

SINCE NOW A CITY IS THERE: REMARKS ON A CITY CENTER.

Examples from the City of Lodz

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Abstract: Every city has its center. The heart of a city and its center is usually a street or a square or both. In Lodz, one of the biggest cities in Poland, this role was played for a long time by Piotrkowska Street. This is the most famous Polish artery, which not long ago would be associated with the Lodz of labor and textile manufacturing, for the lot of Piotrkowska Street and the history of the city whose face and personality shaped the industry were intertwined. Today the street is an important element of the city; however, it does not determine the character of the city and has lost the function of concentrating public activities. Moreover, it is no longer recognized as the place where the most important events in public life take place (and that feature, according to Aleksander Wallis, characterizes a city center). Today, other spaces of Lodz have taken over the role of the city center and have brought together on their territory the cultural practices of the urban community. What is the cause for that state of things and where is the city center situated today? The article addresses these issues.

Keywords: city center, mythologization of a city center, culture area

1. To go or to walk “to the city” means to move in one direction – to the center, i.e., to the place in a city “where something is gathered or concentrated” (SŁOWNIK... 1978:241). As Tadeusz Sławek emphasizes: “one cannot avoid the conclusion that thinking about a ‘city’ must presuppose a reflection about some kind of centralization, about a point around which particular elements/surfaces of a city/crystal are congregated, and of which a non-urban space is deprived” (SŁAWEK 1997:11). The center is a place “where multiplicity is translated into unity, since in the center exactly a city earns its face and gives an opportunity to

be remembered; it is the center that makes a city precisely what it is, this unique city which can be distinguished from others" (SŁAWEK 1997:18). When I know where the center is, I cannot get lost because the center orients the city, organizes the topography, and confirms geographical directions, harmonizes all relations between the city and the world; in the center the urban order, confirmed by "*the presence of lamps and police patrols,*" is accumulated (SŁAWEK 1997:16-17). The center is a place about which Roland Barthes wrote that it is stigmatized, for "*there exactly assemble and summarize values of civilization: spirituality (churches), power (offices), money (banks), commerce (malls), a word (agoras: coffee-houses and promenades); to go to the center means [...] – to participate in a glorious completeness of 'reality.'*" (BARTHES 1999:82).

A Nestor of the Polish sociology of the city, Aleksander Wallis, several decades ago in his book *Information and Hubbub. About the City Center* (WALLIS 1979) formulated general statements which, according to him, can be regarded as enduring traits of the city center. The center – according to his own words – is a small part of the city, distinct from the rest of urban space with respect to architectural and town planning aspects, as well as an institutional infrastructure; it has the best location with respect to transport accessibility, and it is of fundamental importance to functioning of the urban community and "*to the community of an area dominated by the influence of the city*"; it is identified "*as an area where the most important processes of public life take place*" (WALLIS 1979:19) and where processes of public life reach the highest level of realization (WALLIS 1979:23) "*without which contemporary metropolis and contemporary society are incomprehensible*" (WALLIS 1979:7). Owing to the last characteristic, in every phase of its history the center has always played "*the central role in the course of integration and development of the urban community*" (WALLIS 1979:23-24); and the community, through the center, identifies with the city as a place. Since, for Wallis, the center (along with a residence and a temple) was the most important culture area, i.e., a space which represents successive generations and aggregates material, aesthetic, and symbolic values, and with which, almost organically, needs and cultural practices of particular groups (communities) are connected (WALLIS 1979:15-17).

Every city has its center. The heart of a city and its center is usually a street or a square or both. In Lodz, one of the biggest cities in Poland, this role for a long time was played by Piotrkowska Street, the street that runs longitudinally in a straight line and is over 4 kilometers long. This is the most famous Polish artery which, not long ago, would be associated with the Lodz of labor

and textile manufacturing, for its lot and the history of the city whose face and personality shaped the industry were unified. Today it is an important element of the city; however, it does not determine its character and lost the function of concentrating public activities. Moreover, it is no longer recognized as the place where the most important events in public life take place (and that feature, according to Aleksander Wallis, characterizes a city center). Today, other spaces of Lodz take over the role of the city center and bring together on their territory cultural practices of the urban community. What is the cause for that state of things and where is the city center situated today? This article addresses these issues.

