

## POST-WAR ATTEMPTS TO BUILD A MODERN METROPOLIS AND THE PROBLEM OF LODZ HISTORICAL HERITAGE

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### Abstract

*Large parts of Lodz underwent a significant transformation from 1945 to 1989. This largely concerned the city's downtown area. Quarters of historic buildings were replaced with new buildings, constituting parts of the new center. The ambition of both the new authorities and the city's inhabitants was to create a representative area corresponding to the importance of the dynamically developing capital of the region.*

*The article presents the views of residents – both professionals (architects, planners) and “ordinary” ones – regarding the city's historical legacy against the background of their ideas of the modern Lodz of the future. The work aims to present how these views evolved over several post-war decades.*

*The research was based on an in-depth query of the Lodz daily press supplemented with information from industry or scientific studies and books and materials from archives.*

*The results show a clear evolution in residents' views regarding the city's historical legacy. Starting from a rather dismissive attitude in the immediate post-war period to the complete recognition of its value and the need for protection in the decade of the 1980s.*

**Keywords:** Lodz; Poland; Historical city center; Urban and architectural heritage; Redevelopment of a 19<sup>th</sup> century city; Destruction; Postwar modernism; Identity

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### Introduction

The history of modern Lodz began 200 years ago, in the 1820s. It was then decided to include the city among the industrial settlements and was assigned the role of a weaving and cloth center. At the same time, two industrial settlements were planned south of the existing small agricultural Lodz, which gave rise to the city as we know it today [1]. In just over a hundred years, Lodz, inhabited by approximately 800 people, transformed into the second largest city in Poland, with a population of approximately 700,000 inhabitants before the outbreak of World War II. It also became an important industrial center of the country.

Such rapid and not fully controlled development of the city contributed to the emergence of many various problems. Chaotic development, mixing of residential and industrial functions, insufficient transport connections of individual areas and terrible hygiene and sanitary conditions are just some of the problems that residents had to face in the inter- and immediately post-war periods.

A characteristic feature of the spatial shape of Lodz, for almost its entire area, was that the city space gave the impression of a construction process that had been ongoing for over 100 years. Its individual parts, with a few exceptions, seemed unfinished. The exceptions were some small parts of the city center that “reached some finished form of urban development and, in a sense, finished the process of construction and shaping as a fully finished part of the city” [2]. However,

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the mixture of architectural forms juxtaposed next to each other was still nothing special. The neighbors of big city buildings were, for example, low buildings. Additionally, the interiors of the quarters were often filled with various types of makeshift cells, sheds, workshops or warehouses that contrasted with the surrounding tenement houses. At the same time, the raw and blind gable walls were exposed and exposed to general view from the streets or squares. Some parts of the city remained empty or poorly developed, which was especially noticeable in the city center.

Just after the end of World War II, most of the buildings were built at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among them, you could find buildings from earlier eras or from the last dozen or so years. Additionally, the fragment that clearly stood out from the rest was the area of destruction covering part of the former ghetto, which was located in the northern part of the city. Despite this change, from the perspective of the city space, its development and equipment, Lodz after the end of World War II resembled pre-war Lodz with all its flaws.

The article aims to familiarize the reader with how the inhabitants of Lodz related to its historical heritage during the post-war period of very intense changes in the city space. The voices of both specialists – architects and urban planners – as well as “ordinary” city residents are presented. The text is an attempt to capture their moods, thoughts and views regarding the above-mentioned issue. Hence the large number of quotes, which results from the will to give voice to the inhabitants of Lodz at that time without interpreting their words or assessing the views expressed. Some ideas, sometimes very controversial from today’s perspective, are very interesting examples of how the city, its heritage and space were once thought about.

The time scope of the article covers the period from the end of World War II to the political transformation in 1989. The scope covers Lodz as a whole and its most important parts – the center area, Wolności Square (the cradle of modern Lodz) and Piotrkowska Street (historically the main and most important street of the city).

## Materials and Methods

The text below was created mainly based on articles, interviews and letters published in the Lodz press – “Głos Robotniczy” (“GR”), “Dziennik Łódzki” (“DŁ”) and “Odgłosy”—selected as part of an in-depth archival query, including all issues of the mentioned titles from the period 1945–89. For decades, these newspapers have reported what, where and when is and will be designed, built, rebuilt or demolished. Sometimes, on the occasion of larger or more prestigious investments, there were lively discussions in letters from readers expressing their opinions on a given topic for weeks (one of them was the issue of the transformation of the city in the context of the existing historical buildings). At that time, “GR” published “discussion articles.” In “DŁ” they took the form of a regular “discussion tribune” entitled “Lodz must be liked,” which began with a letter from the architect Ludwik Mackiewicz [3]. The same newspaper also published “Report of the Week” [4], which summarized activities at Lodz’s most important construction sites. The importance of the issues described can also be proven by the fact that issue 5/6 of the trade magazine “Architektura” from 1973 was entirely devoted to Lodz projects (including the reconstruction of the Lodz city center). The above-mentioned initiatives may confirm that residents were not indifferent to the future shape of the city and enjoyed great interest from them. Press articles are supplemented with information from professional or scientific studies and books, as well as materials from archives (city [Lodz City Council Archive – AUMŁ], state [National Archive in Lodz – APL], SARP [Archive of the Association of Polish Architects – A-SARP], university [Archival materials of the Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning of the Lodz University of Technology – AIAiUPL]).

## Results and Discussion

Just after the war, the new authorities' goal was to rebuild the city in the spirit of socialist realism. Its main purpose was to radically improve the living conditions of the inhabitants. In later years, after the collapse of the socialist realist doctrine, the authorities sought to create Lodz as a modern city – a metropolis that was the capital of the region, a thriving industrial and scientific center with unique functions, with a new center reflecting the ambitions of its residents.

