



THE OLD MARKET IN LODZ – A PLACE WITHOUT AN AXIOLOGICAL IDENTITY. CLASSIC AESTHETIC QUALITIES AS A TRANSFIGURATION POTENTIAL

Wioletta Kazimierska-Jerzyk

University of Lodz, wioletta.kazimierska@uni.lodz.pl

ABSTRACT:

The dramatic destruction of a large part of the Old Town in Lodz committed by the Nazis was compounded by the communist authorities that removed all the traces of its form and function. For that reason The Old Market, which was once the historical city centre, became useless and problematic. The aim of the paper is to analyse the current conditions of the experience of the urban space in this area. I'm going to point out the complex, contextual aspects of this experience and to emphasize the role of analysis using classical aesthetic qualities. The main task is to try to understand what kind of revitalization could transform this empty territory into the place.

KEYWORDS: Lodz, public space, memory, aesthetic experience, aesthetic qualities

RESUM:

La dramàtica destrucció d'una gran part de la ciutat vella a Lodz comès pels nazis es va veure agreujada per les autoritats comunistes que van eliminar totes les empremtes de la seva forma i funció. Per aquesta raó el vell mercat, que una vegada va ser el centre històric de la ciutat, es va convertir en inútil i problemàtic. L'objectiu del treball és analitzar les condicions actuals de l'experiència de l'espai urbà en aquesta zona. Assenyalaré els aspectes complexos, contextuals d'aquesta experiència i posar l'accent en el paper de l'anàlisi usant qualitats estètiques clàssiques.



La tasca principal és tractar d'entendre quin tipus de revitalització podria transformar aquest territori buit en lloc.

PARAULES CLAU: Lodz, espai públic, memòria, experiència estètica, qualitats estètiques

RESUMEN:

La dramática destrucción de una gran parte de la ciudad vieja en Lodz cometido por los nazis se vio agravada por las autoridades comunistas que eliminaron todas las huellas de su forma y función. Por esa razón el viejo mercado, que una vez fue el centro histórico de la ciudad, se convirtió en inútil y problemático. El objetivo del trabajo es analizar las condiciones actuales de la experiencia del espacio urbano en esta zona. Voy a señalar los aspectos complejos, contextuales de esta experiencia y hacer hincapié en el papel del análisis usando cualidades estéticas clásicas. La tarea principal es tratar de entender qué tipo de revitalización podría transformar este territorio vacío en lugar.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lodz, espacio público, memoria, experiencia estética, cualidades estéticas



The Old Market (Stary Rynek) is one of the most problematic places in Lodz. Although it is not the oldest area of the city nowadays, yet it is the very place where its urban organism began to develop in the 15th century (Stefański, 2011: 13-19; Małeck, Wojalski, Robak, 2011: 7-10). Therefore, it is hard to imagine why this area has been neglected, unused and even abandoned for many years. Despite radical, even visionary, changes occurring in Lodz (Łódź), the subsequent local governments have not had an idea for successful revitalisation of the area. Currently, in the framework of “Lodz Revitalisation Programme 2020+”¹, there are plans to, among others, reconstruct the street of Podrzeczna also in the section adjacent to the Old Market, as well as the square itself. The revitalisation will include works improving the transport network and infrastructure for organising mass events². There are no known plans that would at least to a small extent restore the memory, the identity and the role of the space as a centre characterised by a certain essence, life and aesthetic expression. Although historical values are not possible to recreate, it is likely that their permanent ignorance is the reason why transfiguration of this area into a place has not been successful since the post-war era redevelopment. It is these two concepts – of transfiguration and of the place – that I am going to use in this text to analyse the area within the Old Market and the current conditions of its experience. This will allow to combine the following observation perspectives: 1. to present this specific place (?) as an object of aesthetic experience, 2. to indicate the complex, contextual aspects of this experience, 3. to emphasise the usefulness of the analysis employing classical aesthetic qualities such as a the whole/the unity of composition, rhythm and appropriateness. Its main purpose is an attempt at understanding in what form the Old Market could keep the memory and elements of its former identity in modern times.

¹ “Local Revitalisation Programme of Lodz 2020+” is a tool to pursue the objectives of the Integrated Development Strategy Lodz 2020+ and other strategic programmes in the area of revitalisation, particularly “The Development Strategy for the Lodz Region 2020+”, adopted by Resolution XLIII/824/12 of Lodz City Council of 25 June 2012, pp. 1-48, online: <http://bip.uml.lodz.pl/plik.php?id=40419>.

² *Rewitalizacja Obszarowa Centrum Łodzi. Wstępny Plan Projektu 4 – Część Inwestycyjna (Revitalisation of Lodz Centre. Preliminary Project Plan 4 – Investment Part)*, the document prepared by the Revitalisation and City Building Development Office (Biuro Ds. Rewitalizacji i Rozwoju Zabudowy Miasta), pp. 1-4, online: uml.lodz.pl/get.php?id=8077.





Photo 1. The view of the square and the southern edge of the Old Market, the line of parked cars in the place of the missing frontage, photo by W. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, May 2015 & A. Remesar

The most difficult task in the case of the current Old Market is to briefly describe what we are dealing with. This market is “old” in name only as all the buildings come from the 1950s. In fact, it does not fulfil any functions of an actual market: no important roads crisscross here; there are no public administration buildings or other important buildings serving a religious purpose or of historical importance; it is not a place of daily meetings or recreation; it rarely becomes a place of assembly (the summer cinema is the idea which works out best here) or significant events. Finally, it is a housing estate in which residents are not seen on a daily basis. The lack of buildings along the southern edge of the square makes the arrangement of the surroundings illegible and the view opens up to the space which is unspecified in its quantity and quality (Photo 1). Can the Old Market be even called a place?³. A place is after all always for someone: it is felt mentally and somatically,