2. In the past, Piotrkowska was a trail through the wilderness running from Piotrkow to Zgierz, which crossed a small agricultural and manufactural town, Lodz. It became a street at the beginning of the 19th century when, as the result of realization of government industrialization plans for the country, it was decided that near agricultural Lodz a factory settlement of the same name should be built. The street started from an octagonal marketplace and expanded southwards, together with the town, becoming from the very beginning Lodz' main artery, and in time it evolved into a factory route, facilitating contacts with the capital and industrial cities that hosted britzskas, carts, droshkies, and, after activation of the Warsaw–Vienna Railway, buses and electric trams were introduced. Soon after the street was demarcated, iron pillars marking the distance to Warsaw (RYNKOWSKA 1970:19) were placed along it, and Piotrkowska was illuminated with city lamps with metal reflecting mirrors that were located in particularly attended places (RYNKOWSKA 1970:52-53).

According to primary plans, Piotrkowska was to be a residential district. An industrial area was delimited in the southern part of the city, in the colony called Lodka, along the Jasien River, and in the southern part of the street that had not been completed yet (a later section from Emilia Street to the Main Marketplace). However, according to a regulation allowing industrial building expansion in the whole street, industrialization encompassed entire Piotrkowska (RYNKOWSKA 1970:35). Therefore, Piotrkowska became the street of drapers as well as cotton and linen weavers, masters, traders, and factory-owners who had just started their careers. In time, impoverished people moved to side-streets, giving up their parcels to more affluent citizens (RYNKOWSKA 1970:69). Manufacturers lived in wooden and brick houses



Postcards: Piotrkowska Street before Second World War.



of homogenous architectural construction which were at the same time their workplaces (houses had rooms serving as workshops). Zygmunt Manitius mentions that at the time when his father came to Lodz, one-story houses dominated Piotrkowska, and there were only a few storied buildings. One could find no shops on the street. *“On the other hand,”* as Manitius wrote, *“across a full-length of the street from every single building, window, and doorway one could catch a characteristic, and surely cherished in my childhood memories, clatter and clack of a thousand workshops. There was no sign of side streets, except for those few which led to the fields [...] On the right and on the left side of Piotrkowska, the paving ended, and a regular road ran, and a deep wide ditch separated paths (that replaced pavement) and the roadway (MANITIUS 1928:43-44).* In time, devices for finishing off raw fabrics were installed in courtyards, near the rooms that served as workshops; in addition, dye-works, print-works, and finishing-machines functioned (RYNKOWSKA 1970:35-37) because, according to Anna Rynkowska, plants located in the southern part of the city, by the Jasien River, *“did not manage to meet the needs of an increasing fabrics production”* (RYNKOWSKA 1970:35).

Although, Piotrkowska from the very beginning concentrated the whole life of the industrial city, for a long time it maintained a partly urban and partly rural character. Manufacturers who lived there were given some land where they could seed rye and potatoes, and in the courtyards they built barns and cowsheds in front of which one would see tons of waste and cowpat; moreover, they bred chickens, cows, pigs, and even horses. In the back of every parcel near Piotrkowska, one could find gardens where the citizens grew vegetables, as well as fruit trees and shrubs. Windmills and steam-mills were also located along Piotrkowska (RYNKOWSKA 1970:73-77). People who lived there threw away their litter right onto the street or into ditches and empty squares; for a long time only several fragments of Piotrkowska were paved (RYNKOWSKA 1970:55). Along the street you could not find many shops yet, and there were mostly spicy goods, herrings, fish, soaps, candles, dyestuff products, cotton yarns, and textile commodities in stock. Citizens of Lodz bought food in three marketplaces located by Piotrkowska, namely: the New Town Market, the Upper Market (situated at the southern end of the street), and the Factorial Market (located in the central part of Piotrkowska). Food was also available at taverns that – just like pubs – were situated near the markets and factories of Piotrkowska. Some of the taverns were also beaneries where one could eat a warm meal (RYNKOWSKA 1970:43-50).