### *a. Just after the war – late 1940s and 1950s*

The new post-war political reality played a huge role in how urban space was shaped. Shortly after the end of the war, people realized the social function of “city arteries and squares as areas through which the masses of humanity flow every day, as auditoriums from which the masses experience their city and finally as areas of high concentration of various types of service facilities” [5]. In addition to the urban layout of entire districts, the architectural form of individual objects and the appropriate equipment of the space (paintings, sculptures etc.), thanks to which its imagery and narrative character were to be strengthened, the message behind these elements was also important. The architecture was one of how a break with the city's “bad” past was to be achieved in favor of a new vision, a beautiful and healthy Lodz – “the city of a joyful tomorrow” [6]. The investments themselves were also not accidental – residential, cultural and industrial. They were to be preserved in the minds of the inhabitants as an expression of the people's state's concern for its citizens [6].

An important task of the post-war period was to create new spaces with which the city's inhabitants could identify, including, to a large extent, people who had recently arrived in Lodz. Such an area was to be the city center, constituting “the core of the city, the center of political life, where the most important party, administrative and cultural institutions would be concentrated, with a distinct silhouette and large scale. A place where rallies, demonstrations, proletarian parades and gigantic ritual spectacles would take place” [6].

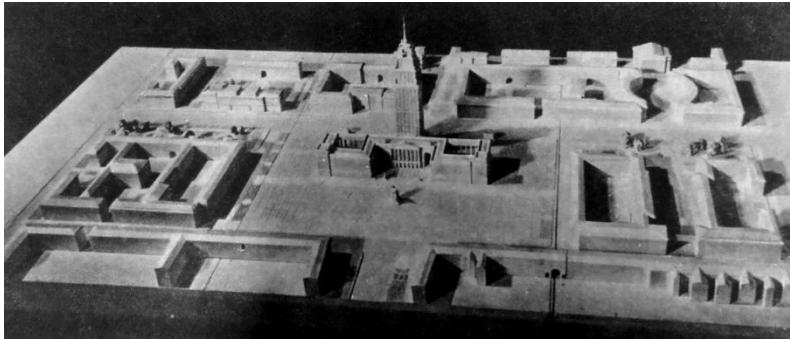
So far, the most important space in Lodz, concentrating particularly important functions and facilities, was primarily a part of Piotrkowska Street, which had “distinct city features” and where the city's most important public institutions and services were located. However, the existing spatial structure of Lodz did not meet the requirements of the new, post-war reality. As it was then believed, its disadvantage was:

“the lack of a [city] center that would become the center of political life would bring together the most important public buildings, which, with their design and monumentality, would determine the composition of the city and its silhouette. The current layout of Piotrkowska Street does not fulfill this task. Being many kilometers long, it does not have a square suitable for mass meetings and the small spacing of buildings that determines the width of the street does not allow for the scale of political demonstrations typical of a city of half a million inhabitants” [7].

Moreover, the existing spatial structure was identified with “capitalist exploitation,” the symbol of which was the most important street in Lodz – Piotrkowska [6]. Due to the way it was shaped and the very poor hygiene and sanitary conditions, the city center was even considered a slum. Additionally, the narrow streets of the center and the lack of clear spatial dominants were not “suitable” scenery for gigantic demonstrations or parades. Hence, the plans for a new city center should not come as a surprise, as it would stand out from the older parts not only with its form but also with its functions. The existing part of the city, which was a district of “banks, wholesale trade, luxury shops and entertainment venues,” was to become an arena of “social life with the greatest ideological tension” [5]. Therefore, the need to create spaces with which residents could identify and which would meet the ideological requirements of the time turned out to be important.

The expression of this type of postulate was the vision of a monumental development located on the east-west axis of the city (the route of Główna Street, then Stalina Street – the

current route of Mickiewiczza and Piłsudskiego Avenue), perpendicular to Piotrkowska – “Stalina Avenue, grand in its ideological and artistic design, which will become the proper city center in the future” [7]. Thanks to this measure, the current main street of the city would be degraded and transformed into a shopping avenue [6]. The most important element of the layout was the planned central square (located at the intersection of the two main compositional axes of the city – the historic Piotrkowska Street and the new Stalina Avenue), with a skyscraper located there, towering over the city (Fig. 1). Ultimately, this vision could not be realized.



**Fig. 1.** A socialist realism vision of the square at the intersection of al. Stalina Avenue (Główna Street) from Piotrkowska Street and Kościuszki Avenue, first half of the 1950s, photo: M. Szarfharc, source: [8]

It was also not possible to depreciate the importance of Piotrkowska itself, as evidenced by the words of the president of the Lodz branch of SARP, Waław Bald. At the end of the 1950s, he commented on the most important street in Lodz as follows:

“Piotrkowska, despite the diversity of the style of its houses, is already a piece of our city's history,” says Bald. – It's what it is like – it has a certain charm for the inhabitants of Lodz. We, architects, do not want to destroy this charm. We want to preserve some of the facades designed by famous Lodz architects for many years to come, facades that are already historic and have their own artistic value” [9].

In the initial post-war period, special emphasis was placed on the organization of common spaces, especially squares. These were places where rallies and demonstrations could take place. Because the way they were shaped did not meet the requirements of the socialist realist doctrine in force at that time, plans were made to “reconstruct” a number of Lodz squares located both in the city center and in other districts [6]. It was planned, among others:

“shaping Komuny Paryskiej Square, giving form and content to Niepodległości Square, shaping the development of Reymonta Square, [...], creating a reduced size, but intended to constitute an architectural whole, Dąbrowskiego Square with the National Theatre under construction, creating a square next to the Łódź-Fabryczna station from the side of Kilińskiego Street” [10].