³ Describing and experiencing the city have been dominated lately by categories of *urban cultural studies*. These are concepts largely known from various humanistic discourses, but redefined and subject to reflection in different variants of meaning, adapted to the changing

which means that one is active in a place, understands its functions and structure. Finally, a place needs the determination of its twofold **meaning**. Firstly, in order to know the **context** in which one can or should be or act; secondly, to determine its **importance** in cultural hierarchies and social behaviour, e.g. whether and what kind of monument it is, whether it is functional or non-functional, private or public space, etc. It is certainly a rare situation when entering somewhere for the first time one sees everything at a glance, recognises the functions of the buildings, understands the topographical layout and step by step immerses oneself in the city. The so-called ideal cities, for example, Polish Zamosc (Zamość), can be admired this way. One cannot, however, experience that which is defined as a place of “embodied essence” in the Old Market in Lodz (Buczyńska-Garewicz, 2006: 13). This popular phenomenological definition of space as “embodied essence” means that the place is not just something physical (i.e. a territory), that it is created by a relationship between the person who is somewhere and for whom the territory becomes familiar and clear to understand. It is vividly illustrated by the photo that can be seen below, sent to me by Prof. Antonio Remesar (Photo 2) when we discussed the issue. I refer to it at the beginning of deliberations as the view was captured by an observer not entangled in the traumatic history of the place, a tourist visiting the city for the first time, yet at the same time a researcher and a careful user of public space.



Photo2. The panoramic view of the square, western and northern frontages of The Old Market, photo. A. Remesar, 2014.

Here is what we see: an almost undifferentiated row of three-storey buildings with ground-floor arcades and a sloping roof, trees partially obscuring the façades; it is difficult to figure out the function of the square, there are even no benches. The photo depicts also a “false panorama” suggesting the existence of a stately building with a tower in the northern frontage. The very photogenic, Neo-Gothic Church of the Assumption built on a hill dominates the landscape. It is, however, located in Plac Kościelny, approx. 120 metres

conditions of civilisation. Their main category is the place (Feld, Basso, 1996; Low, Lawrence-Zūñiga, 2003; Rewers, 2014).

away from the rather low, “intimate” and “small-town” buildings of the Old Market (Sumorok, 2010: 183-184). There are almost no people here, at noon or in the evening. One can see it looking at the shadows of the buildings in this and other photographs (Photos 1-3). Single individuals traverse the square quickly, heading towards tram stops or other places in the city. Prof. Remesar has noted that while visiting the place he did not venture onto the surface of the market at all. Although the Old Market was found on his list of obligatory places to visit, it failed to interest or attract the visitor.



Photo3. The view of the eastern frontage of the Old Market, photo by W. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, May 2015.

Perhaps one should therefore use a more precise definition of the place or even another term to characterise this area. The first group of concepts which can be invoked is related to the diversity of meanings referring to the word “place”. The Old Market is definitely not the so-called reflective place, i.e. the one co-created by a particular group of users and their behaviour. It happens to be, however, the so-called singular place (Zimpel, 2013: 136-7). A Wi-Fi network, organised in the framework of the civil budget, has been active here since last year but there is no infrastructure (tables, benches, shelters) that would facilitate its use.

Therefore, it is difficult to consistently call this area a non-place, taking into account the fact that the Old Market comprises not only the square but also the adjacent streets and buildings. The square itself – according to the characteristics of Marc Augé (Augé, 2010: 75-115) – currently exists only to be passed by and is almost devoid of symbolic forms (the stone commemorating the city rights is hardly visible). Historically, however, it was completely different. After the founding of the city on the Magdeburg Law, the market

square was the site of weekly markets and two major annual fairs. Over time it became the main commercial square of Lodz (Photo 4).



Photo4. The marketplace in the Old Market in Lodz before 1925, photo of the State Archive in Lodz, cat. no. Ł-1 3/2.

Similarly to several other, less regular squares in the neighbourhood, it buzzed with the life of an overpopulated, poor district which owed its flavour to the Jewish community. Its descriptions can be found in few remaining recollections:

Arnold Döblin: *“The street is crowded with Jews; the further north we go the more we see. They’re wearing high fur caps and black cloaks, black yarmulkes. Thick beards and bushy eyebrows. Their hands in pockets and legs in high boots...*

The old town: narrow streets and crooked houses... Lots of kids; the ground is flopping” (Spodenkiewicz, 2006: 35).

Lajb Praszkie: *“One should have seen the old town, its poverty. The pulse of life. The trade. The warehouses. On Łagiewnicka and Pieprzowa streets. There was also huge market called Jojne Pilicer Square, where baking shops were. In the area between Wolborska 20 and Wschodnia 2, there was Szachermark. There you could buy used suit or old shoes, resoled and refurbished, which would fall apart after two weeks. Junk. Further there were shops with poultry. As it was very crowded there, they built another shop on the corner of Północna streets. On the opposite site, which is an empty square now, they would sell fish. Just next to it, there was stalls with herring. You would never imagine how much herring there was. Everybody would have 10 to 20 barrels; herring and other fish, whatever you wanted’ (Spodenkiewicz, 2006: 35).*



Photo5. The strolling square in the Old Market in Lodz in the years 1925-1939, photo from Portal dokumentalno-historyczny fotopolska.eu, cat. no. 102435.



Although only the southern frontage belonged to the Jewish quarter established in 1825, the tsarist law allowed more affluent Jews (provided they spoke Polish, German or French and sent their children to a public school) to reside outside the designated area (Małecki, Wojalski, Robak, 2011: 29). In the 1920s, when the marketplace was transformed into a strolling square (Photo 5), the Old Market was invariably marked by the dynamics of a craft and commercial district, packed with shops situated not only on the front ground floors but also in courtyards and on higher floors (Małecki, Wojalski, Robak, 2011: 44). People traded a variety of services, including prostitution and hired labour (Rakowski-Kłos, 2014: 310). This interwar place acquired its own legends: “this square with its trees and benches in the Old Market was called Froim Luzer gurten or Tapgurten. ‘Gurten’ in Yiddish means ‘garden’ or ‘square’, ‘tap’ derives from the verb ‘tapen – ‘to paw’” (Spodenkiewicz, 2006: 35).

The sensual characteristics of the place are of particular note, rich in ambiguous – full of delight or depressing – descriptions of colours, smells, sounds and behaviour. In any case, it was an expression of the rich, polysensory experience of which absolutely nothing has survived to our times (Rakowski-Kłos, 2014: 305-316).

