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Exploring Łódź's city centre – from the origins to modern times

Abstract

The article presents a comprehensive analysis of changes in the perception and functionality of Łódź's centre within the context of urban and social transformations. It focuses on identifying key factors influencing the city's spatial and social evolution, examining how historical and emerging centres affect its structure and residents' lives. Utilizing a broad methodology based on spatial data, historical analysis, and results from field research and surveys, the author aims to understand the dynamics of changes in Łódź's urban structure. The conclusions highlight the importance of adaptive urban strategies that consider changing social needs and expectations, indicating the development of multi-functional centres as a response to the complex challenges of the modern city. The study sheds light on spatial restructuring processes, emphasizing the role of social participation and innovative approaches in shaping the future of urban centres.

Key words: Łódź, industrial heritage, city centre, revitalization, urban development, urban strategies

Introduction

In urban planning, the city centre is considered a crucial component of the spatial structure, serving not only commercial functions but also providing a space for the integration of various aspects of urban life. According to Kevin Lynch's theory, the centre is a "node" – a key point of reference that helps users with creating mental maps of the city consisting of paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (2011). In cities where the city core is not clearly defined, forming coherent mental maps becomes challenging. This difficulty impacts users' ability to properly orient themselves and interact with the space. A lack of a clearly defined centre can lead to fragmentation of urban experiences.

Cities without a clearly defined centre may suffer from spatial and social incoherence, which is crucial for residents seeking a sense of belonging. Additionally, these cities often face difficulties in attracting tourists and investors, which may be linked to limited economic and cultural dynamism. Łódź presents a unique case study with

its specific history. Its urban structure is associated with the dynamic growth of the industrial sector, which has contributed to the weakening of its traditional historical centre. Other cities, often with richer histories and clearly defined centres, do not provide a similar context for analysing the impact of urban changes on residents' perceptions of the city.

Aims and research methods

The research conducted in Łódź focused on assessing whether the current perception of the city centre corresponds to its geometric centre. It also considered whether there is a need to define and develop a new centre in the absence of a clearly established one. The author analyses historical sources, contemporary spatial data and survey results to understand how the evolution of urban space affects the identification of central areas. The study also examines the impact of new structures emerging within the centre in relation to the city's heritage and current needs. Adopting Lynch's perspective demonstrates that the city centre, a crucial element in residents' mental maps, is not a static entity but undergoes continual evolution in response to social and urban dynamics. Understanding this process can lead to better spatial planning that addresses

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dynamic changes in perception, which is crucial for creating coherent and vibrant urban centres. Understanding this process can improve spatial planning by integrating evolving perceptions. This is essential for developing coherent and dynamic urban centres, as it enables adaptive strategies that respond to ongoing changes in urban experiences and social contexts.