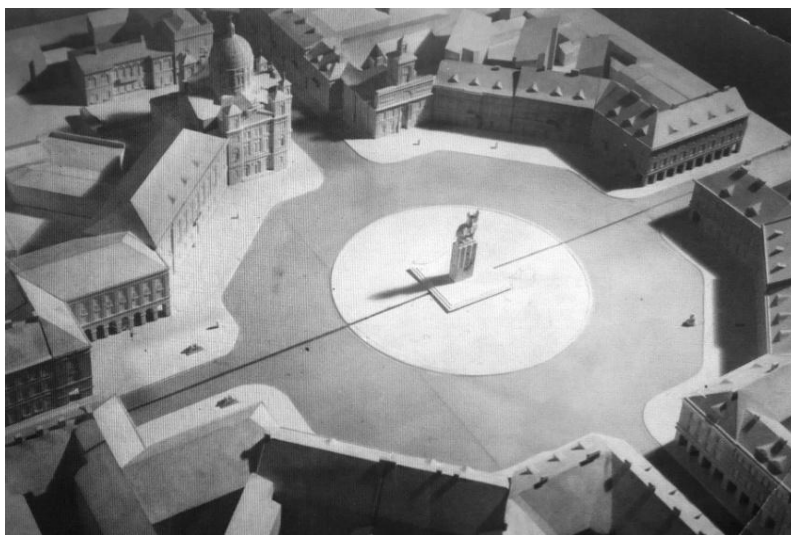
Wolności Square was to have a special setting. Here, the main goal was to “tidy up” its buildings. Although its character was urban, the surrounding buildings were chaotic. It resembled, as it was written in the early 1950s, “a jaw full of uneven teeth” [11]. This had a very negative impact on the appearance of this space, which was even called “ugly.” Describing the buildings around the square, it was regretted that:

“Unfortunately, only the town hall and the sies have survived in their original form and of the square's surroundings, out of a total of 16 plots, only 5 single-story tenement houses, which are falling into ruin, remain, with facades disfigured by alterations, deprived of the old, noble architectural details and disfigured by the lack of proper maintenance.

On the remaining plots, disproportionately tall, inappropriate and pretentious-shaped buildings were built, which destroyed the uniform character of the square's

development; the late 19th and early 20th centuries have produced a shabby development of the immediate rear with tall buildings, gables and the rear of outbuildings, visible above the square's former low enclosure and dominating the overall shabby appearance of the square today" [10].

Then, in the early 1950s, a project was created to tidy up the facades of Wolności Square in Lodz (Figs. 2 and 3). Although it was a project with a very traditional way of shaping the space, fitting into the existing urban layout, the proposed "tidying up" was not a delicate cosmetic. In fact, it concerned quite serious interference with existing facilities located around the square. Due to the planned reconstruction, it was considered how it should be done. In the discussion that took place then, among others, in "Głos Robotniczy," architects clearly indicated the square as a historical place, important in the urban fabric and being a remnant of the times when urban composition played an important role in Lodz.



**Fig. 2.** Design of tidying up the facades of Wolności Square in Lodz, visible buildings of equal height and unified roof forms, and the characteristic entrance to Pomorska Street (on the left). Source: APL, ref. Ł-II 3/17



**Fig. 3.** Design of tidying up the facades of Wolności Square in Lodz. The southwestern part of the frontage of Wolności Square, source: APL, ref. 39/633/0/5/1502

At the same time, they understood its "historical nature" slightly differently. Some experts considered the entire layout important; others considered only selected elements of the square to be important.

The former market square was indicated as "[...] the only remaining historical motif of the city with a single-story building, emphasizing the dominant importance of the town hall and the former visual appearance of the market square" [12]. Cyprian Jaworski also drew attention to the

appropriate proportions of the square and its former enclosure, which “[...] created a finished architectural and aesthetic whole, adapted to the scale of the city at that time” [10]. At the same time, he recognized that “Wolności Square is historic, as are parts of its surroundings, but mainly only the town hall can be considered a monument. Apart from the town hall, the historic element of the square is currently primarily the square plan as an octagonal form and its scale” [10]. Bolesław Tatarkiewicz, on the other hand, had a slightly different opinion and emphasized:

“[...] the need to respect the few traces that remain in Lodz from the period of its urban splendor. Wolności Square should absolutely be treated as a monument and carefully preserved in its original appearance, especially since both the then restrained architecture and the urban layout completely deserve it” [13].

It is clear that already at that time the square was considered a particularly important place that should be approached with special care. At the same time, people were aware of the problems with the existing buildings around the site and the need to transform them, as evidenced by the opinion of another discussant:

“Someone will say that what is currently in this square is ugly and there is nothing to regret. I agree about the ugliness, but it does not justify the fact that Wolności Square, as a historical remnant of our city, after recomposing the single-story buildings, will have a positive impact on the accent of the town hall and the reconstruction of the historical center of the development of Łódź” [12].

At the same time, the architects of that time believed that “[...] Wolności Square, as the former New Market Square, should be both tidy and transformed, but only after a deep and comprehensive consideration of this issue, both in terms of urban planning and external architectural design [...]” [14]. They also pointed out that “preserving the only example of a national, regional architectural form in the city, perhaps on a larger scale, is consistent with the postulates of socialist realism” [15], which was very important at that time.

It was also considered how this “tidying up” should be done and the extent of transformations. Some architects called for preserving the original, single-story buildings of the square as much as possible, while others called for its transformation (raising), while preserving its character. The second solution was chosen by the already mentioned C. Jaworski, who wrote that:

“It seems that the only real way to tidy up Wolności Square is to level out the buildings around the square by raising the buildings to two floors, possibly equalize the dimensions of the buildings, skillfully reduce the excessive heights of later buildings while at the same time giving the whole, through modifications to the façade, an architectural character corresponding to the era of the square’s creation. Covering the buildings with steep, tile roofs will give the whole a more solid and aesthetic form and color. This arrangement of buildings will cover the unsightly view of the back area and will unite and tidy up the overall view. This will not be a falsification of monuments, nor, on the other hand, a loss of the historical and historic character of the square; it will be the shape of the square in a new form, but in a form related to the past and tradition” [10].