The historical location of the Old Market cannot be overstated. It was situated at the so-called Piotrkow Tract, connecting in a straight line the most dynamic older towns in the region: Łęczyca – Zgierz – Piotrków Trybunalski. Along this axis (after the regulation of the city's build-up at the beginning of the 19th century), the New Market (Nowy Rynek) and the settlement of New Town (Nowe Miasto) were delineated south of the Old Market in the years 1821-1823 (Stefański, 2001: 34-39). It was then that the main street of Lodz – Piotrkowska – was created and in 1898 the tram line number one was launched, connecting the Church Square (Plac Kościelny), the Old Market, the New Market as well as – via Piotrkowska – the Upper Market (Górniak). The Old Town was thus situated on the main road, the best and fastest transport route to the rich, growing part of the city, as well as the quickly increasing population of the district of New Baluty (Nowe Bałuty), delineated along the extensions of the Old Market streets. The Balucki Market (Rynek Bałucki), which took over as the main food market, had a tram connection with Zgierz already in 1901 (Małecki, Wojalski, Robak, 2011: 39). Currently, the tram lines (number 46 and 40) running besides the Old Market and connecting important transport nodes continue to provide good public transport in the area of Lodz and outside the city.

However, it can be said that it is a through route which is used only to reach more attractive places.



Photo6. The view of the Old Market with the statue of Julian Marchlewski (1964), authors Elwira and Jerzy Mazurczykowie), reproduction of the communist era postcard.

Since plans of a new centre have failed to materialise in Łódź after World War II (Sumorok, 2010: 98), during the period of the Polish People's Republic⁴, the Old Market fulfilled the function of one of smaller centres of political life, meetings, mass rallies and parades. Similarly to other squares, it was to serve as a propaganda message, supposedly to create public space characteristic of urban centres but also ideological in its nature, which was usually emphasised by monuments (Sumorok, 2010: 116). The monument of socialist activist Julian Marchlewski and workers, basically not integrated with the city's history, was unveiled here in 1964 (Photo 6). The monument survived only until 1989. After

⁴ The Polish People's Republic (Polish: Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa) was the official name of Poland until 1989 according to the Constitution issued by the communists in 1952.



changes of the political system, the empty square became useless, in addition, it sank into oblivion as a product of the previous system, a symbol of the vision of the communist authorities that intended to completely erase the memory of the past of the historical city centre (Sumorok, 2010: 183). Nowadays the Old Town is called a “missing district” or “lost quarter” (Spodenkiewicz 2006; Gruda 2014) and its scale model can be seen on display at the Museum of the City of Lodz. Currently, the market square has significantly emptied and become silent – as non-places do – but unlike non-places it has become problematic. One does not know how to use it. The experience of this area is primarily a sense of meaninglessness, inexplicable apathy, atrophy of action, as well as embarrassment both about the undeveloped gap in the very centre of the city and about the clumsy attempts at the restoration of memory, traces of which can be encountered in Park Staromiejski (Leśniak, 2010: 319-326). After destroying in effect all the successive layers of the historical fabric and replacing them with substitutes, a sense of historical time has become fractured. By creating an oasis of non-functionality, a sense of the current time has been also destroyed (Castells, 2010: 460-499). The street lines and the name, however, have been left intact in the Old Market area. This, in turn, evokes the characteristics of contemporary spaces presented by Michel Foucault who thought that “contemporary space is perhaps not yet entirely desacralised – unlike time (...). And perhaps our life is still dominated by a certain number of oppositions that cannot be tampered with, that institutions and practices have not ventured to change – oppositions we take for granted, for example, between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful, between the space of leisure activities and the space of work” (Foucault, 1999: 177). In the Old Market, this fear is exposed by the impressions of a contemporary recipient as well as a lack of consistency of builders of the socialist realism period. The square devoid of function makes a person feel rather strange being here. Someone who stands in the middle feels a bit like an object of observation or an intruder and wants to avoid the impersonal gaze of identical windows as soon as possible. It is quiet, as if private, and rather sterile. The Old Market is also almost untouched by street artists – in contrast to the neighbouring buildings located at 2/4 and

6/12 Podrzeczna, which are part of the same housing estate, that have been completely appropriated by graffiti creators (Photo 7).



Photo. 7. The buildings of the Old Town housing estate at 2/4 and 6/12 Podrzeczna, photo by W. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, May 2015

Despite the great desire to erase the traces of the past, they did not decide, for example, to double the size of the square in order to create the preferred space for propaganda spectacles or saturate it with communist symbols. Although this reduced modernism may be regarded as such a symbol. It is not so invasive, however, as the said monument of Marchlewski. The intimate scale of the buildings as well as the square, which is optimal for our sharpness of vision and focusing capabilities and which could allow one to feel at home here, was thus adopted (Gehl, 2011: 155). It does not work, however. As the Old Market – contrary to its name – does not sparkle with the life of the privileged centre of the Old Town, there arises a great temptation to seek an explanation of the impasse in Foucault's heterotopias as they are real emplacements which “are at the same time



represented, contested and reversed” (Foucault, 1999: 178). The problem is that the manner in which real places function is not always obvious, homogeneous, characterised by a single function, etc. However, the experience of the place which is observed here has no internal motion so characteristic of – as Foucault defines heterotopias in other words – contre-emplacements. Thus, following the principles of heterotopia (Foucault, 1999: 178-185), it can be noted that:

- (Principles 1 and 2). It is very easy to be found inactive in the Old Market. Barely a few minutes is enough to learn about the area and its details. This inaction is not, however, endowed with any special meaning or function, it is rather ridiculous and not deviant. It is as a paltry joke: one visits the heart of the Old Town which does not exist (neither the heart nor the Old Town). In fact, there has never been an administrative district of the Old Town of Lodz. Today, the Old Town is one of many housing estates distinguished for the purpose of street marking⁵.
- (Principle 3). The square and three frontages are – similarly to heterotopias – spaces incompatible with one another but – unlike them – they are not juxtaposed but just exist next to one another. The buildings along the adjacent streets are not integrated with the square, they are essentially part of a housing estate with its back turned to the square as people do not come into their homes from the side of the arcades where not very popular (unfortunately) commercial entities are located.
- (Principle 4). Multiple layers of time are illusory here as the buildings are lent classic forms of the Renaissance variety. They will not take us back in time, we will not trust their costume as Lodz of the 15-16th centuries was rural and its buildings were wooden and sparse. Time, therefore, has stopped in the Old Market, it has shrunk. In addition, it is not known when exactly in history time stopped as the Renaissance identity of the contemporary, growing rich bourgeoisie was reflected

⁵ According to the division, the city is made up of 56 housing estates – the so-called areas of the City Information System in Lodz.



in diverse façades of townhouses whose owners competed for their aesthetic superiority.