It was not before the second half of the 19th century that Piotrkowska began to gain metropolitan features. It was a significant period for Lodz that was becoming at that time a textile power of the Congress (Kingdom) of Poland, and the city managed to maintain this status till World War II. Piotrkowska got sidewalks: initially – asphalt, and next – stone, and what is more, along her entire length trees (poplars, acacias, and chestnuts) were planted (RYNKOWSKA 1970:110,140-141). An installation of street lamps (originally – gas, and later – electric) increased the importance of the street allowing the traffic to last till late in the evening. As befits a city center, in Piotrkowska bookshops, printing-houses, photographers' shops, a theatre, the first city newspaper, the largest hotels in Lodz, cinematographs, a branch office of the Polish Bank, and a Commercial Bank were opened (RYNKOWSKA 1970:128-180).

The northern and central parts of the street were modernized first. At the time when industry abandoned Piotrkowska, open spaces between houses (so characteristic of the early rural landscape of the street) became more and more rare; the gardens disappeared and factories, multi-story buildings, and tenement houses took over their place. The second half and the turn of the 19th century are the best period in the history of Lodz and the street: it is the time of fabulous fortunes of factory-owners, and three industrial potentates – Scheibler, Geyer, and Kindermann – competed in order to build on Piotrkowska the most magnificent family residence (called “a palace” at the time). The street was presentable, and people who lived there built houses of the highest possible standard, with electric front elevations and Renaissance, Baroque, Rococo and sometimes Art Nouveau motifs. The architecture served as visible evidence of the financial resources of the owners, and talents as well as artistry of its creator. The street became exclusive; here affluent citizens would rent roomy suites with “*all possible conveniences: gas pipes, water sinks, toilets, and bathrooms*” RYNKOWSKA 1970:124); manufacturers, bankers, lawyers, doctors, engineers, and notaries lived on Piotrkowska (RYNKOWSKA 1970:189). To live on Piotrkowska was the dream of every educated person. Less affluent citizens lived in annexes situated in backyards resembling wells, and workers rented flats in the southern part of the street. Ground floors of the fronts of the buildings were reconstructed and adapted for commercial purposes, and for the first time in Lodz, one could see impressive shop-windows (RYNKOWSKA 1970:154). More and more shops were opened in the backyards, ground-floor – and even second-floor – apartments (RYNKOWSKA 1970:155). Teresa Klugman so describes the Piotrkowska shops just before World War II: “*Shops*

side by side, some shop-windows beautiful, and some – full of dust and goods. Ignatowicz’s beautiful shop with lots of foreign liquors and sweet-smelling fruits, Kopcinski’s bakery filled with the aroma of fresh bread and pastry, Dutkiewicz’s dairy products, Dyszkin’s shop with expensive charcuterie, and the shop owned by Kokinakis, the Greek, where you could buy the best halvah and brown bread with raisins in town. ‘The Sesame toy shop where decorations in the shop-window were changed every week, the enchanted world of fairy-tales where – for free – you could watch and admire without limitations or moving a muscle’ (KLUGMANOWIE 2004:7). Due to its very convenient, central location Piotrkowska was the most desired place for all institutions; consulates, offices, churches, money-exchange offices, warehouses, textile shops, and shops selling all kind of glass, porcelain, faience, haberdashery, tailors’ shops, jewelry shops, delicatessens full of luxury goods available only to the most affluent citizens, several confectioneries, and restaurants were situated there. Since, in the words of president Pieńkowski, *“Piotrkowska is the city center, and the city’s life is concentrated here”* (RYNKOWSIKA 1970:144), it was decided that Piotrkowska should have regulated traffic and a tram line.