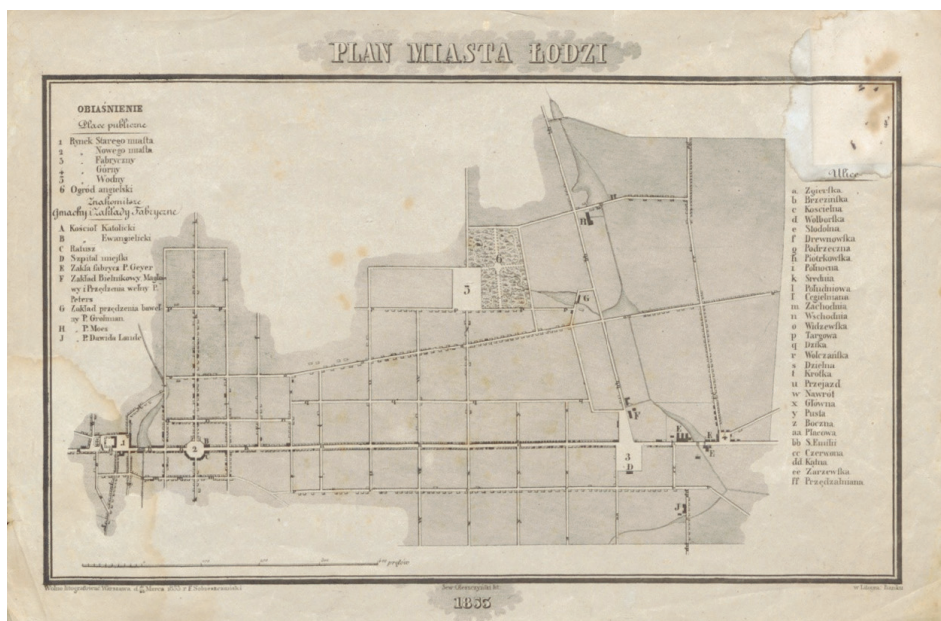
Evolving historical city centres

The earliest historical mention of Łódź dates to 1332, when Prince of Łęczyca Władysław granted perpetual usufruct of the village to the Bishops of Wrocław. Historical sources from this period provide information about the construction of the first church and the establishment of a public square with a compact block of buildings. In 1423, the settlement was granted city rights according to Magdeburg law by King Władysław Jagiełło. Despite the establishment of market days for merchants and craftsmen, agriculture remained the primary means of livelihood for the residents. Agricultural-oriented Łódź developed slowly, reaching a population of around 700 by 1618. The wars, fires, and epidemics of the 17th and 18th centuries had a significant impact on the population, affecting the city's development. By the early 19th century, Łódź, located in the Prussian Partition, was a government town covering approximately 20 hectares. Public buildings, including the town hall and the prison, were situated around the market square, which was the centre of urban life. The church served as the primary landmark, standing out in the city's skyline due to its height (Koter 1970).

From 1820, under the influence of the royal decree to establish factory settlements and the initiative of Rajmund Rembeliński, prefect of Masovia, Łódź transformed into an industrial textile city. Nowe Miasto (Eng. New City) was developed in 1821, at a distance from agricultural Łódź, creating a distinct spatial cluster designated for foreign textile specialists. The framework of the new ortho-

gonal urban plan was defined by Piotrkowska Street and Średnia Street (now Legionów/Pomorska Street). The intersection of these axes was Nowy Rynek (Eng. New Market Square), now known as Plac Wolności (Eng. Liberty Square). Around this market were situated important public buildings, including the Evangelical church, town hall, and county school. Three years later, near Nowe Miasto, the settlement of Łódka was founded, characterized by its focus on handicrafts and industry. These two areas, through their rough development, created a linear arrangement along Piotrkowska Street. Łódka also had its own markets, known as Fabryczny (now known as Plac Katedralny, Eng. Cathedral Square) and Górny (now known as Plac Reymonta, Eng. Reymont Square). Development was further advanced by the establishment of weaving colonies and the designation of Nowa Dzielnica (Eng. New District) in 1840 in the eastern part of the city. The spatial organization of these integrated settlement units guided and facilitated the creation of a cohesive orthogonal urban structure (Stefański 2001).

The opening of the Łódź Fabryczna railway station in 1866 had a significant impact on the city's economic development, catalysing further expansion of rail transportation (Kulesza 2009). The development of numerous service facilities around the station caused the relocation of the city's commercial core to this section of Piotrkowska Street. However, the lack of an open public space prevented this area from fully functioning as a city centre in the conventional sense (Stefański 2019). Urban planning in Łódź was primarily focused on advancing industrial growth, frequently compromising the development of representative public spaces. The primary arterial road of the city was designed to provide easy access to factories, and the use of the central area by residents was closely linked to the work schedule. The lack of distinct district boundaries led to unintended interactions between different social classes (Śmiechowski 2019). The dynamic growth of Łódź in the 19th century resulted in uncontrolled urbanization



of the peripheries, where the poorer population was concentrated. Over half a century of inactivity by the tsarist authorities transformed Łódź into a city characterized by urban chaos. It was only between 1906 and 1915 that the suburban areas were incorporated into the city (Stawiszynska 2019). The pursuit of creating an integrated and functional centre continued to challenge urban planners and decision-makers in the following years. As a result, Łódź developed into a city with a seemingly organized urban structure, reflecting its dynamic historical evolution.

Pre-war/post-war visions of city centre

Compared to other Polish cities, Łódź experienced relatively minimal destruction during World War II. Consequently, Łódź was designated as the temporary capital of Poland during the reconstruction of Warsaw, which had been devastated by the war. Despite the tragic circumstances, this period was pivotal in the city's history, offering an opportunity to transform the down-town area into a modern centre after more than 500 years since its founding. The Nazis sought to integrate new compositional axes into the existing urban layout of Litzmannstadt. Their vision included the development of wide boulevards and squares along what is now the Łódź W–Z route (Eng. Łódź east–west route). This planned axis was to be adorned with monumental buildings designed to symbolize the power and influence of the Third Reich. The new town hall, the monument to General Litzmann on Manifestation Avenue, Art Avenue, and the Welcome Square near Łódź Kaliska Railway Station were intended to signify a shift in the prevailing urban aesthetics. The plan also included the creation of Manifestation Square, designed to host mass gatherings and propaganda events. However, most of these ambitious projects were never realized due to the defeat of the Third Reich in the war (Bolanowski 2013).