- (Principle 5). It seems that we encounter here a specific type of openness and closure. This is guaranteed by the supposedly missing frontage and a “wall” of park greenery as well as the feeling of being an unwelcome guest. However, ultimately it is easily accessible public space and it is difficult to say that this space ends or begins somewhere or sometime. Lodz residents constantly ask themselves if someone will construct this missing section of buildings or not.
- (Principle 6). In terms of the relationship with the rest of the space, there is no illusion here of an elegant place (it is often said that its main advantage is its cosiness), or an area created to compensate for the loss of the historical old town or the undeveloped downtown district (it is worth noting that in the last administrative division in which districts existed (1960-92), the Old Market belonged to the district of Bałuty, not to the Downtown (Śródmieście)). The neighbourhood does not form the surroundings of the square, it is disconnected aesthetically, functionally, behaviourally from it (Buczyńska-Garewicz, 2006: 27).

Therefore we deal here rather with emptiness, the anti-city and the social anti-space (Kociatkiewicz, Kostera, 1997: 77). Façades, which should be considered elegant, have indeed symbolical, pseudo-historical character. However, the fact that the individual axes are undifferentiated (not taking into account the avant-corps) promotes their anonymous, uniform reception. It does not serve the individualised use, the creation of an attractive, distinctive place. It is also surprising that this functional part does not serve residents. They do not use it (as was originally expected) to perform ordinary activities: making small purchases, taking advantage of different services, going for a walk, taking a short break on a bench, etc. Thus they do not build a community based on spending time together and emotions connected with it (Nawratek, 2014: 81).

Referring to the terminology proposed by Jan Rabiej, today's Old Market can be described as architectural and urban transfiguration based on destruction and creation (Rabiej, 2013: 71-83). It is obvious that the dramatic destruction of a large part of the Old Town committed by the Nazis was compounded by the communist authorities that removed all the traces of its form and function (apart from the outlines of the streets but only along



the square (see Maps 1-4). That alone could be enough of an explanation of the tragedy of this place. However, this does not justify the subsequent long-term helplessness and inaction, the lack of ethical responsibility for nurturing the non-memory, for the slow devastation. The Association of Friends of the Old Town, operating since 2003 and located here, unsuccessfully strives for its revitalisation.

The concept of transfiguration will prove to be – in my opinion – helpful to understand this situation. First of all, one can more effectively deal with the problematic issue of the transformation of the Old Market by analysing the meaning of the compound in the word “trans-figuration”. When our thought is focused on the term “figuration”, we think about that which has been transformed and, consequently, whether – in fact – such transformation has taken place at all or transplantation of new forms has only occurred. When the attention is focused on the prefix “trans”, one can see its double meaning: 1. “through” 2. “beyond”. Therefore, a transatlantic cruise can mean the crossing of the waters of the Atlantic but also a transfer to the opposite shore (Kazimierska-Jerzyk, 2010: 53-63). Thus, using transfiguration one can “sail” or “leap”. The Old Market witnessed a “great leap”. Therefore, considerations concerning the transformation of architecture as transfiguration allow one to pay attention to that which is transformed as well as to how it undergoes this process. Finally, transfiguration is also the medium of this experience. The most famous of such descriptions in aesthetics was formulated by Arthur C. Danto (Danto, 1981). He referred it to the issue of transformation of ordinary objects into works of art. Nevertheless, this concept is useful in reflections on all kinds of experience in which understanding and experiencing something precedes our concept of this thing and then demands its revision. This is the case with the Old Market. When one visits it, thinking about the centuries-old tradition of urban planning in European cities, nothing seems to be right. This comparison of morphological characteristics of similar objects is the basis of our interpretative effort and at the same time the first contextual factor of interpretation based on transfiguration. Thus the irritating nature of the Lodz market attracts attention, demands understanding, justification. Given this very need, one may also refer to yet another feature of the experience of space – the atopy (Gregotti, 1996: 75-82; Dziuban, 2009). According to the promise made by Hans G. Gadamer: “So all efforts at trying to understand something begin when one comes up against something that is strange, challenging, disorienting” (Gadamer, 2007: 93). Let us see what other contextual factors



of the experience of transfiguration invite us to think about this part of the city instead of abandoning the thought about it. The second factor is an interdependent interpretation of the object and its name. This particular proper noun – the Old Market – is a promise not only of a specific structure but also familiarity of the place. Thanks to this name we know (or should know) where we are. This familiarity is constituted primarily by objects. I refer here to Heidegger's relational nature of place which indicates that it is not the place which determines the existence of objects but rather the other way round (Heidegger, 1971: 152). First there was a road and a river, then a customs house and a watermill built along them. Thus an attractive place for social life, which later became the town that absorbed the nearby village of Lodz, was created (Małecki, Wojalski, Robak, 2011: 10). Nowadays nothing in the Lodz market tells about this history or justifies its name in any sense. The role that the so-called primary transfigurations, not necessarily related to the architectural structure itself but rather to the geographic location and the ecosystem, play in blocking the experience should be noted (Rabiej, 2013: 65-68). Perhaps the fading of this place started when in 1863 the natural and supposedly charming southern border of the Old Town, i.e. the mill pond called Staw Dworski on the Ostroga River (nowadays the Lodka (Łódka) River) was filled in due to factory contamination. In 1916, the Lodka River was built over, changing into a strolling square. Today, this river which helped in the establishment of the city, its first dyeworks and breweries, as well as posh (paid!) Helenów Park (1885), is a sewage ditch made into a canal in its middle section (Bieżanowski, 2001: 27-36; Springer, 2013: 11-140), and a Google map suggests that there is only “an imitation of Lodka” in Lodz (see Maps 1,3,4). The name “Old Market” means an “old town market square”, which does not exist in the experience of Lodz residents. Mistakenly they derive the name of the city from the Lodka River and not from the village from which the city and the main river took their names over time. They do not know either what the central square of the city looked like. Serious publications reproduce images of the famous Moorish synagogue Alte Szil and the adjacent separate, irregular, small square (formed at the intersection of streets meeting at a wide angle) as the view of the Old Market (Photo 8). The name “Old Market” requires a certain important reference in residents'

awareness. However, linking it ultimately with the place and the historically correct interpretation is not possible without detailed archival guidelines.