The better Lodz industry and modern transportation did, the more crowded and full of shops fraught with fancy goods, trams, hackney coaches, billboards, and people Piotrkowska was. It was the city’s showroom: cultural institutions and places of entertainment were situated here – in restaurants and coffee houses (referred to as “confectioneries”), and in café-gardens, or verandas opened in the summertime the local elite (writers, actors, merchants, bankers, and manufacturers) would meet to discuss the latest town news, to do business, to gamble, to enjoy chansonniers’ performances, and to gossip (PAWLAK 2001:9-13). During every carnival, circus visit, or fete the street was filled with crowds looking for amusement (PAWLAK 2001:47-49). Piotrkowska became the favorite promenade of Lodz citizens. On Sundays, workers – even from distant parts of the city – would come here to have a walk, and that custom was delightfully depicted by Władysław Reymont in his novel *“The Promised Land”*; at that time, strolls after Sunday mass and meetings organized by young people were also rituals. People *“would come to ‘Pietryna’ to breath the metropolitan air of the street that one could feel, thanks to the original design of the buildings, sumptuous shop-windows, and intensive traffic. However, the vast majority of citizens did not carefully admire the splendid architecture of ‘Pietryn,’ but rather they were interested in the commercial aspects of the street which had the finest shops and storehouses in the city”* (PAWLAK 2001:83).



Postcard: Piotrkowska Street in socialist times.

Teresa Klugman remembered from her childhood “the *Majestic Grand Hotel* and the *Raspberry Hall* that children did not even dream of entering, the neon lights switching on and off: ‘Radion washes for you’; ‘Persil Ata Imi,’ ‘Ola Gum?’, ‘Pulsa Soap’; Trams rang, horses’ hoofs tapped when droshkies drove the paved road, and along the paved street one could admire the local fashion-show: smiles behind veils, tapping canes, and hats constantly raised by gentlemen. A beautiful, elegant world. Salesmen ran with newspapers or balloons, women sold flowers in the street, and sometimes a trolley with ice-cream or oranges appeared” (KLUGMANOWA 2004:7). The street was crowded and noisy in the evening as well. “Maidens, fräuleins, and baryszkas were picked up constantly, with laughs, giggles, happy glances, loud comments on the beauty of the *made-moiselles* passing by, this one and that one got a flower, this one and that one was seized by the hand in the passage with indescribable gallantry, finally one would approach – and here again, a dream of a miracle: that this one would become the right one – the only one in the whole wild world” (PAWLAK 2001:87).

3. Piotrkowska entered the era of socialism undamaged; together with the whole city, it was spared destruction of buildings during bombardments and

battles on the front line of World War II. Local authorities did not manage to take advantage of this fortunate position and did not try to earn Lodz the modern metropolitan status that the city had before the war. On the contrary, after World War II the city and the street were neglected. Authorities of that time made intellectual and cultural life difficult and forced the vast majority of cultural institutions, editorial offices, artists and intellectuals to leave Lodz; only industry and production were promoted, and the authorities did not care about dwelling-houses, sidewalks, or places of consumption and entertainment. Piotrkowska was a scene of economical paralysis and equal dullness that deprived it of its former magnetism and exclusiveness. The colorful neon-lights and beautiful shop-windows disappeared, and fancy restaurants were turned into sordid diners; the street was no longer “an elegant and beautiful world.” During the decades of socialism previous tenants from the suburbs and basements moved into high-standard apartment houses; the street grew uglier by the year; the apartment houses and sidewalks slowly went to ruin. I can remember facades of the tenement houses in Lodz in the 1970s and 1980s – also on Piotrkowska – the sight of which was repulsive due to falling plaster and pieces of wall, or iron remains of balconies that used to have splendid ornamentation.

At the time of the Polish People’s Republic, Piotrkowska was alive only during the working hours of shops, offices, and agencies. Its space was mainly defined by business and commerce because state-owned (mainly textile) shops – where you could sometimes find products better than anywhere else in the city – were located in ground-floors of the front sections of tenement houses. We would visit Piotrkowska in order to buy shoes, bags, jewelry, or clothes for our children (in Piotrkowska the only shop in Lodz with articles for children – the Child Domain – was situated) and in order to make all the necessary arrangements in offices and travel agencies. People from all over the country used to come to Piotrkowska to do shopping (mainly to buy clothes) in two storehouses, and black-market money changers (a significant competition for the official exchange at that time) would await their clients in front of commission-houses, hotels, and gateways offering gold and foreign currency. The vast majority of restaurants were located in Piotrkowska (they opened at noon, and at one p.m. alcohol could be sold, but the choice was rather poor, and beer was a rare product).

