

THE ŁÓDŹ ATLAS

Sheet V: Łódź in the high industrial period

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In the period between 1850 and 1914 under study in this sheet V, Łódź evolved from a compound of factory settlements with elements of small-town developments (primarily found in Stare Miasto and Nowe Miasto) into a large urban centre which gradually not only took on metropolitan landscape and spatial structure, but also expanded its various functions and facilities, without which a metropolis would not be able to exist. This process, however, had not finished by the end of the Russian rule: religious, health care, cultural, and secondary education institutions were established faster than the essential technical infrastructure components – the construction of water supply and sewage system had to wait until the inter-war period. Obviously, the city’s development was to a greater extent informed by the needs of the richer and better-educated minority than those of the prevalent working class, despite numerous initiatives undertaken by social activists and philanthropists.

Globally unparalleled was the rapid population growth in Lodz: in 1897 the city’s population, including that of its urbanised suburbs, was 314 000, while in 1914 this number grew to 630 000. The urbanisation process was naturally correlated with the industrial growth linked to the growing exports to the vast Russian market (approx. 70–75% of the production output) and enabled by the removal of customs barriers on the borders of Congress Poland and implementation of protectionist trade policies on the borders of the Russian Empire, and especially by utilising cheap Russian cotton. The number of spindles reached 525 000 in 1887 and 810 000 by 1910, which made Łódź the largest textile centre in Central and Ekstern Europe (although still nowhere near the size of the British textile centres).

The city population’s social structure was a curious and highly unstable mixture of different nationalities. The group of German settlers, prevailing in the early period of the city’s industrialisation (in the mid-century still approx. 70%), lost their dominance to the Jewish and, in particular, the Polish community, whose proportion as of the mid-19th century had become dominant, especially if counting in the inhabitants of the city’s rural-urban fringe. In 1915, Poles accounted for 51.4%, Jews for 36.4% and Germans only for 11.6% of the city’s population. However, the Polonisation process had little to do with the actual significance of both minorities: at the end of the century about 90% of the properties in Łódź were owned by Evangelicans and Jews (about half each) (S t e f a ń s k i 2001). The national sociotopography of Łódź could be described as follows: in the city’s rural-urban fringe (excluding Bałuty) prevalent was the Polish community, the inner city was nationally mixed, while the entire Stare Miasto (Old Town), parts of Bałuty, and northernmost parts of Nowe Miasto (New Town) with time became a Jewish district. However, it needs to be remembered that the proprietary relations in Łódź hardly lend themselves to regionalisation – ever since the liquidation of the ‘Jewish district’ in 1862 (P u ś 2001).

Until 1906, the administrative area of Łódź had not changed. Although it did incorporate forests, geenfields, and semi-rural areas, still outside the city limits were such crucial and urbanised complexes as the industrial Widzew, and in particular the rapidly growing (as of the 1850s) working class suburban district of Bałuty (with its predominantly wooden buildings), in the early 20th century accompanied by Chojny on the other side of the city. Paradoxically, these areas located outside the city limits were more attractive for worse-off settlers due to lower rents, possibilities of building below-standard houses, and lack of regulations regarding street standards. Planning intervention in these areas was limited to establishing market squares and main roads, whereas the remaining development was rather spontaneous. Notwithstanding the widespread awareness at the beginning of 20th century of the need to extend the city regulations to these exurban areas, too, the city limits’ expansions of 1906 and 1908 only half-solved the problem, since Bałuty and a larger part of Chojny still remained outside the municipal jurisdiction.

Still in 1880, the configurations of the industrial settlements established in the first half of the 19th century retained their semi-rural character: their vast areas still remained undeveloped. Nowa Dzielnica (New District), on the other hand, projected as an area for urban expansion (rather than for an extensively built-up artisan settlement), had not been fully delimited in the field. One additional element that hindered Dzielnica’s development was the railway line (Fabryczno-Łódzka) which was laid on the ground level or on small embankments and split even the existing streets (e.g. Targowa). The Silesian district - Obszar Ślązaków - (the name which later referred to the whole settlement south of the River Jasień) and most of Nowa Dzielnica were too peripheral in relation to the centre that had formed around Nowy Rynek (New Market) to be intensively developed. There was a need for the city regulations to be extended to the areas located much closer, yet still not included in the plans, i.e. in the west, in the fields representing the property of the old town burghers. About 1880, the first concept proposals for the ‘Wiązowa’ district (the name did not catch on) were put forward. The layout of the planned district was based on a rectangular arrangement of streets with the ‘Wiązowy’ Market (later Zielony Rynek) as the centre point. However, only the street network was delimited, while inside the quarters retained were the oblique farmland divisions which later became the boundaries of developed properties. This improvised layout stretched as far as Piotrkowska Street north of Dzielna Street (later Zielona Street).