After the Nazi occupation, the Communist authorities took over Łódź and aimed to implement their own urban planning vision. A key component of their strategy for the city centre was to establish a clear central axis along Stalin Avenue (now Piłsudski Street). This approach partially continued the Nazis' scheme to extend the urban development from Łódź Kaliska Train Station) to Rynek Wodny (Eng. Water Market). Surrounding the axis, it was envisioned that monumental party buildings, cultural institutions, and other structures would emerge to symbolize the power of the working class. In the central part of the parade square, a building comparable to Pałac Kultury i Nauki (Eng. the Palace of Culture and Science) in Warsaw was planned, whose dominance in the space was intended to be prominent in the city's skyline. The functions of the urban space were aligned with the principles promoting more or less enforced social integration. This concept can be described as coherent but also as imposing a direction for the further development of urban structures. Among other things, it included a redefinition of the city's image, which undermined the significance of the historical core (Sumorok 2010).

Despite this, Łódź's most pressing issue during this period was the inadequate housing conditions, the short-

age of public utility buildings, and the lack of technical infrastructure. In the 1940s, the city's administrators proposed a development plan for the Bałuty district, located near the city centre. The Bałuty concept was reminiscent of the Kraków district of Nowa Huta, known as a garden city, based on the idea of Ebenezer Howard (Motak 2016). Each of the five neighbourhoods, designed as green urban blocks, was intended to include its own local community centre to address the needs of the residents. However, during this period, most residential developments occurred outside the city centre. This was evidenced by the newly developed neighbourhoods in New Rokicie and Doły. Moreover, the redevelopment of the railway connecting the peripheral districts with the city centre, along with the integration of the ring railway and the planned radial tunnel, was intended to enhance both intra- and inter-city connections (Gralińska-Toborek 2016). Despite significant needs, only a few of these plans were realized, as Łódź was not considered a priority area by the central authorities at that time. A turning point came in the 1970s when Edward Gierek's initiative for national modernization allowed for a spatial redefinition of the down-town. During this period, several key structures were built, including the office-service complex along Piłsudski Street, Dom Handlowy Central (Eng. Central Department Store), or Szpital Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych i Administracji (Eng. the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration Hospital). The development of the city was also significantly influenced by the conceptualization and partial realization of university campus plans, which contributed to shaping Łódź's profile as an academic centre. During that time, the housing sector experienced significant growth. Zespół Śródmiejskiej Zabudowy Mieszaniowej (Eng. the Down-town Residential Complex) was constructed there. This development features high-rise apartment buildings whose architectural style and urban character distinctly contrast with the city's traditional architecture. This was intended to project a modern and dynamic image for Łódź. Over time, it was recognized that high-rise residential buildings were not the optimal solution, influencing subsequent urban development directions. Nevertheless, the complex remains a significant part of Łódź's urban landscape, reflecting the city's ambitions for high-rise construction (Ciarkowski 2016).

The communist period of Poland's history is often criticized for disregarding the value of existing urban structures, but the ideological heritage of that era is currently undergoing processes of modernization and adaptation to contemporary needs. The area once designated as Stalin Avenue now functions as a primary transportation artery of the city. A high-rise complex designed for residential and office purposes have been developed along this avenue.

The site of the Soviet-proposed skyscraper is now occupied by a public transit hub, similar in its shape to Lisbon's train station – Gare de Oriente (Majewski 2016). The area around the "Piotrkowska Centrum" train stop (see Fig. 2) is characterized by significant service, retail, and entertainment establishments, primarily developed in the 2nd half of the 20th century and in the 21st century. The concept of a vibrant space has been preserved, but it now



Fig. 2. The "Piotrkowska Centrum" train stop and its surrounding development (photo by M. Włodarczyk, January 2024)

Il. 2. Przystanek „Piotrkowska Centrum” i okoliczna zabudowa (fot. M. Włodarczyk, styczeń 2024)

mainly acts as a central hub for the aggregation and distribution of traffic in various directions. Despite its many benefits, this area does not fulfil the criteria for a sustainable public space. One of the drawbacks of this area is its dense development, and the risks posed by heavy vehicular traffic result in a space that is not pedestrian-friendly. This fact contrasts with contemporary urban planning trends, which emphasize the importance of pedestrian spaces in the context of urban development (Poklewski-Kozieł 2019).

New Faces of Old Centres

Following the economic transformation of 1989, Łódź experienced a profound crisis due to the disruption of the economic ties from the previous regime. The deindustrialization process, while effectively removing disruptive industries from the city centre, also led to the increase of unemployment and the decline of areas crucial to the city's historical significance. The unfavourable economic conditions exposed a developmental imbalance, highlighting the deterioration of central areas. The demolition of many abandoned factory buildings created opportunities for new real estate developments. However, only

a few of these projects included revitalization efforts that preserved historical heritage. Nevertheless, at the dawn of the new millennium, several developments emerged that played a crucial role in restoring the city's image and economic vitality. The transformation of the former Izrael Poznański factory into the Manufaktura department store brought new significance to the area. The distinctive architecture of the complex, which combines entertainment, cultural, and retail functions, is a prominent feature in the urban landscape. The extensive public space within the complex has for years been the site of many significant city events (Wycichowska 2012).