Despite the doubts, it was finally decided to increase the height of the square's buildings, considering it the most reasonable option. The college justified this decision as follows:

“The extension of the square walls by one story raises objections due to the preservation of the historic town hall as the dominant feature of the square. However, due to the need to adapt the square to today’s needs, the presented solution should be considered the only realistic one. [...]”

The presented alternative of building a superstructure on the existing butcheries instead of leaving them in the form of terraces seems to be more correct. While maintaining the general character of historical architecture, it would be necessary to avoid faithful reproduction of old motifs in the treatment of details” [15].

The design made at that time emphasized the most important elements of the square and drew on patterns considered the most valuable by contemporary architects. The architects continued the spatial arrangement created in the third decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, trying to organize it as much as possible, skillfully using and strengthening its compositional values. The designers aimed primarily at equalizing the height of the buildings to two floors and an attic (which involved raising the lower buildings and lowering the taller tenement houses located on the square's northern side), trying to cover the outbuildings visible from the square. In addition to the church and the town hall, it was also assumed that the form of the roofs of individual buildings would be unified. Finally, after over 100 years and while maintaining its characteristic shape, the entrance to Pomorska Street (the former butcheries), located on the eastern side of the square, was also enclosed. Ultimately, only a small part of the project was completed and ideas for transforming the square were developed in later years, which will be discussed later.

### ***b. The 1960s – the beginning of great changes***

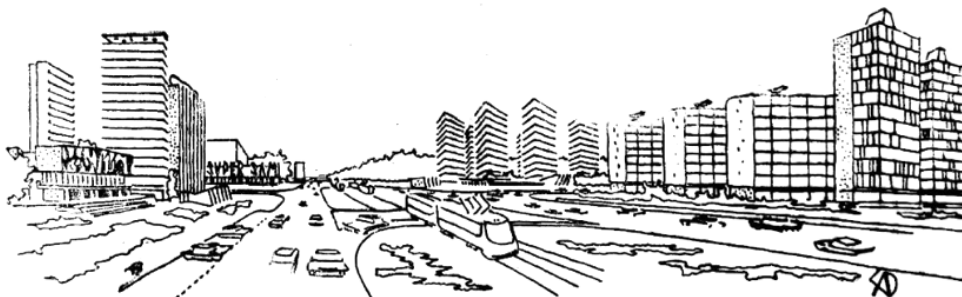
Further bold visions of the reconstruction of Lodz began to appear at the beginning of the 1960s. It was a special time for the city because it was then (1961) that the first post-war spatial development plan was adopted ("*Ogólny plan zagospodarowania przestrzennego miasta Łodzi; plan kierunkowy na rok 1980*"). It had a huge impact not only on its overall shape but also on the way its urban spaces were created, including many city center areas. In this decade, the SARP competition for the city center of Lodz was also organized ("*Konkurs nr 366 na centrum Łodzi*"), which, in a sense, initiated the process of rebuilding some areas of the city center [16].

The articles published then in the daily press and the accompanying illustrations (Fig. 4) reflected the nature of the proposed changes and at the same time showed how the provisions of the adopted spatial development plan were imagined to relate to reality. Some descriptions did not specify in detail what exactly was to be found and where or what it should look like. However, they presented preliminary ideas as to the expected form of some parts of the city. Many of them concerned the Lodz downtown area. It was planned to give it a metropolitan character, among others, by constructing high-rise buildings that take the place of existing, low and inconspicuous buildings [17]. New buildings in the shape of the popular "Adaś" (the characteristic apartment block at Piotrkowska Street was built in the 1950s) were to be built in place of the single-story wooden houses at Piotrkowska Street, dating from the first period of industrial development in Lodz [18].

At that time, the inhabitants of Lodz saw the Lodz of the future as a large, dynamic city with a developed and efficient transport system. Tall buildings were planned to be located along rebuilt communication routes, including Zachodnia Street. It was assumed that the combination of these two elements – tall buildings and communication arteries – would change the character of the city center at that time. Two-level, collision-free intersections; pedestrian underpasses; numerous parking lots; and 60–80-meter-wide dual carriageways with a tram track between them made up the city's "modern" communication system. These arteries were planned to be supplemented with greenery – e.g., the rebuilt street. The main street was seen as a walking boulevard. The number of city center residents was expected to be reduced by approximately half. In addition, it was assumed that many industrial, craft and service businesses located in the area were to be closed down. It was intended to recreate them in areas outside the city center. The "wooden hovels" and small tenement houses were to be replaced by new commercial, service, catering and hotel facilities, passages and green areas [19].