At the time of the Polish People’s Republic, Piotrkowska had “users” who differed from those before World War II; people who had built the industrial

city and who were emotionally and physically attached to Lodz (factory-owners, merchants, bankers, artists, Germans, and Jews) did not walk along the street anymore. They were forced to leave the city for political and historical reasons (KARPIŃSKA 2002). After the war, the majority of the citizens consisted of new settlers who came to Lodz (mainly from the country) to work in textile factories. They lived outside the downtown area and visited Piotrkowska infrequently in order to make necessary arrangements in offices or do some shopping. Young people – students and school children – were frequent visitors of the street; for them a stroll along Piotrkowska used to be a pleasant interlude in everyday life. As far as they were concerned, “to go to the city” meant “to go to the Verve” (as Piotrkowska was named because it was the busiest street in the city, and on Saturday afternoons its delimited sector would turn into a pedestrian zone).

When I was at school (in the late 1960s and early 1970s) we used to play truants in “the Verve” because it was a perfect place to prowl around, to watch people passing, to meet friends and to make friends with someone new, to show off, and to observe shop-windows that were much more colorful than in the rest of the city. We used to stroll along both sides of Piotrkowska dressed in our all finery, obligatorily before parties, every Saturday afternoon or evening. With equal frequency, my friends and I visited Piotrkowska in our university years. We would sit in one of the restaurants. Our first choice was usually the place we could afford and where we could get some beer. For my generation, Piotrkowska was a place of significance, a place that shaped our characters and judgments, our way of thinking, and our self-perception. Piotrkowska made us feel *“safely anchored to familiarity, well-known to us and therefore, so dear, which let us feel ‘at home’ within the safety given to us thanks to a place of which we are a “glossa,” a digression, and a point of reference; [this] place to us is an essence of our uniqueness; it is a place that we understand, and thanks to which we can express ourselves, since identification with a place is one of the elements of individuals’ self-determination in the face of the magnitude and foreignness of the world”* (SENDEROWICZ 2004:172). Piotrkowska strengthened a group-bond and made our identification with the city possible; owing to Piotrkowska, we gained a sense of place and a sense of settlement, and we could learn how to admire a place. At home, many of us would listen to idealized tales of the street before the war: of the bustling street full of colors that everyone visited. At that time, the process of mythologization of Piotrkowska was established; it became the street that lived in our memories and not in the real world. And so

the urban myth as a source of emotional impulses was created, and it influenced the way of life of my generation powerfully.

4. Transformations related to the collapse of socialism caused changes in the principles organizing different spheres of life, including the economy's functioning. As the market economy was reinforced, and due to altered trade exchange with the countries of the people's democracy, the textile industry of Lodz falls apart. It is the end of the age of Lodz as a city of industry – factories are shut down, and employees lose their jobs – and so the myth of the workman's Lodz is over. Lodz loses its stable and distinct occupational structure, and factories – firm model of the urban space of the 19th century and visible evidence of the industrial city's power – are sentenced for destruction. Abandoned, lacking any conservatory, security, or adaptive pursuit, they soon became places deprived of "the breath of life," and many of them till now discourage a passer-by due to broken windows and walls.