Only Nowe Miasto (New Town) and the quarters lying alongside Piotrkowska Street had become, before 1880, the locations of enhanced development with a view to giving Łódź a more urban appearance. The share of the city’s built-up area increased, and so did the new buildings’ ratios, which only at the turn of the centuries reached the metropolitan level (4–5 storeys). The local authorities’ control over the city’s development was limited, both with respect to adapting existing factory settlement plan to the needs of a densely developed city (which led to the formation of city quarters of a size not to be found elsewhere), and fitting it out with urban infrastructure or important public buildings. The urban infrastructure, until the outbreak of World War I, was only comprised of the gas network and electrical grid built mainly in central districts, as well as the electric tramways network. In view of the absence of the capital city functions (at the time Łódź was a city located in the Gubernia Piotrkowska (Piotrków Province) and its ‘provincial capital’ status was honorary rather than entailing real capital city competencies), and in view of the thin city budget, public buildings were mostly established by individual citizens and non-government organizations. Hardly ever were they adequately prominent in public space – despite the various intentions.

Certainly with the objective to intensify the city’s structure in the already urbanised areas, around 1880 delimited was a ‘city line’ beyond which larger-scale buildings were not to be located. The city authorities also managed to delimit an important longitudinal street: so-called Promenada (officially Spacerowa Street), two separate sections of which were only connected in 1913 (which at last gave the Moravian Brethren a new plot of land to establish a church), but the plan to build it up with prominent edifices never came off in full. A certain role in the city’s urban plan was played by the practice of delimiting ‘private streets’ - Pasaż Meyera, Pasaż Szuleca, Orla Street, and Gubernatorska Street - which usually represented

a higher development standard at least for having trees planted on the sides, or for the neat architectural designs of the buildings (Pasaż Meyera). One characteristic feature of the city’s development was that there were built up the street frontages, which practice had already commenced in the first half of 19th century, that the municipal rights granted to the artisan settlements did not at all envisage: first in the streets perpendicular to Piotrkowska Street, and then in those parallel to it. In this way created were divided configurations of secondary building plots that were perpendicular to the original extended plots. One important central city street that waited to be developed until the 1880’s was Dzika Street which the planners tried to give a noble character by locating there a public park and a middle school building, and changing its name from Dzika (Wild) to Mikołajewska.

On the intervention of the authorities, and in the case of Jews – with support from the Poznański family (Jewish industrialists), new cemeteries were successfully planned: Christian cemeteries in Ogrodowa Street and at Doly, and a Jewish cemetery at Doly. As regards public greenery, initially private entrepreneurs (Milsch and the Gehligs, who owned private gardens on the outskirts, but primarily the Anstads, who established a well arranged toll Park at Helenów) had the upper hand over the public authorities which only established the Kolejowy Park by the railway station. The public initiative in this respect only gained momentum at the end of 19th century.

The extension to Łódź of the Fabryczno-Łódzka railroad (originally planned as a transit line) caused the areas in the foreground (though not in the background) of the railway station to undergo intensive development. Consequently, starting from the end of the 19th century the city centre began to drift away from Nowy Rynek (New Market) southwards along Piotrkowska Street. The second railway line that appeared in the city, the Warsaw-Kalisz Railway, did not bring any significant changes to the city’s spatial structure – probably as much for its remoteness as for the short-lived effects on the city during its most intensive growth that was brought to an end by a cut-off from the once lucrative markets in the post-revolutionary Russia. One favourable effect of building this railway line was that works we-re undertaken to transform the eastern edge of the adjacent forest – former Olszniak – into a park.