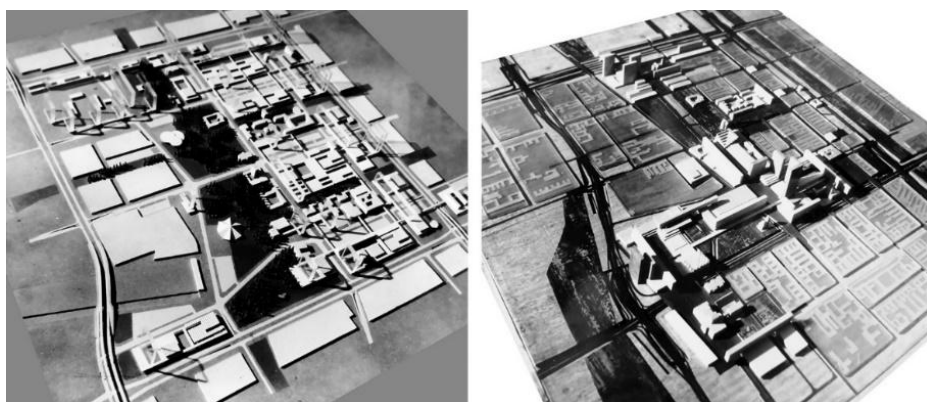
These visions were consistent with architects' views, including the approach to the city's fabric at that time. Jerzy Hryniewicz, long-time president of SARP, saw two possible solutions for the transformation of Lodz. The first is "general reconstruction," and the second is leaving the old part and surrounding it with new housing estates. However, he considered "general reconstruction" to be more correct, in which high skyscrapers would be built in the developed

area, in place of the old buildings. This approach was intended to relax the dense development and provide access to fresh air, light and greenery [21].



**Fig. 4.** Główna Street – view from the area of the intersection with Piotrkowska Street towards Sienkiewicz Street; on the left you can see, among others, the philharmonic building and on the right the buildings of the Śródmieście Residential District (ŚDM) [20]

All projects carried out as part of the SARP competition for the reconstruction of the city center of Lodz presented very bold solutions, both in terms of scale and uncompromising attitude towards the existing structure (Fig. 5). All works assumed the creation of a spatial arrangement clearly different from the rest of the Lodz city center. All of them also assumed a huge scale of demolitions. In most cases, the historical fabric of the city was not treated as something valuable, as evidenced by the fact that only two competition entries recognized the public and social importance of Piotrkowska Street. In work 02 of the Lodz team, it was considered “necessary to include the Piotrkowska Street as one of the main elements of the center’s composition, both for emotional and functional reasons” [22]. Its traditional role “as a set of functions and a characteristic spatial entity” [22] was also noted. In work 04 of the Wrocław team, it was proposed to transform it into a promenade, free from vehicular traffic and change it “into the main pedestrian route surrounded by trade, gastronomy and buildings concentrating various interests of the inhabitants of Lodz” [22]. This type of transformation of the function of the most important street in Lodz was intended to “specially emphasize the importance of Piotrkowska Street, characteristic of Lodz, based on the city’s history and tradition” [22].



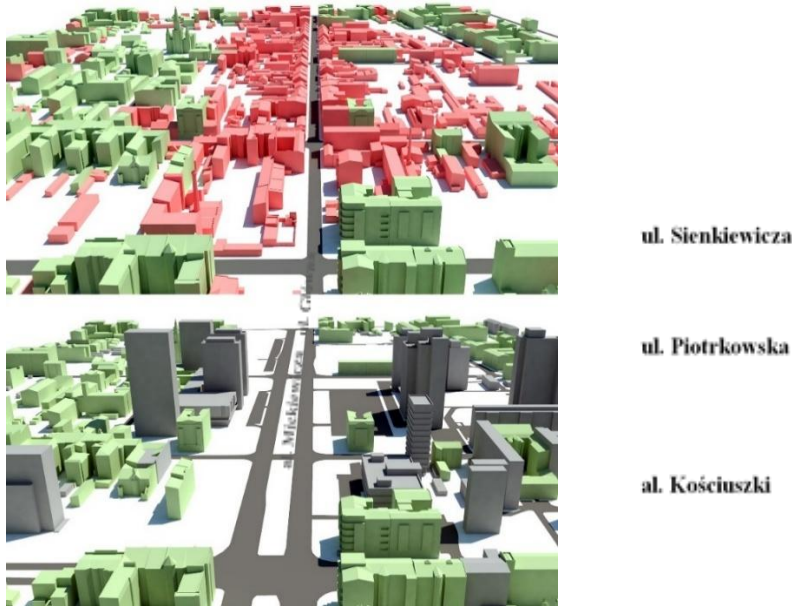
**Fig. 5.** Competition for the center of Lodz, work 08 (left) and work 05 (right). Source: A-SARP, ref. 3/5199

The reconstruction of two parts of the Lodz city center (the “nest” at the Fabryczny station and at Główna Street, which was transformed into the W-Z route (the east-west communication artery) connecting the east and west of the city, the designs of which were created as a result of post-competition studies) started shortly after the competition, in the late 1960s and was



associated with numerous demolitions of the existing buildings, a large part of which still consisted of structures from the end of the 19th and the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries (Figs. 6 and 7). As it was written in the Lodz press:

“There are still many houses in post-industrial Lodz that date back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and their appearance spoils the appearance of what would otherwise be a modern Lodz. In the future, multi-story skyscrapers will be built in their place. Lodz city planners will plan many squares, green areas and parks” [23].



**Fig. 6.** W-Z route – route Mickiewicz Avenue (formerly Bandurskiego Street) and Piłsudskiego Avenue (formerly Główna Street). View towards the east. In the foreground, the intersection with Kościuszki Avenue, next to Piotrkowska, Sienkiewicza and Kilińskiego streets. The illustration at the top shows the situation before World War II, i.e., the period of the most intensive development of properties along the streets. The illustration at the bottom shows a dual carriageway along which new developments have been built. On the left (northern) side you can see one of the “nests” of the new center and on the right (southern) side you can see, among others, high-rise buildings in the Śródmieście Residential District (ŚDM) and the “Central” building complex (department store and office building). Source: ed. Own



**Fig. 7.** “Nest” at Główna Street, state after the end of World War II (on the left) and after partial implementation of new buildings (on the right), source: ed. Own

The result of this type of activity was to be the Lodz of the future. A “modern city,” whose downtown, planned on a grand scale and tailored to the expectations of its residents, would consist of buildings with “modern architecture,” preferably impressive and representative buildings and would be a place with numerous cafes, cinemas and theaters. It was also predicted that “the center

of Lodz will not look worse than the current center of Warsaw” [24]. Readers expected differently shaped streets and buildings surrounding them.