The opening of Manufaktura, as well as other buildings converted from post-industrial development, had a significant impact on the economic revitalization of Łódź. In contrast, the revitalization processes around Piotrkowska Street proceeded more slowly and less intensively, which contributed to a decline in the attractiveness and significance of the historic part of the city. In response to these challenges, a revitalization program was developed for the degraded area of the Metropolitan Zone of Łódź. Launched in 2013, the program takes a comprehensive approach to revitalizing the area. It focuses on introducing new spatial and functional solutions, improving the transportation infrastructure, and enhancing the attractiveness and safety of public spaces (Portal Rewitalizacji Urzędu Miasta Łodzi). The listed projects should focus on specific issues within the urban structure, which are shaped by the users themselves. Public participation in this matter appears to be essential, as it directly influences the willingness to use the space. It also proposes linking the planned initiatives with participatory budgeting projects, which often focus on local urban centres (Cysek-Pawlak 2017).

The most significant beneficiaries of the area revitalization appear to be the former power plant complex, which now functions as the EC1 Science and Technology Center, the Cultural Center, and the Planetarium, along with the new Łódź Fabryczna railway station (see Fig. 3). The modernization of this area was part of the project Nowe Centrum Łodzi (Eng. New Center of Łódź) initiated in 2011 based on a master plan by Rob Krier and its subsequent transformations. The project for this nearly 100-hectare area was seen as a response to Łódź's aspirations to adapt



Fig. 3. Panorama of the New Center of Łódź. From the left: Family Poznański Alley, Łódź Fabryczna railway station, EC1 Science and Technology Center, City Gate (photo by M. Włodarczyk, January 2024)

Il. 3. Panorama na „Nowe Miasto”. Od lewej: al. Rodziny Poznańskich, Dworzec Łódź Fabryczna, Kompleks EC1, Brama Miejska (fot. M. Włodarczyk, styczeń 2024)

this strategically and historically significant location to contemporary needs. The successful developments in this area suggest that Łódź, formerly one of Europe's major textile industry centres, seeks to transform into a district for modern business services and new technologies (Opinia 2017; Pawłowska 2019).

The New Center of Łódź is not universally regarded as an ideal urban creation. Jacek Wesołowski, in his study of the Fabryczna railway station, suggested that it is a product of megalomania, coupled with high hopes for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Transport Development Strategy. He expresses disapproval of the architectural form of the building and its surroundings, criticizing, among other things, the lack of context-sensitive design, poor functional layout, and spatial chaos resulting from selective implementation (Wesołowski 2023). Currently, the area around the station is perceived as unsafe and neglected, reflecting a lack of consistency and care from the authorities, especially given the nearby development of new residential and office buildings. Beyond subjective opinions on the aesthetics of the station building, it is difficult to make an objective assessment of its value due to the incomplete execution of the multi-phase project. The realization of the vision will depend on the opening of the underground tunnel and changes in property laws to enable development above the station. A key factor for this investment will be the development of urban structures of the bipolar system with Warsaw, which will enhance transportation capacity and increase passenger flows. It would also be important for Łódź to realise the concept of Centralny Port Komunikacyjny (Eng. Solidarity Transport Hub). The implementation of this idea would enhance the prominence of new railway hub (Szapakowska-Loranc, Matusik 2020).

Changes are also planned for historical central areas, as outlined in the Piotrkowska Street Development Strategy (2009) and in projects undertaken as part of the Area Revitalization of Łódź's Center (Opis przedmiotu zamówienia, 2015). The transformation of public spaces includes Plac Wolności, which is set to evolve into a green oasis and a dynamic meeting point through the delineation of functional zones within the framework of multifunctional public spaces. This redevelopment has the potential to restore the area's former prominence by enhancing its compositional layout and sightlines, where traffic restrictions and organizational changes are to be implemented. These changes will lead to traffic restrictions and a reorganization of traffic flow, resulting in increased safety for pedestrians. Concurrently, the often-overlooked Stary Rynek (Eng. Old Market Square) will undergo a comprehensive renovation aimed at reviving its historical significance and transforming it into a distinctive venue for commerce and exhibitions. Revitalization projects that involve infrastructure modernization, heritage restoration, and urban space development often face challenges related to management and a cohesive development strategy. Achieving coherence often requires changing building functions and redefining public spaces. However, in Łódź, efforts are more frequently focused on aesthetic improvements to degraded areas, which can lead to mixed feelings in relation to expectations.