Photo. 8. Lodz – the Old Synagogue, the so-called Moorish Synagogue in Wolborska, photo of the State Archive in Lodz, cat. no. 62/109; Archive of Włodzimierz Pfeiffer, cat. no. 22.



The interpretation based on transfiguration should also take into account the singularity of the creator of the work (the third contextual factor), that is his or her intentions, the characteristic way of shaping the structure of the work. The authorship of the current form of the market belongs to the Department of Workers' Housing Estates (Zakład Osiedli Robotniczych – ZOR). It was the only centrally managed investment authority in the field of multifamily housing in post-war Poland. The works in Lodz were managed by Warsaw architect Ryszard Karłowicz that designed a section of the Workers' Housing Estate No. 6 as an element of the doctrine of socialist realism. He designed (along with Kazimierz Goławski) the square as well as the eastern and northern residential buildings. The western frontage was constructed last according to the plan created by Lodz architect Edmund Orlik, essentially reproducing the previous schemes (Sumorok, 2010: 183). Typified, pseudo-historical, devoid of details “small houses” from “the land of ZOR” (Sumorok, 2010: 169) do not encourage one to get to know the visions of their creators. The plans were not fully realised either. First of all, they were deprived of infrastructure and public buildings as a result of economic factors, therefore the authorship is to some extent irrelevant (Sumorok, 2010: 131, 183). The Old Market generally has not had much luck in terms of important buildings, heroes or urban legends. King Władysław Jagiełło, the nominal founder of the city, whose statue was even designed in one of the attempts at the renewal of the Old Market (2008), has nothing to do with its shape. Everyone also knows that Rajmund Rembieniński, the president of the Commission of the Mazowieckie Voivodeship, was the creator of industrial Lodz. He created the concept of the New Town and the New Market, only tidying up the Old Market buildings. If one was to search for an author who influenced the face of this area of the city, this could be famous Warsaw architect of Italian origin Henryk Marconi [1792-1863], the author of many elegant buildings of the first half of the 19th century. However, for Lodz he only designed (Stefański, 2009: 120-121) bakery and butchers' shambles in 1840-1841, which no longer exist (Photo 9). They were supposedly the “real pride” of the Old Market (Małecki,

Wojalski, Robak, 2011: 30) but above all the symbol of the district, its vibrant, commercial and service providing nature.



Photo. 9. Stalls in the Old Market, the view of bakery and butchers' shambles in the western frontage of the Old Market (1840-41), architect Henryk Marconi, photo of the State Archives in Lodz, cat. no. Ł-I 3/5.

It was not Marconi that was its creator but a boundless crowd coming and going here every day, co-creating its atmosphere. The houses were similar to each other and other shambles in nearby streets formed a natural part of the cityscape. It was not individuality that created the Jewish quarter but repeatability and diversity mingling with a kind of monotony. Thus, one enters another context of the experience, that is the location of the work in history. According to Danto's suggestion, it would involve more than only the reconstructing of a succession of historical events and their consequences. Let us establish that it is not getting to the truth about the subsequent transformations of the Old Market that is at stake in the experience of transfiguration of the Old Market but the discovery of its inner essence which does not allow one to completely forget about the place and does not leave one indifferent. The historical context is not entirely external to the essence of the place, it penetrates its inner essence (Danto, 1981: 36). Why does Lodz need to have the Old Market since it is neither old nor a market, as it has had for a long time the older New Square – the Freedom Square (Plac Wolności) and Piotrkowska which other cities do

not have? Because it exists due to some inner necessity, contrary to all the rules. Its frail, mismatched, unfinished status reminds us that there is still some work to be done here, something to make up for, to complete. The aesthetic paradoxes of today's experience of this place reveal violations of these rules. They are compatible with what Danto called the causal history of the work (the last contextual factor of interpretation based on transfiguration):

- The attractiveness of an urban market is usually measured by multi-layered diversity of wealth, taste, cultural competence, aspirations of respective owners and builders. Socialist builders standardised the appearance of the “Old Town” façades but did it under the slogan of “palaces for the people”. Imitating the aura of a historical monument, they introduced historicising elements. Thus, they distinguished in a democratic manner (sic!) tenants of all the flats (incidentally quite comfortable for those times). Nowadays, we would call it vintage rather than timeless, pan-classical beauty (Sumorok, 2010: 22, 43-44).



Photo. 10. The arcades of the northern frontage of the Old Market, photo by W. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, May 2015.

- It was suggested then that the style was chosen in reference to the said Marconi shambles. The hypocrisy of the authorities at the time consisted in the fact that the building, which survived wartime destruction in a very good condition, had been demolished in 1948 (Stefański, 2009: 120-121; Sumorok, 2010: 183). At the same time they promoted the Old Market as the Lodz Cloth Hall, referring to the famous Renaissance cloth stalls in Cracow (Urbankiewicz, 1968). In addition, the coffered ceilings of Lodz arcades were glamorised by associations with equally unmatched Hall of Deputies at Wawel Castle (compare Photo 10). However, they did not trade in cloth in the Old Town shambles but in food. Houses of clothiers were built in the New Town. That fake monument produces in effect the feeling of artificiality as well as inappropriateness.
- The rhythm of the arcades is related to the tectonics of ground floors of all the three frontages. The functions of premises should reinforce the meaning of this form. The aesthetic emphasis in the form of the rhythm of the arcades, which are the only decorative element, does not lead, however, to attractive premises or



Photo. 11. The arcades of the northern frontage of the Old Market, photo by W. Kazimierska-Jerzyk, May 2015.

open to beautiful views. The monotony of the arch entrances paradoxically creates a sense of amorphousness not order.