“In the new city center of Lodz, along the rebuilt, wide streets, I expect more modern architecture, especially medium-rise and high-rise buildings. They allow for better use of the most valuable construction areas, add charm to the city and leave more space for urban greenery, of which there will certainly be more in the new center than at present” [25].

### *c. The 1970s - great reconstruction and dualism of views*

A problem resulting directly from the issue of city reconstruction was the attitude of Lodz’s inhabitants towards its historic buildings. And this one was varied. Some saw its importance and the need to protect it; others recognized these values only partially or not at all. Hence, there have been various proposals regarding this problem. The spectrum of proposed actions included a compromise between the coexistence of old and new buildings and their complete demolition. The press wrote, among others, about the need to integrate some of the old fragments into the “future shape of the city” while mercilessly demolishing the rest to:

“trace new streets, build parking lots, new houses, shops, cinemas, cafes and restaurants. Finally, it will be necessary to let more fresh air into the city center and create new squares. [...] The city needs a real center built on a real scale” [26].

Others believed that:

“it is worth preserving something of old Lodz during this [reconstruction], although I agree with those who say that the value of Lodz’s monuments is negligible and that they should not be ‘forced’ to be created and protected. In my opinion, the worst solutions are compromise solutions, probably undertaken under the pressure of clashing tendencies of conservative and modern thinking” [25].

Questions were also asked: “Isn’t it time to do the city center properly, not sparing tenement houses with narrow courtyards?” [27]. The discussions in the press concerned in particular the area of Wolności Square (which was not included in the competition for the center) and Piotrkowska Street leading off it. Despite attempts to organize this space in the 1950s, the character of the square did not change over the years and its appearance was not the only problem. Back in the mid-1970s, the architect Witold Millo, who by the end of the 1960s had developed as many as 18 different variants of the reconstruction of the square and its immediate surroundings [28], drew attention to the specificity of this place and the paradox that, on the one hand, it was an area extremely important for the city and on the other hand, it was full of all kinds of complex problems. In a conversation with Antoni Szram, the then City Conservator of Monuments, he recalled that:

“The area of Wolności Square, the former New Town of Lodz cloth, is, in my deep belief, a special area for the city. On the one hand, the historical heritage, the square itself and the neighboring historic complexes with the unique Piotrkowska Street; on the other, the area with the highest concentration of cultural objects. All this raises the profile of the team. However, this part of the city requires thorough reconstruction for social reasons. There’s nothing to hide. It is also a slum area. The deplorable technical condition of the buildings and the density and biological conditions of the inhabitants cannot be tolerated any longer and no “cosmetics” of the facade will help...” [29].

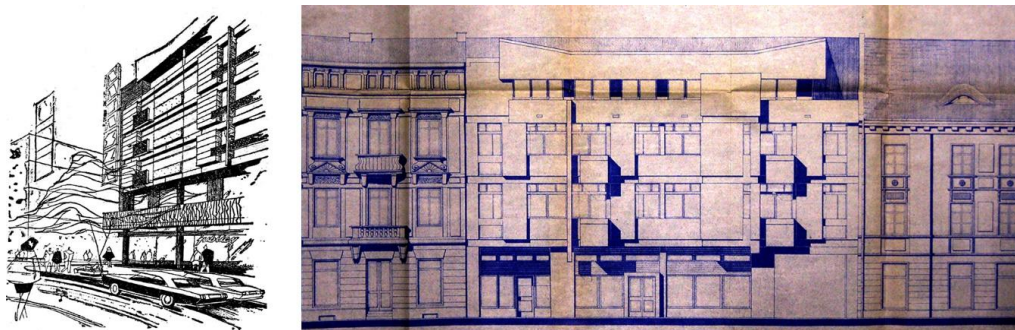
The concepts created by W. Millo meant giving up the “pseudo-historical appearance” [30] of this part of the city, which was desired in earlier years. At the same time, some people were concerned about the planned changes. They were related to, among others, the inconsistency with which urban planning concepts for this place have been implemented so far and the fact that their result could be a loss of the previous character of the square. Press editor Jerzy Wilmański emphasized that:

“The architectural structure of the past cannot be treated on the basis of ‘nice’ and ‘ugly’—the atmosphere and character of the entire complex are important and perhaps even more important. About the so-called Marconi’s butcheries [...] some specialists say, ‘Just an average monument, no special value.’ Maybe. But in the framework of the entire architecture of the square, in the historical shape of the complex, this ‘average’ monument is extremely important. Just as important are tenement houses and buildings, which, although they do not bear the sign of ‘zero-class monuments,’ create the character of Wolności Square.

Therefore, the point is not to destroy this character when organizing the square but to ‘fill’ it with a new object in an extremely balanced way. I am afraid of these inconsistencies in the case of the square, because construction errors are, as we know, irreversible” [31].

The new buildings stood out clearly in their appearance from the existing historical buildings (Fig. 8). At the same time, they maintained their dimensions, organized the space of the square and improved the proportions of the urban enclosure. Such contrasts in buildings were not and are not unheard of. However, this kind of compromise was not appreciated by many people. As it was written:

“I guess an expression of such a compromise is the project of rebuilding the Wolności Square that has already been approved for implementation. Since the defenders of monuments would like to see one- or two-story houses around the Kościuszko monument and the modernists would like to see skyscrapers around the Kościuszko monument, it was decided to build the square with five-story houses. Of course, the intermediate solution does not satisfy either party and is probably not happy for the city. Questionable modernity is to be combined with a questionable monument. Modernity is to be represented by houses like hundreds of them in Lodz but with better facades. History... the octagonal shape of the square” [25].