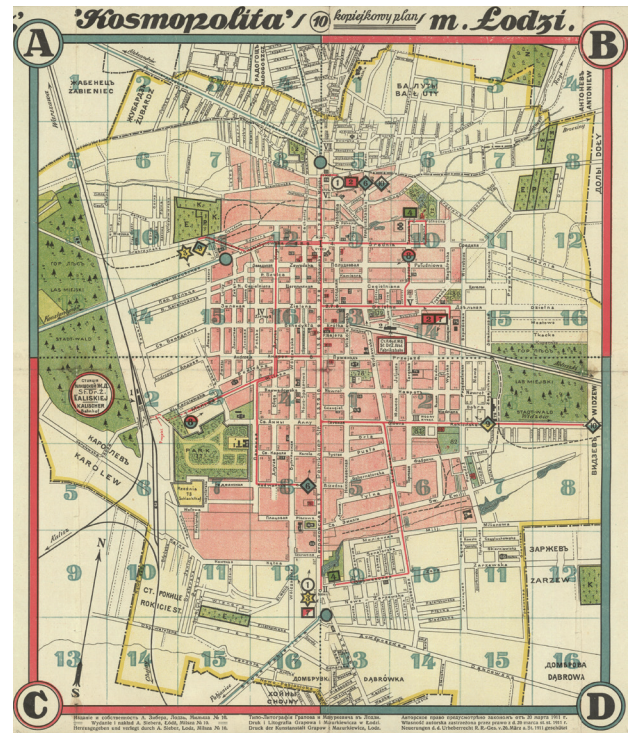


Fig. 4. 10-copeck Plan of Łódź (Sieber 1913).

The central point of the map encompasses the intersection of the then Piotrkowska Street and Andrzeja/Przejazd Street (now Struga/Tuwima Street)

(source: Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, sygn. 39/609/0/-/551)

Il. 4. Dziesięciokopiejkowy plan m. Łodzi (Sieber 1913).

Centralny punkt mapy obejmuje skrzyżowanie ówczesnej ul. Piotrkowskiej i ul. Andrzeja/Przejazd (obecnie ul. Struga/Tuwima) (źródło: Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi, sygn. 39/609/0/-/551)

Speaking of the geometrical city centre

In the popular consciousness, as well as in various mapping documents or internet portals and applications, we can find the annotation “the centre” in the neighbourhood of the Piotrkowska-Struga/Tuwima Streets junction. Although this labelling might seem arbitrary at first glance, it is confirmed by the Spatial Information System, which defines this area as the geometric centre of the city's zone no. 1 (Łódzki Internetowy System Informacji o Terenie). This designation also has historical roots, as evidenced by maps from Rychliński and Wagner from 1904 and the 10-copeck city plan by Alfred Sieber from 1913 (Fig. 4). In an urban layout based on an extensive grid system with a 4-kilometre main axis, pinpointing a single dominant central point is challenging. This contrasts with the well-defined central hubs usually seen in concentric or radial urban designs. Nevertheless, the consistent designation of this central point in various sources led the author to conduct historical and field research. The research investigates whether it is possible to identify a new central node that could contribute to the creation of a potential local city centre.

In the context of the study area, a significant reference point is the building at 104/104a Piotrkowska Street, which is the location of the Łódź City Hall. This could

indicate that the current designation of the city centre by cartographers is influenced by the placement of this key administrative institution. However, the presence of the prominent building at this address carries historical significance. In the 2nd half of the 19th century, the façade of the current City Hall obscured the view of one of the largest woolen goods factories owned by Juliusz Heinzel. The strategic location of this factory was instrumental in its development. Due to the transportation connections and the commercial vibrancy, the central section of Piotrkowska Street naturally evolved into the epicentre of urban activity (Kusiński et al. 2009). Despite the growing needs of users, the development of the city centre was still constrained by the long-standing division of land ownership. The narrow plots of land along Piotrkowska Street, largely held by private owners, posed significant challenges for consolidating these areas into a cohesive public space. Historian Krzysztof Stefański highlights that the city's development was significantly impeded by the lack of a cohesive urban planning strategy. The inactivity of the tsarist authorities compounded this issue. Additionally, the influence of private business interests played a crucial role in obstructing progress. These combined factors resulted in enduring challenges for effective urban land management (Stefański 2019).

Currently, in the area around the studied “geometric centre”, particularly along Tuwima Street, there is noticeable fragmentation in the urban-structure. This gap is largely due to the demolition of former industrial buildings and changes in traffic patterns. Changes in traffic organi-

zation have also contributed to this condition. However, in the context of sustainable development, prominent locations on the map are expected to do more than just exist. Michał Stangel argues that the coexistence of various urban fabrics in city centres increasingly requires defining, complementing, and integrating these structures to avoid spatial issues that affect social dynamics (Stangel 2013). It is essential to evaluate whether this location on the Łódź map remains relevant today.

