiting further analysis. Texts prepared in this way were uploaded to qualitative data mining software that permitted basic lexicometrical analyses (QDA Miner with a WordStat package by Provalis Research). Within the software, databases with all the articles were created. Basic variables, such as date, press title, and main topic were assigned to each article. Later, qualitative analysis was performed.

All selected articles were coded according to the coding scheme by two independent coders and re-checked by a third. Coders applied open and closed codes to the texts. The code book included codes referring to the formal features of the analyzed discourse, its content and rhetorical strategies deployed in the text. Above all, coders marked fragments related to the formal mode of utterance of discourses of modernity—those presenting diagnosis of the situation, threats of modern life, proposed projects of change, reference points and prospective visions of the future. Apart from these formal features, fragments implying particular modes of agency were marked (as passivity, action, normative obligation, and call for action). The coders singled out actors described in the text (as workers, the city council, the state administration, Germans, Poles, Jews). They also marked the problems or realms to which this modern discourse referred (infrastructure, urban space, civic institutions). In addition, various ideas about the city were singled out, along with specific references to the modern condition (instability, need for legitimization). Additional codes were assigned to the presented imagined communities (class, nation, enlightened readers) and also to some key concepts (such as progress, modernity, chaos). The summary tables presented in the text are based on coded fragments for each period.

Moreover, such organization of the material allowed for various cross-tabulations. For instance, it was possible to check who the actors were who were described as responsible for particular challenges in urban life and how their presentation changed over time and in different analyzed titles. The assumed mode of agency of different actors could be checked just as could be the frequency of occurrence of various topics in ideologically polarized titles. The database enabled smooth topical analysis – for instance collating ideas regarding infrastructure in various periods or scrutinizing the dominating realms of modern change for each period. Additionally, important concepts could be analyzed as keywords in context—for instance helping us to understand what the historically embedded meaning of the concept of progress was and what the ideas usually accompanying its occurrence were.

The resulting study is a cross-temporal comparison of press discourse in a single city. Hence, the book is an untypical, four-facet case study. The sub-cases can be compared to demonstrate change in time. However, they are also interdependent as in every new period the older diagnoses and tropes were recirculated – not only because of intransigent features of urban life in an industrial city but also because of awareness of older depictions and debates.

PRIMARY SOURCES COVERED

Detailed composition of queries for each period is as follows:

Period I 1897–1914

This query focused on the time of rapid industrial development and urban debate on the rising modern industrial city within the Russian Empire. Because of the crucial importance of this period, which set the stage for later debates, we decided to cover all years, from the start of a regular daily press in Polish to the outbreak of First World War. The queries encompassed the period 1897–1914. The press titles investigated were the dailies *Rozwój* and *Goniec Łódzki*, which after 1906 changed its name first to *Kurier Łódzki* and later to *Nowy Kurier Łódzki*. 76 articles were selected for detailed analysis from the broader pool of ca. 350 articles covered.

Period II 1918–1923

This query was concerned with the debates that took place after the creation of the independent Polish state following the First World War and its direct aftermath, and encompassing the years 1918–1923. Thus, it refers to the urban debate that occurred within the emerging order of the interwar nation states. The starting point is November 1918, when Polish administration in the city was established, and the final date is delimited by the subsequent elections for the municipal council in May 1923. The titles analyzed were the dailies *Kurier Łódzki* and *Rozwój*, supplemented by the weeklies *Łodzianin* and *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi*. During the first stage, 275 articles were analyzed, more detailed coding included sixty-six records (63 articles – some of them appeared over the course of more than one issue).

Period III 1945–1949

This query encompassed the period starting from the relaunching of the Polish press after the liberation from Nazi occupation. It finishes at the moment when an initial limited political pluralism was replaced by tighter Stalinist censorship,

rendering the debate much less multi-vocal. Thus, this period covers the urban debate within the emerging state-socialist framework, typical of the post-Second World War order in Eastern Europe. The query covered years 1945–1949. During the first phase, 341 articles were analyzed. Detailed coding covered 67 articles from the following dailies: *Express Ilustrowany*, *Dziennik Łódzki*, *Kurier Popularny* and *Głos Robotniczy*.

Period IV 1989–1994

This query was focused on the press as it reflected on transition. The starting date is the reemergence of the commercial press in 1989. The research covered a period of five years up until 1994. Titles analyzed were the following dailies: *Gazeta Łódzka* (the local supplement to the nationally published *Gazeta Wyborcza*), *Dziennik Łódzki*, *Głos Robotniczy* (after 1990 renamed as *Głos Poranny*) 1990–1994; and the weekly *Odgłosy* 1989–1994. The broader pool for research comprised 738 articles (generally dailies published more articles of potential relevance due to the changing default format of the issue), 104 were chosen for more detailed analysis.

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