**Fig. 8.** Seals at Wolności Square, drawing by W. Millo (on the left), source: [28], AUMŁ, ref. 4/1524/4 (right)

However, many wanted more radical changes to the square and its immediate surroundings (Fig. 9). Some “modernization” proposals, from today’s perspective, may seem incredible to us, especially the extremely uncompromising ones. This especially applies to the ideas of huge demolitions, including the above-mentioned Wolności Square and Piotrkowska Street or criticism of the proposals presented by architects and urban planners regarding these places.

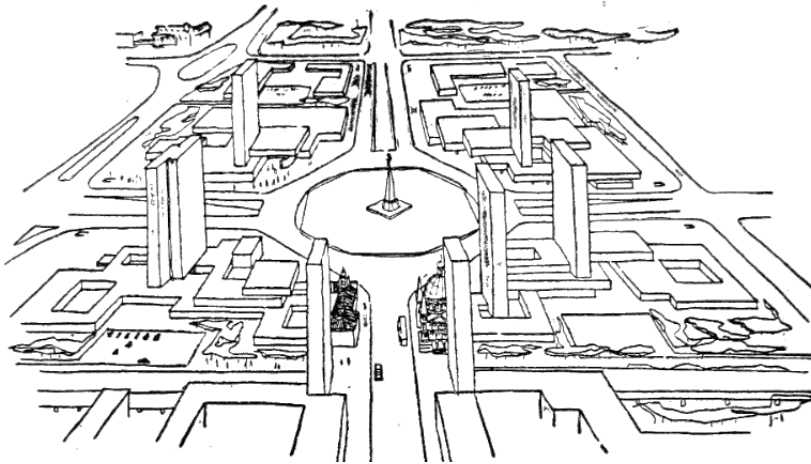


Fig. 9. Could Wolności Square and its immediate surroundings look like this? Source: [32]

In letters to newspapers they wrote, among others:

“The octagonal shape of this [Wolności] Square is a monument of questionable quality. [...] It is necessary to demolish the buildings in the northern part of the square in due time and return this area to modernity. In the space obtained after the demolition of the old, rotten ruins [...], several not 5-story buildings, but tall, impressive buildings should be built. There should be a lot of greenery, fountains etc. All this would add charm to the amphitheater-like, southern part of Wolności Square and would correspond with the Staromiejski Park and skyscrapers on the slope and would improve traffic in this area of the city” [32].

Another reader noticed the important role of Piotrkowska Street and Wolności Square as an area where offices and various types of services were concentrated. He argued that:

“These considerations require a general reconstruction of Piotrkowska Street, Wolności Square and the neighboring region. I would start from Nowomiejska Street, which is already a nightmare for both pedestrians and vehicles since the demolition of scandalously neglected houses. In this way, the narrowing of the urban communication artery would be removed. The new, wide and comfortable Nowomiejska Street, connected to the similarly rebuilt Zgierska Street, would open the city’s window to the north. The beginning of the reconstruction of the street itself. Piotrkowska Street should involve the demolition of the houses standing on Wolności Square to the right of the City Hall. In their place, a new street lane could be built. Piotrkowska, connecting with the current stream of this street in Próchnika Street. In this way, the City Hall would remain on a green island between two one-way branches of Piotrkowska Street, which would ensure better transit through pl. Wolności and improved pedestrian and road communication. [...]”

As far as the city’s financial capabilities allow, a new route of Piotrkowska Street, running from the right side of the Town Hall, should be extended towards the south. Since in the coming years it would not be easy for us to part with some houses standing on the odd side of the street, I would decide to bypass these buildings with gentle bends so that the current (old) road would be a left and a right lane. As a result, Piotrkowska Street would lose its character as a straight corridor, but it would gain scenic views.

Another possibility of creating a new route of Piotrkowska Street would be to build large parking lots on the site of demolished old houses on the odd side of the street. They would become the beginning of a new road and their successive connection

would eventually lead us to our destination. There remains the problem of open courtyards, but I think that our architects would deal with it by building a beautiful dummy made of steel, concrete, glass and aluminum, housing services, trade, gastronomy, hotels and everything we lack.

My proposals are completely contrary to the intentions of urban planners. Even the last statement of the architect of the city of Lodz, published as part of the discussion forum for "GR" readers, showed that Piotrkowska is to be a quiet street, without vehicular traffic. Such an approach is probably a misunderstanding because it does not consider the development of the automotive industry and the needs of the motorized society. [...] In Lodz, Piotrkowska, Kościuszki, Wschodnia and Sienkiewicza streets are already crowded today. It is becoming increasingly difficult to find a parking space there. In the face of the rapid pace of development of the automotive industry, even the reconstruction of Zachodnia Street will not improve the situation much.

Therefore, I propose that Lodz urban planners should once again consider the future of Piotrkowska Street, regardless of the possible loss of several Art Nouveau tenement houses and Wolności Square, which may have a historic shape but is a more important transport hub than a monument. And besides, let's build a new story, as long as it's a good one. Let's design the shape of the city and its architecture so that the next generation will not have to demolish the houses we built. We ourselves know well how difficult it is to demolish buildings that are still healthy. The city center, which has been neglected so far, gives us great opportunities to use appropriate and modern solutions during its reconstruction. These opportunities must not be missed" [33].

Another reader was more critical of architects and urban planners and wrote to the newspaper as follows:

"[...] However, I observe with some horror that urban planners intend to continue on the wrong path of building a city for today, without a deeper analysis of the future. For example, they want to build Wolności Square with 5-story houses. This means that the city's central street, Piotrkowska, will end up in a sack bag with almost no exit. After all, today you can neither walk nor cross the streets Nowomiejska, Nowotki or Stalingradu [Pomorska]. In a few years, given the current pace of automotive development, any traffic in this area will be impossible without demolishing the northern side of Wolności Square.