The area around the analysed intersection does not significantly differ from other locations in the neighbourhood. It is characterized by row housing with no prominent features. The quality of green spaces around Plac Komuny Paryskiej (Eng. French Commune Square) (Fig. 5) and the surrounding architectural landscape reveals varied perceptions. Historical sources from the 1860s indicate ambitions to transform this area into a vibrant urban square, but these plans were never realized (Stefański 2019). Currently, the functions of the square, which include elements of a plaza and parking areas, suggest the potential for creating a connection between the New Center and the historical part of Łódź. Although the city's urban policy aims to preserve the traditional layout of the city centre and avoid introducing new focal points, transforming the place could enhance spatial identification of the area. Additionally, the proposed familiar form of a public square could serve as a prominent landmark, easily identifiable on the map (Mordwa 2009).

In terms of transportation and functionality, the junction currently does not play a leading role. The remnants



Fig. 5. Current development of Plac Komuny Paryskiej:
a) view of the Church of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, b) view of the rear of the City Hall (photo by M. Włodarczyk, January 2024)

II. 5. Obecne zagospodarowanie placu Komuny Paryskiej:
a) widok na kościół pw. Podwyższenia Świętego Krzyża, b) widok na tył budynku Urzędu Miasta (fot. M. Włodarczyk, styczeń 2024)

of the tram tracks on Struga Street suggest that this area was once an important transit crossroad. The proximity of several significant landmarks and a high number of service points contribute to the concentration of traffic in the area. However, changes in commercial activities have significantly impacted the use of Piotrkowska Street. (Dzieciuchowicz 2013). Dom Buta (Eng. Shoe House) (Fig. 6) and Dom Handlowy Saspol (Eng. Saspol Shopping Mall) (Fig. 7), situated opposite each other, provide fascinating examples of how retail spaces have adapted to evolving social and economic trends. Dom Buta, an eclectic building from 1911, has served various roles over the years, reflecting the commercial nature of Piotrkowska Street. After a fire in the 1990s, the building was converted into a shopping centre, but it has been vacant for the past two decades. In 2024, the building is scheduled to be repurposed into a hybrid public space (Jabłoński 2022). On the other hand, the postmodern building Saspol, with its controversial design, was built around the same time when the neighbouring Dom Buta was destroyed by fire. Initially, it addressed a functional gap in the area. However, over the years, such buildings have lost favour among customers, who actually prefer large-scale retail centres. The future of Saspol appears uncertain, and it is quite possible that this building might face a fate similar to that of its Wrocław counterpart, Solpol (Kałach 2022).

Summarizing the findings, the geometric centre under investigation does not currently function as a prominent node within the context of Piotrkowska Street. However, it holds potential to become a significant node through the revitalization and activation of the area of Plac Komuny Paryskiej. The integration of the old and new centres of Łódź through a defined public square appears to be a natural development at this location. However, a tangible

definition of this square would positively impact spatial identification and effectively contribute to community activation. Additionally, the proposed aesthetic enhancements to the architecture along the façades of Tuwima Street could significantly elevate the status of this area. The latent potential for revitalizing activity in this location is linked to the “revival” of the Dom Buta building, where effective management of the rental space will be crucial for establishing the character of the local centre. Constraints on mobility affect the frequency of use of this area. However, the flow of pedestrians positively impacts the perception of this part of the down-town, which aims to maintain its representative character.

“Could you tell me where the centre is?”

Recognizing the opportunities for revitalizing the city after years of recession and the efforts by authorities to improve the quality of life in Łódź, residents are facing a contentious issue. One key question is determining the current location of the city’s centre after all these changes.

Given its current expanded and modernized urban structure, can the city clearly define a central space?

As part of the social research, a quantitative survey was conducted on a selected group of Łódź residents. This anonymous, closed-ended survey was conducted in January 2024 and gathered responses from 83 women and 65 men aged 18 to 80. All participants in the survey are residents of Łódź or the Łódź metropolitan area. The results are presented in the form of charts that compare the responses to the survey questions (Fig. 8).

The survey results indicate that among the respondents, the term “city centre” is most commonly associated with



Fig. 6. Dom Buta – view from Piotrkowska Street (photo by M. Włodarczyk, January 2024)

Il. 6. Dom Buta – widok od strony ul. Piotrkowskiej (fot. M. Włodarczyk, styczeń 2024)



Fig. 7. Saspol – view from Piotrkowska Street (photo by M. Włodarczyk, January 2024)

Il. 7. Saspol – widok od strony ul. Piotrkowskiej (fot. M. Włodarczyk, styczeń 2024)