- The lack of the southern frontage completes the feeling of absence of a specific form. The market does not have its own identity as it is not seen as a whole. The instrument of this completeness could be the unity of detail but with such an intimate size and close proximity to the recipient, it gives the impression not of ornament but unfinished austerity (Photo 11).

The Old Market is picturesque only from the distant, panoramic, landscape perspective (Photo 12). It is difficult to decide to what extent this view was an expression of the politicised concept of landscape (Williams, 1973: 120-126) as we are not dealing with the city section created strictly according to plans.

- The opening of space was planned where it had been the most severely closed. On the western extension of the southern frontage over Zgierska, there was one of the wooden bridges that connected the various parts of the ghetto in German-occupied Lodz separated by extraterritorial streets (Photo 12). This view was the

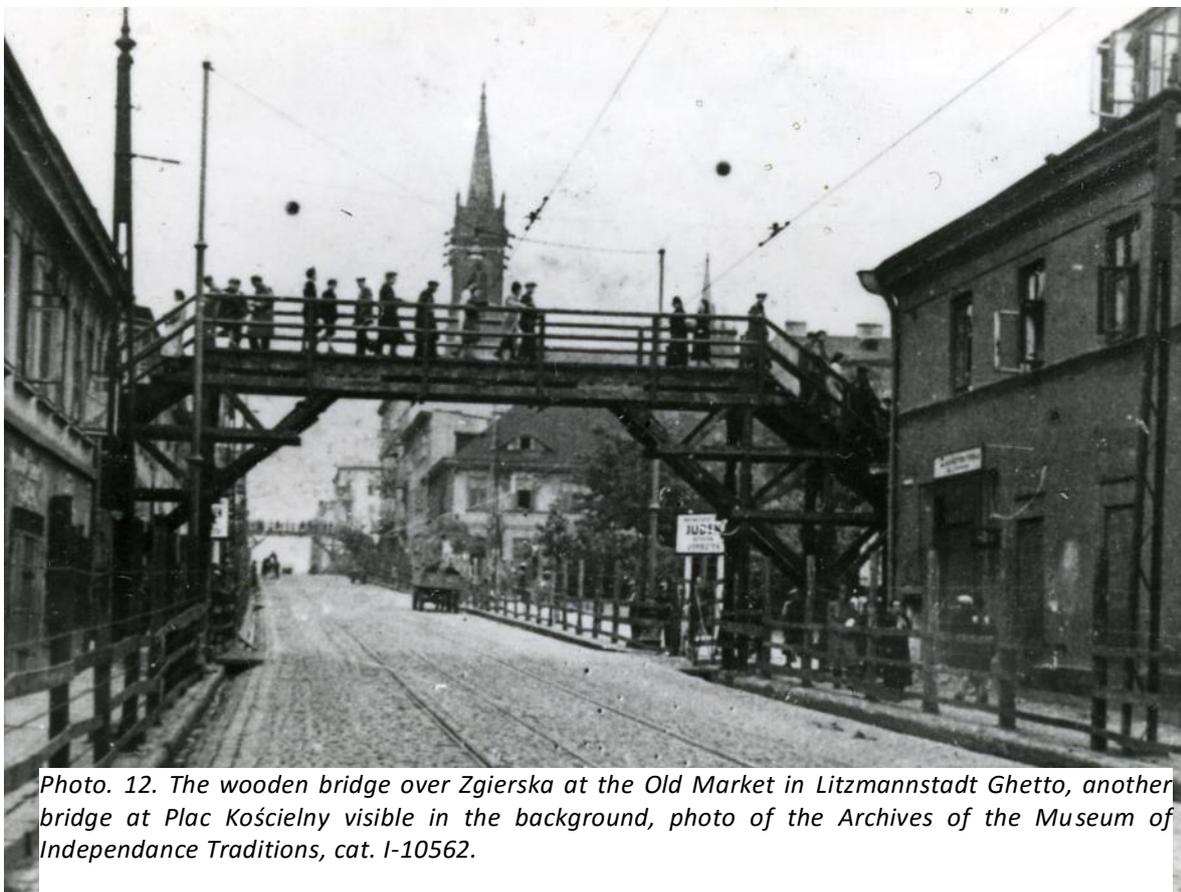


Photo. 12. The wooden bridge over Zgierska at the Old Market in Litzmannstadt Ghetto, another bridge at Plac Kościelny visible in the background, photo of the Archives of the Museum of Independence Traditions, cat. I-10562.



symbolic southern gate of no return for Litzmannstadt Ghetto, reflected like an echo in the next, twin footbridge at the aforementioned Church of the Assumption. At the opposite end of the southern frontage, there was another symbol of the Holocaust – an empty square left after Alte Szil Synagogue was demolished in 1939. Its colourful façade, arcades, horseshoe arches and intricate detail juxtaposed with a dry truss of ghetto bridges create the most symbolic and visual contrast in the memories of the Old Town. The axis of the street where the views could be seen is today the most neglected place within the boundaries of the Old Market, a temporary car park. Nothing more.

Even low activity of social animators and creators of culture in the Old Market draws in people in a few moments, whole families come, willingly participating in workshops and discussions. Then one can see that it is a housing estate. Lodz Urban Forms Foundation, implementing here in the summer of 2014 the project entitled “The Old Market: restART”, conducted a survey among residents about the new arrangement of the space of the Old Market. The most popular was the idea of “an integrating square” whose task would be “to integrate people with different interests and to provide the opportunity to meet the needs of a broad target group” (*Raport...*, 2014: 18-21). Another popular idea was to give the place to art and artists (*Raport...*, 2014: 22-25). I have thought for a long time now that not an equestrian statue or a glass office building but an autonomous to some extent artistic concept is a way to save this place. I imagine that the southern frontage could be recreated, not necessarily in the form of residential or commercial buildings but in the form of installations, a combination of sculptures and greenery or park architecture whose form would fulfil the following functions: (1) it would close this space so that it could regain the form of the market through the structure as well as the impression of completeness; (2) it would open the road from the south-west corner of the market towards the non-existent synagogue; (3) it would give a meaning to the existing rhythm of the arcades so that they would cease to be just empty holes and would provide this space with the pulse of life, which necessitates – I think – a reference to the theme of the arcades in the missing frontage (which does not mean their literary reproduction). I would entrust the façades to the creative cooperation between the conservator and artists involved in street art who – similarly to Gdańsk along Ławnicza, Ogarna and Szeroka

(Photos 13, 14) – would create successful identification of individual townhouses in the form of wall decorations and various aesthetic details (Kołodziej, Mrozek, 2015). I suppose that in Lodz this task could be extremely rewarding as there is no lack of historical sources or literary descriptions that would facilitate a creative contact with the past.