Local authorities of that time made an attempt to create a city image based on the idea of Lodz as a "one-street city." It was then that Piotrkowska was embellished and, in consequence, for a short time her paramount position grew even stronger. Piotrkowska got a new sidewalk and stylish street-lamps; moreover, renovated facades of tenement-houses were illuminated, vehicular traffic was prohibited, and the whole street was turned into a promenade; restaurants, cafés, and pubs were opened, and now in the high season you can sit in tea-gardens; what is more, the state-owned shops do not exist there anymore, and money-exchange offices, banks, round-the-clock shops, car showrooms, computer stores, and clothes shops with big shop-windows, and colorful neon-lights have taken over their place. Also, following the famous example of the Hollywood Walk of Fame, the Lodz Alley of Fame was created, and sculptures were arranged into the Great Citizens of Lodz Gallery that – together with the Memorial of Lodz Citizens at the Turn of the Millennium, i.e., plates with names built in a roadway in the central part of the street – are now marks of Piotrkowska. The street got a new informative layout that influences her aesthetic and semantic value. Since 1992, the Lodz holiday (which is becoming more and more famous in Poland), the Techno parade (given up in 2003), New Year's Eve parties, happenings, artistic installations, juvenilia, marches, fairs, and feasts have been organized in Piotrkowska. For example, Thread Day was organized (and at that time a gigantic colorful spider web was hung over the street); for two days the street was turned into a sandy beach, with boats



Piotrkowska Street.
Photo by G. E. Karpińska,
2008.



and a pier, and in the middle of the summer (on the occasion of the Ice Holiday) within 48 hours, a three-story tall ice pyramid was built and it would not melt for six long hours (and contrasted with the eclectic image of the street).

The whole effort resulted in a new *époque*, both for the city and the street. New times and new local authorities brought life back to Piotrkowska: crowds of young and old citizens and tourists would stroll along the street on weekdays and weekends, witnessing her metamorphosis and warming her up (so to say) with their breaths and body movements. People sat in pubs, restaurants, cafeterias and pizzerias which were (finally) situated where they belonged, that is, on the main commercial street; people walked along the street where they could meet and experience everything: they could take a stroll on the sandy beach, touch the ice pyramid, see the colorful spider web, have some beer in one of the tea-gardens, travel a long journey on a plane, ride the Ferris wheel, sit on the bench beside Julian Tuwim or at the piano with Arthur Rubinstein, or at the same table with the creators of industrial Lodz: Izrael Poznanski, Henryk Grohman, and Karol Scheibler. As befits a true city center, Piotrkowska Street became a fascinating and attractive place for young and old people to meet, the place of hubbub where one could experience a certain thrill produced by the intensity of the crowd of people who realized their various passions and interests in that space, while enjoying their aesthetic activities and consumption as well. Piotrkowska once again became the city promenade (cf. KARPIŃSKA 1995). The street attracted visitors from all over Poland, especially citizens of Warsaw who came to Lodz on Friday or Saturday evening in order to enjoy themselves in one of the clubs in Piotrkowska. Local authorities, designers, and city architects – with (a little) help from the citizens and tourists – made every effort to change the pre-war image of the street (captured in paintings) as the location for restaurants and cafés where owners of great fortunes had spent their time, and create the new notion of Lodz as a city that absorbs fresh trends and fashions, that is dynamic and open to the world. In other words, another myth was brought into existence and fostered in order to serve citizens as a reference point to imagine their future and the future of their city; a myth that should be a source of pride and contentment with the city and with the street. Citizens of Lodz and visitors created an image of Lodz as a city of fun and entertainment, filled with ludic spaces, and Piotrkowska – with all the restaurants, clubs, pubs, and discos – confirmed the notion. And at that time, the street earned another dimension: it began to be perceived as a space of consumption where people could satisfy their hedonistic needs.



Piotrkowska Street: the founders of industrial Łódź: K. Scheibler, H. Grohman, I. K. Poznański.
Photo by G. E. Karpińska, 2006.



Piotrkowska Street:
Artur Rubinstein at the piano.
Photo by G. E. Karpińska, 2006.