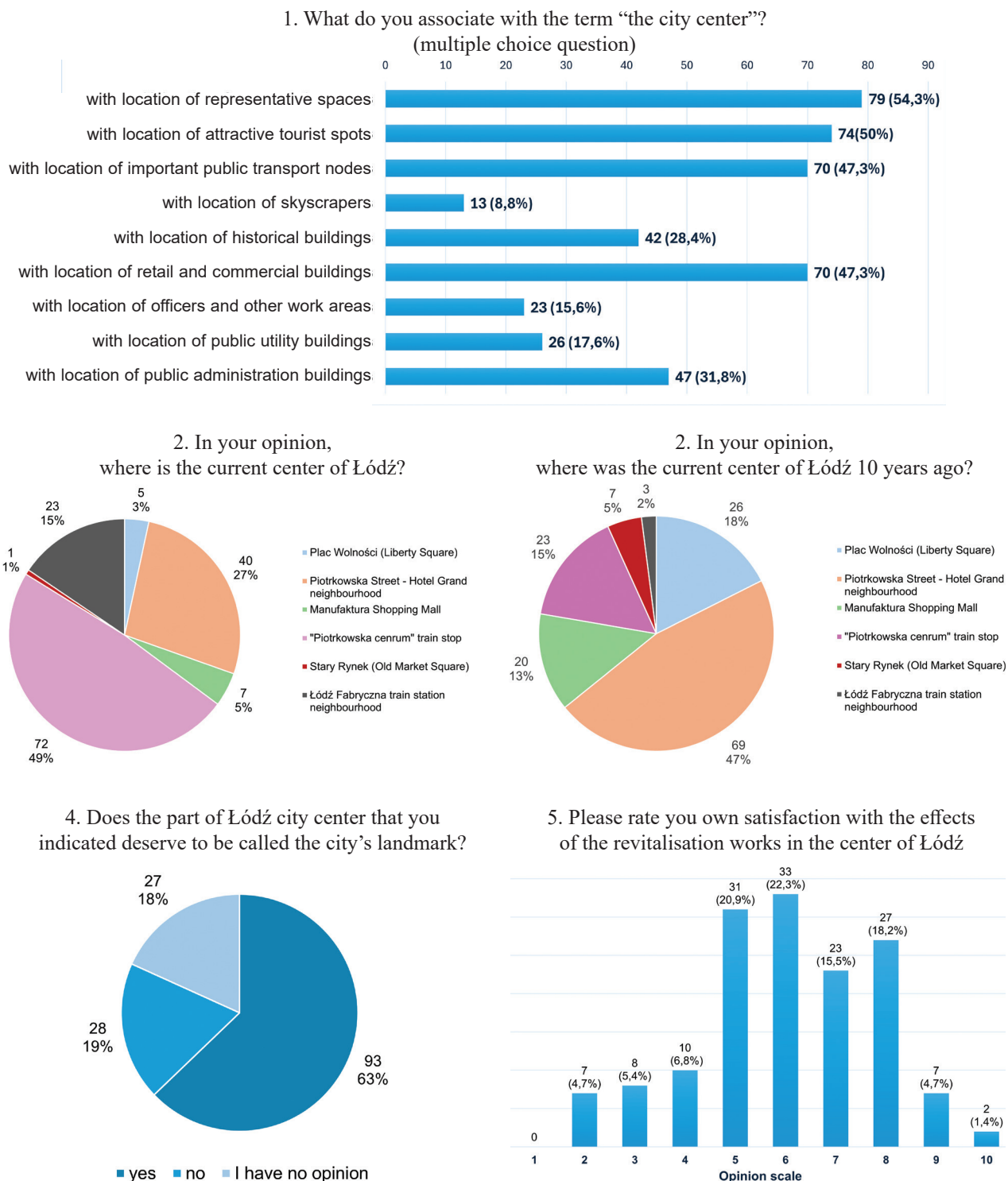


Fig. 8. Results of the online survey:

- 1) bar chart illustrates responses to the multiple-choice question: “What do you associate with the term “the city centre”?”,
- 2) pie chart displays responses to the question: “In your opinion, where is the current centre of Łódź?”,
- 3) pie chart displays responses to the question: “In your opinion, where was the centre of Łódź 10 years ago?”,
- 4) pie chart displays responses to the question: “Does the part of Łódź city centre that you have indicated deserve to be called the city landmark?”,
- 5) bar chart displays the rating of respondents' satisfaction with the efforts of the revitalisation works in the centre of Łódź.