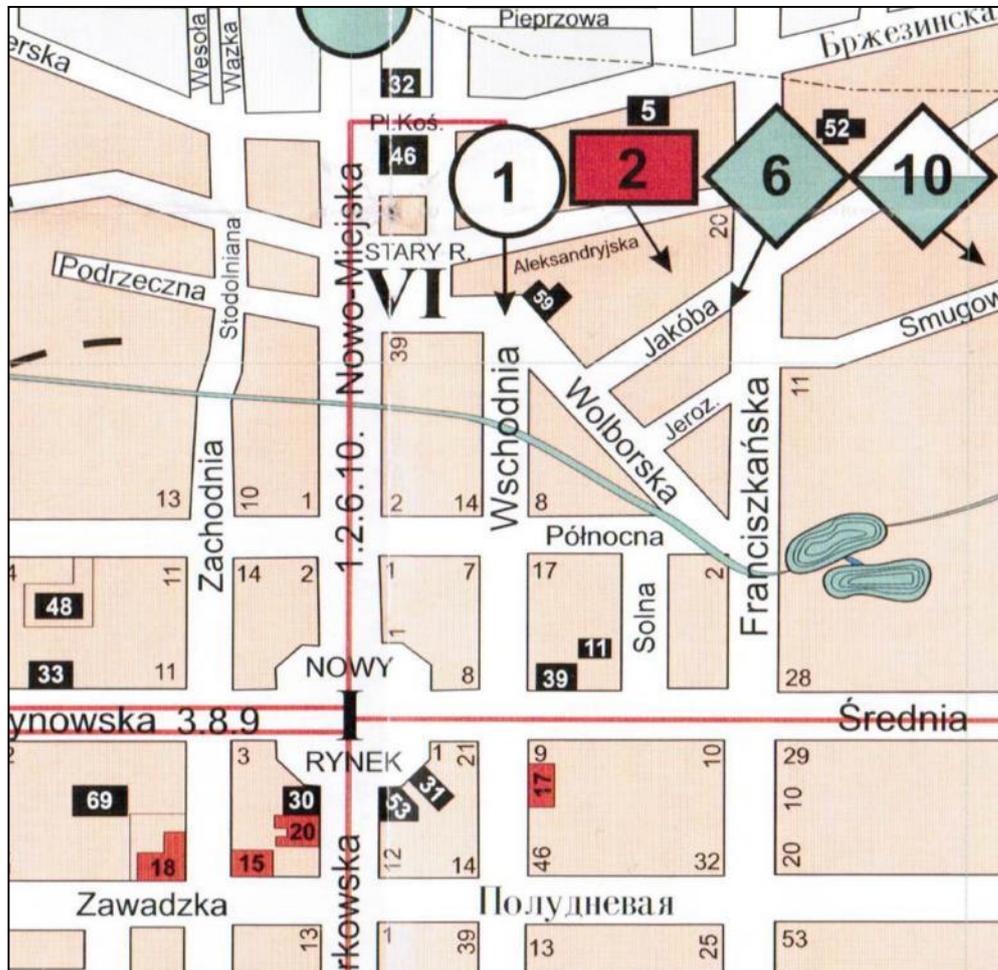


Photo. 13. The revitalised façades of the modern houstowns in Szeroka in Gdańsk, 2014, photo by the Urban Forms Foundation.



Photo. 14. Stone, ceramic and metal details on the revitalised façades of the townhouses in Szeroka in Gdańsk, 2014, photo by the Urban Forms Foundation.