5. Today, the citizens of Lodz do not identify themselves with Piotrkowska Street. The street has lost characteristics and functions of the city's heart; it no longer bears signs of highly intensive economical and social activity of the citizens. It is no longer a place-as-a-whole, since the city was fragmented; it is not perceived (as it used to be) as a city of industry and manufacture, or (as it was not long ago) as a city of amusement and entertainment. The city is now neglected and marginalized, partly because it has lost its former economical importance. Privileges of the main street as a place "*where one can go and return from [...] about which one dreams, and according to which one directs, in brief – orients oneself*" (BARTHES 1999:82) are taken over by different spaces in the city: first, by a shopping center, Lodz Gallery and, later, by a mall called Manufacture. The shopping and entertainment center Manufacture was opened in 2006. It was situated on the premises of a former factory complex owned by Izreal K. Poznanski, who was one of the Lodz textile potentates. On a twenty-seven hectare (66.7 acre) parcel thirteen historic post-factorial buildings of unplastered red brick were restored and completely rebuilt inside; now they host: the Museum of the Factory, the Modern Art Museum with (unique in Europe) a collection of 20th and 21st century art, *Cinema City* with fourteen cinema halls, a climbing wall, a bowling alley, children fun rooms, many restaurants, coffee shops, pubs, and a disco. In a newly constructed building, one can find a shopping gallery and, in the center of the whole complex, a three-hectare (7.4 acre) Market Square where galas, concerts, exhibitions, happenings, fashion shows, and outdoor parties take place. Entire design shares the intention of revitalizing actions popular in cities with an industrial past that aim at conservation of an urban atmosphere from the past in harmony with modern utilization of buildings. Manufacture has "taken away" from Piotrkowska Street the elements which made her conceivable, according to Manuel Castells, as a space of entertainment concentration, and of "*big city lights*" disposition. The whole thing is not only about restaurants, discos, and night clubs functioning but also, and perhaps mainly, about the issue of "sublimation of the city climate itself" attracting, thanks to a wide range of choices of consumption, leisure activities, and a prospect of surprises (CASTELLS 1982:235, 244). As shopping and entertainment centers have carefully planned scenery for the spectacle of a city's every-day life based on urban space organization standards (delimited streets, squares, sidewalks, street lamps, benches, fountains, exhibitions, greenery, parking lots, restaurants), and that all enables emotions which are evoked thanks to thoughtless wandering around the city and



The Manufacture. Photo by G. E. Karpińska, 2007.

rubbernecking. Moreover, these centers have techniques – which are brought to perfection – realizing the idea of consumption as a pleasant and amusing activity (air conditioning, light, tidiness, physical and emotional safety that lets you overcome the feeling of strangeness and intimidation, lack of beggars and homeless people). They want to be metaphors of the city center, and hence the terms: “center,” “gallery,” “temple,” “cathedral.” However, they are only a substitute for the center, its miniaturized copies, because they lack the attractiveness emerging from consolidation and intensity of interpersonal relations, from convergence of authentic values produced by many generations, and from the phenomenon of concentration of diversity which is characteristic of a city center (JARZĘBSKI 1999:418-423). Malls are private spaces, available to particular groups. Therefore, there is no chance of meeting with dissimilarity (for instance, homeless people or controversial events). As Marc Augé stresses, elimination (from shopping centers, among other urban locations) of danger and irritation – that are inseparable from the life in a city – goes hand in hand with rejection of all that is spontaneous or unexpected. Thus, all that has social, historical, and cultural meaning is replaced with experience generated artificially (AUGÉ 1997:100). Malls, by imitating the public sphere that is easy to

enter, join in creation of an illusionary image of the center's reality. This is one of the ways in which a city "turns its back on the center," and shopping and entertainment centers usurp the rightful position of the center (i.e., as sociologists say, we are witnessing the peripherization of a center, and centralization of periphery that result in the change of the urban space perennial cultural code) (JAŁOWIECKI 2005:33).

The social life of the city alternates as well – the old crowd that used to flood main streets and squares now disperses. In Lodz, people do not spend their free time, as they used to, in the center (i.e., on Piotrkowska Street). Instead, they visit various shopping centers, the shopping and entertainment center Manufacture, in particular. They are seduced by the colorful and attractive spectacle of Manufacture, which offers a new, safe, and cleaner version of Piotrkowska Street, which now faces progressive degradation and is becoming unable to meet social expectations. Manufacture and Lodz Gallery now attract crowds of pilgrims, and Piotrkowska is becoming empty on weekends.

Aleksander Wallis wrote that a cultural area plays the right role in the life of a community *"only if the community can use it freely, intensively, and systematically. In no other conditions can the area serve as a place and catalyst to conduct vital cultural processes. From this perspective, the cultural area can be at a stage of development, stabilization, or decline"* (WALLIS 1979:16-17). In what sense do the remarks refer to contemporary Lodz and its center?