Question using a scale 1 : 10
(elaborated by M. Włodarczyk)

II. 8. Wykresy przedstawiające wyniki sondażu internetowego:

- 1) odpowiedź na pytanie wielokrotnego wyboru: „Z czym Pani/Pan utożsamia pojęcie „centrum miasta”?”,
- 2) odpowiedź na pytanie: „Gdzie Pani/Pana zdaniem znajduje się aktualne centrum Łodzi?”,
- 3) odpowiedź na pytanie: „Gdzie Pani/Pana zdaniem znajdowało się 10 lat temu centrum Łodzi?”,
- 4) odpowiedź na pytanie: „Czy wskazane przez Panią/Pana aktualne centrum Łodzi jest miejscem, które zasługuje na miano wizytówki miasta?”,
- 5) ogólna ocena zadowolenia efektów dokonanych prac w ramach rewitalizacji Śródmieścia Łodzi (pytanie z zastosowaniem skali 1 : 10)
(oprac. M. Włodarczyk)

a representative space that is attractive for tourism, but also with locations for services and retail, as well as key transportation hubs. According to the majority of respondents' opinion, the current centre of Łódź is located near the "Piotrkowska Centrum" tram stop. It can be concluded that, despite the imperfections in this public space, an emblematic building with high aesthetic value has determined the designation of this point as the city's centre. This conclusion is further supported by the detailed results from the question regarding the desire to award the title of the city's landmark to the centre chosen by the respondents (Question 4), where 95% of those who identified this place as a city landmark. Piotrkowska Street and its central section have consistently been perceived as the city centre by respondents, despite the ongoing changes in the city. This assertion is further supported by the results of Question 3, which asked respondents to identify the city's centre from ten years ago. The results indicate that the city's main promenade was considered the centre prior to the revitalization efforts. An interesting finding is that the third most popular response to Question 2, regarding the location of the current city centre, is the newly developed area around Łódź Fabryczna railway station. This suggests a shift in the perception of the city's image, influenced by the revitalization program. Additionally, the arithmetic mean of the ratings from Question 5, which assessed satisfaction with the revitalization efforts, was 6.02. This suggests a generally positive opinion of the completed work, despite the various challenges faced by the city in recent times.

Conclusions and summary

Łódź, with its distinctive structure and rich urban history, does not pursue the establishment of a singular, clearly defined centre. The contemporary urban development of the city focuses on establishing several central nodes within the down-town area, each distinct in function and aesthetic. These nodes are designed to serve unique purposes while remaining complementary to one another. Such a strategy aligns with the diverse expectations of residents, whose perception of the city centre evolves based

on social, cultural, and historical factors. The historical transformations, particularly those linked to industrialization and subsequent urban planning initiatives, have profoundly shaped the current silhouette of Łódź.

Revitalization projects, such as the adaptation of post-industrial areas, demonstrate how degraded lands can be transformed into key hubs and new urban centres. In addition to the areas currently being modernized, there is also potential to create new centres that could complement the existing structure of the city centre.

In the context of conducting a social survey during ongoing revitalization efforts, these results provide preliminary insights. It is thus observed that the image of various parts of Łódź's city centre is becoming increasingly understandable to users of urban space. Residents express expectations not only regarding the creation of new areas for social activation but also emphasize the importance of respecting existing architecture, avoiding its transformation into a type of open-air museum. Survey respondents also point to the existence of various central points in the city outside of the city centre that require development or modernization, which could address most needs without the need to travel to the down-town. This suggests a potential decrease in interest in expanding the city centre in favour of developing local centres with which residents may feel a stronger connection. Therefore, further development in Łódź should focus on enhancing or complementing the functionality of existing local centres. It will also be important to create local service buildings in newly developed city districts, which are often characterized by a predominance of residential buildings and a poorly developed service sector. The conceptualization proposed by researchers provides a starting point for finding effective solutions. The aim is to create synergy between the form and function of space to improve the local quality of life. To achieve this goal, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary. This approach should integrate evolving urban development trends, communication preferences, and user behaviour observations (Damurski et al. 2018).

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Streszczenie

W poszukiwaniu centrum Łodzi – od powstania miasta po czasy współczesne

W artykule przedstawiono kompleksową analizę zmian w percepcji i funkcjonowaniu centrum Łodzi w kontekście przemian urbanistycznych i społecznych. Skoncentrowano się na identyfikacji kluczowych czynników wpływających na ewolucję przestrzenną i społeczną miasta, badając, jak historyczne i nowo powstające centra wpływają na jego strukturę i życie mieszkańców.

Wykorzystując metodologię opartą na analizie danych przestrzennych, historycznych oraz wyników przeprowadzonych badań terenowych i ankietowych, autorka dąży do zrozumienia dynamiki zmian w tkance miejskiej Łodzi.

We wnioskach podkreślono znaczenie adaptacyjnych strategii urbanistycznych, które uwzględniają zmieniające się potrzeby i oczekiwania społeczne, wskazując na rozwój wielu ośrodków funkcjonalnych jako odpowiedź na złożone wyzwania współczesnego miasta. Badanie rzuca światło na procesy restrukturyzacji przestrzennej, podkreślając rolę partycypacji społecznej i innowacyjnego podejścia w kształtowaniu przyszłości centrów miejskich.

Słowa kluczowe: Łódź, dziedzictwo przemysłowe, centrum miasta, rewitalizacja, rozwój urbanistyczny, strategie miejskie