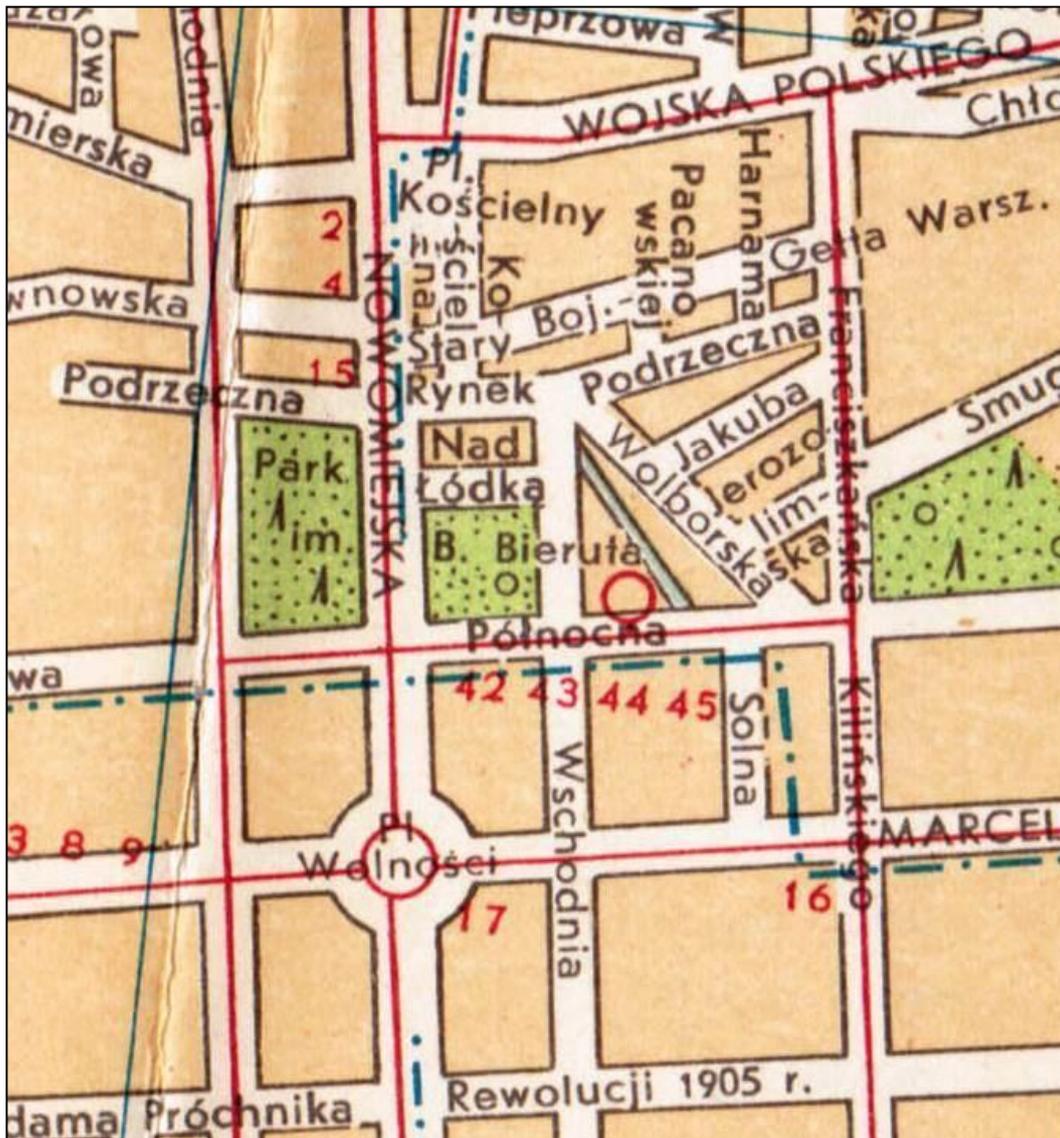
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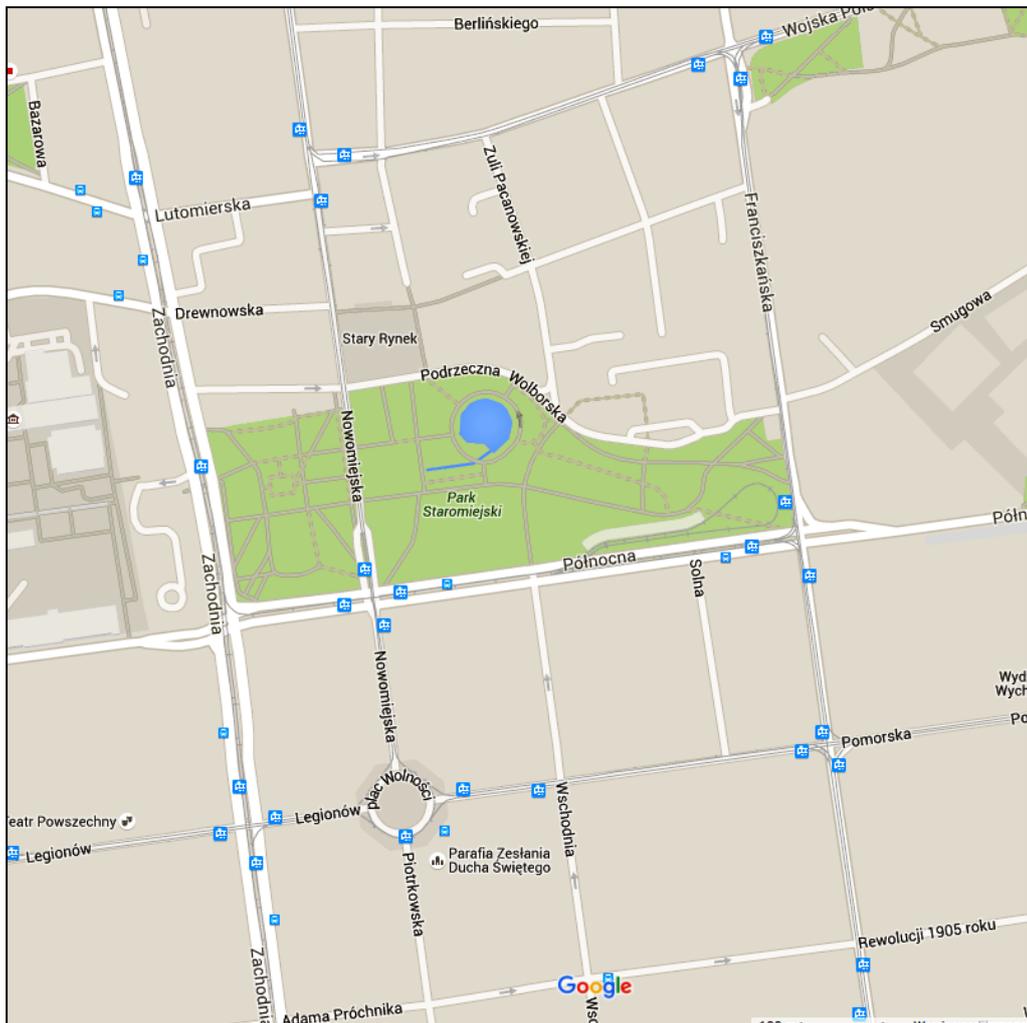
Plan of the City of Lodz (partial), 1913, Łódź: Alfred Sieber (ed.), 10 Milsza, a facsimile of the original from the collection of Marcin Barański, 2000, a supplement of "Gazeta Wyborcza". It shows the Old Market (VI), Lodka River and the pre-war street layout.



An aerial view of Lodz, a photo taken by the Germans in May 1942 (part), Archives of the Museum of Independence Traditions. It depicts: 1. the Old Market; 2. the empty square after the demolition of the Alte Szil Synagogue; 3. a stretch of demolished buildings in the Old Town; 4. the empty Freedom Square (Plac Wolności) – the former New Market (Nowy Rynek).



Plan of the City of Lodz (partial), 1956, Warszawa: Centralny Urząd Geodezji i Kartografii, Państwowe Przedsiębiorstwo Wydawnictw Kartograficznych. It shows a square instead of the Lodka River, a partially preserved pre-war street layout and a stretch of the regulated Lodka channel.



Plan of the City of Lodz) (partial), 2015, source: Google Maps. It shows the vast Park Staromiejski with a pond and an imitation of the Lodka River in the place of the southern part of the Old Town.



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