Nowadays, when I say "I am going to the city," it means "I am going to one of the city malls" (i.e., to Manufacture or Lodz Gallery). Manufacture became an attraction for visitors to Lodz, one that you have to see and revisit every time you come to the city. Piotrkowska was erased from the memory of the people who experienced its hospitality, including those who came here to spend a pleasant evening or to have a meal and some beer five years ago. The street is no longer a popular place to meet, nor a place where citizens express the urban "we." Cultural life has abandoned Piotrkowska, which is not attractive anymore. The street stimulates negative reactions of citizens (such as aversion or objection) due to its filthiness and negligence; people do not like second-hand and junk shops, empty shop-windows, and street peddlers selling cheap bras and panties made in China right from cardboard boxes. Local authorities' incompetent plans to restore the splendor of the street did not earn the citizens' approval.

Today Manufacture is the place that concentrates an important part of the common history of the city and community symbols referring to the biography



The Manufacture.
Photo by G. E. Karpińska, 2006–2008.

of Lodz, and at the same time being a reference point for individual and collective identifications are gathered there; just to name few of these symbols: neatly cleaned façades of a spinning factory, a weaving plant, and a power station and, in addition, spaces that draw the urban public and unite memories of the past. On one hand, renovated walls correspond with the industrial past of the city and, on the other hand, people ascribe new meanings to the walls, supplying them with another semantic level and a new worth (not only when it comes to architecture, but also the local history) due to the introduction of new functions to the factorial spaces. Moreover, in the post-factorial complex of Manufacture a new spatial reality is created, designed not only for

leisure activities, but also arranged (thanks to cultural events organized there to promote various facts connected with painting, sculpture, theatre, music, dance, happenings, photography, and film) as a place of art, open to the latest ideas, trends, and staging conceptions. All these attractions prevent the new city center from becoming a heritage park for tourists where the past predominates over the future and where people come in order to see relicts of the past, and not events of today (cf. WALLIS 1979:15). The place attracts mainly young people who do the shopping, watch a colorful show drinking beer and eating pizza in renovated post-factorial settings, and become active participants of the artistic sphere. Thus, Manufacture concentrates cultural practices of the urban community (i.e., undergoes the processes of culturalization), and, according to Aleksander Wallis, that is the constitutive feature of a cultural area. It means that a post-industrial space, until recently considered as “non-cultural,” reached the status of a cultural area. Unfortunately, the area is turned backwards from the city, since it is not connected to any of its parts, including the nearby Piotrkowska Street.

6. Today, Lodz is a city without a fixed identity and without a permanent center. In order to gain distinctness a city needs aesthetics that are both immersed in cultural roots and created by modern stylistics and symbolism that offer new formal and aesthetic qualities. This kind of strategy is enclosed in a project aiming at the creation of a new city center around the railway station, Factorial Lodz, in a ninety-hectare (222.4 acre) parcel where today we have a devastated hundred-year-old power station, and the remains of a destroyed factory. According to these plans, the Cultural Center of World Art, confronting the latest ideas and trends, a festival and congress hall for four thousand people for the purposes of Lodz festivals – specially, Camerimage and the Dialogue of Four Cultures Festival – hotels, galleries, a Sound Theatre, a Museum of Technology, shops, and restaurants (among other facilities) will be located near a newly-created Factory Square. Realization of the above project will be another large step towards the renaissance of the city of Lodz and the formation of its identity. Thanks to the new center, the city has an opportunity to enter a new era and to gain a new face; by shifting to culture and art, it can become a cultural and artistic center, stimulating other cities in Poland. The project changes the way of thinking about the city and about ways of building its identity. The city will gain its character neither by building something totally from the beginning, nor by saving what has been lost. The former city

of textile industry has an opportunity to become a city of cultural services and a tourist attraction selling the Lodz of the 19th century as well as postindustrial because the city has huge post-factorial complexes of a scale which you find nowhere in Europe.

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