The increasingly widespread use of the steam engine freed factory locations from the river power – starting from the mid-century factories would be erected wherever there was available space. Interestingly, neither the road network nor the railways played any part in this process. The farther south of Piotrkowska, the more often on the plots assigned thereto located were industrial developments, mostly at the back, leaving the front portion assigned for housing purposes. The compound comprised of the factory and the owner’s residence – at first usually being an artisan’s house in nature, later taking the form of a villa or city palace – became a typical spatial and functional arrangement of Łódź’s textile ‘manufactory’.

Some industrial complexes constituted separate and sizeable enclaves. In many cases they impeded the city’s development by obstructing the road network expansion (e.g. the Biedermanns’ compound on the extension of Północna Street), or being an effective spatial stumbling block which affected the pace of development of more isolated parts of Łódź (e.g. the Scheibler’s complex). A major share of the former ‘waterfront factory estates’ was incorporated by Karol Wilhelm Scheibler’s plant to form a vast and functionally complex site. Apart from the industrial buildings, a long railway siding, and a manor farm, it comprised the largest sponsored workers’ housing estate at Księży Młyn (later, sponsored housing buildings were also erected elsewhere within the “jurisdiction”). Scheibler’s philanthropic scheme was complemented with the establishment of schools, hospitals, and workers’ clubs. Other well-known industrialists followed the same pattern, but generally their investments were more modest (e.g. Izrael Poznański) or scattered around the urban space (e.g. Baron Heinzl). A similar scheme was delivered by Heinzel and Kunitzer in the industrial settlement at Widzew.

Commentary on the maps

Map 1. is a synthetic attempt to reproduce the city’s arrangement around 1880 on the basis of the plans made before 1850. At that time, the planning arrangement of artisan settlements was being filled with predominantly industrial developments. Stare Miasto (Old Town) preserved the relics of farming activities: burghers’ fields and barn compounds. The primary cartographic source was “Majewski’s plan”, with the side sources being the slightly earlier “Scheibler’s plan” and the “Trzywiorstówka plan”. The picture of the land outside the city limits has been presented in a simplified form. The main streets have been marked with their present names (it is worth noting that in 1863 different names for the western streets intersecting with Piotrkowska Street were introduced). Due to the great significance of the German population at that time, more important topographical names were introduced in German, the pronunciation of which was completely different from that in Polish (based on the German names, Yiddish names were created afterwards). It must be remembered that alongside official names, colloquial names were also used.

Map 2. is an attempt to reproduce the city’s arrangement on the eve of WWI. Over 30 years, the built-up area had significantly increased, especially in the newly-planned ‘Wiązowa’ district, in the Ślązaki (Silesian) district, and in the southern districts of Łódka – these were predominantly housing developments with various building ratios. In the city’s landscape the number of public buildings substantially grew and so did the various types of factory owners’ residences, the largest of which were surrounded by extensive gardens. Also, notable is a great increase in the industrial area which, from the formerly separated enclaves had transformed into compound built-up areas, usually with complicated property divisions (on the map minor factory areas were omitted). For graphic reasons, only map 2 includes a set of official Russian names, even though they had obviously been used before. The main cartographic source was “Jasiński’s Plan”, for the areas incorporated in and surrounding the city it was the “Dwuwiorstówka Plan”, a topographical map on file at the Łódź University Library, and a German map of Western Russia were used. Additionally, some contemporary city maps were used as auxiliary sources.

Map 3. shows the arrangement of two major industrial complexes around 1914. The main sources were: P o p ł a w s k a (1973,1992) (for Poznański’s factory), compiled under the supervision of P a w ł o w s k i (2001) and graphical imagery in the study by S a l m, W e s o ł o w s k i (1993)

Map 4. presents the transformations in the central city quarter caused by the increase and evolution of the city’s development, and delimitation of Spacerowa Street in a long timeframe from the arrangement of the original artisan settlements until the interwar period. The classification of buildings was made as per their function and type (concerning houses and tenement houses). The analysis provides evidence that the rate of developing the original town quarters varied, and - despite the considerable development density – undeveloped plots existed for a relatively long time, as well as that the process of replacing the existing developments with multi-storey metropolitan buildings was never complete, for which reason the architectural street landscape was always full of architectural scale contrasts. The picture is complemented with a cross-section of Spacerowa Street that was intended as an elegant corso with green space inside, but its development was very slow.

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