Finally, how do urban planners intend to solve the problem of the Piotrkowska Street itself? As far as I know, they plan to preserve its current shape and development due to the supposedly historic nature of several neo-Secessionist tenement houses. It is difficult to see any sense in such a decision. First of all, the historic value of the mentioned tenement houses is very low. On the other hand, it is difficult to call the recently built "Magda" [a popular department store at that time] or the co-operative office building next to the press building monuments. Finally, the whole of Lodz does not "pour" into Piotrkowska Street to see questionable monuments. The street is simply a service and commercial center that cannot be replaced even by a new center in the area of Główna Street. So why should the central street of Lodz, with the largest number of shops and restaurants, always be uncomfortable and crowded rather than historic? It is true that there is talk of possibly removing traffic from Piotrkowska Street, but can the already congested parallel streets accommodate this traffic? How will we finally get to the city's main street? Where will the motorized »service recipient« leave their car? Will the area between Wolności Square and Główna Street not be too long for a mandatory promenade?

These matters need to be considered and decisions that have not been fully considered should be canceled. Otherwise, what plagues us today will be a nightmare tomorrow” [34].

Discussions in the press also concerned the role of Piotrkowska as an important part of the city center and the scope of its protection. As mentioned:

“After all, right now there is no concept of rebuilding the center, connecting it with other city districts or modernizing public transport. And that is why I have doubts about whether it is possible to discuss Piotrkowska Street separately from the concept of the future Lodz – a modern center of modern light industry. And that is why, among other things, it is difficult for me to agree with the opinion that “the entire Piotrkowska Street is historic and should be protected along its entire length” because it is a view detached from reality, abstract, not resulting from the fact that this street is part of a large city that needs to be modernized” [26].

There were also some unfavorable opinions about the beauty of Piotrkowska and its architecture. The street was even the subject of not-very-sophisticated jokes among some people. One of the readers quoted an anecdote that was not very flattering for the most important street in Lodz:

“[...] Once, in 1946, when publishing “Film” in Lodz, together with the late editor Kowalski and editors Giżycki and Pitera, we established the order of world catastrophes (jokingly, of course):

- a) the worst – the station in Koluszki;
- b) second in a row – Piotrkowska;
- c) third – atomic bomb;
- d) only the fourth one – “Przedsiębiorstwo Państwowe Film Polski,” where we all worked [...]” [35].

However, it can be appreciated that despite the not very favorable opinion of the street itself and the architectural setting of the surrounding buildings, the author did not call for its destruction, recognizing some of its advantages. Later in his argument he wrote:

“Of course, I do not want and cannot talk about one or another ‘historic’ importance of perhaps the only completely preserved such a long Art Nouveau-eclectic street in Poland and I am not calling for its destruction. On the contrary, perhaps in a hundred years it will be a kind of “open-air museum.” However, let's not really talk about beauty, because this is where the soul of the art historian in me recoils [...]. Neither Neoclassicism, Neo-Baroque (?), nor Art Nouveau brought anything new to architecture and the so-called decor. And although the apartments in such houses are infinitely better than in the lion cages currently being built, also called “apartments” to confuse the opponent – only for its usefulness – Piotrkowska can be defended, but not really as a “beautiful street” [35].

Therefore, the expectations and ideas of the residents were largely consistent with the assumptions of some specialists. The then architect of the City of Lodz, Eugeniusz Budlewski, also saw Lodz as a modern urban center. Its vibrant downtown, illuminated with neon lights, was to be created by, among others, high buildings housing modern shops and service points. It was planned to create multi-level communication routes. The center was to be connected to the surrounding housing estates by a fast tram or metro. The architect also predicted that integration with neighboring cities would take place in the future [36]. The team of architects from Warsaw and Katowice, in turn, believed that Lodz needed comprehensive solutions that had been lacking so far. They saw the advisability of widening the streets intersecting Piotrkowska as one of the most important actions, where demolitions were to be necessary [37]. The authorities also saw the need for comprehensive solutions that would combine elements of functionality and aesthetics into a harmonious whole and they assumed a move away from fragmentary architectural and urban planning activities. At the same time, it was emphasized that the center of Lodz did not

meet the needs and ambitions of the city; therefore, it was necessary to rebuild it from scratch and connect it with the emerging new districts [38].

Another issue discussed in the Lodz press was the clear, yet superficial, identification of new investments as something that is definitely better and more beautiful than the old ones. Some readers, however, saw a pitfall in this kind of thinking, writing:

“In the ongoing discussion on the urban and architectural shape of the future of Lodz, almost everyone agrees that it should be a decidedly modern city, with wide arteries and high-rise buildings in the city center, planned on a grand scale. The understandable sentiment towards the past of their hometown dictates to many discussants solutions that would allow them to preserve what they can of old Lodz – whether it is the octagonal layout of Wolności Square with its low buildings or the Art Nouveau face of Piotrkowska Street – as elements of Lodz’s distinctiveness, constituting a kind of ark of alliance between the new and former years, but everyone ultimately admits that there is not much that should be cherished in the original appearance.

Interestingly, in this vision of the future, expressed both by architecture experts and simple lovers of their city, modernity and beauty are clearly emphasized as two inseparable concepts; the latter is supposedly an obvious function of modernity. Let’s just give – it is often said – a lot of glass and nickel, light and space; let’s take care of the greenery and we will get a functional and comfortable, hygienic and joyful city, a beautiful city. In such reasoning, however, there is no room for conscious beautification activities or rather there remains such a place in... the subconscious – that somewhere, someday, if necessary, a monument will be erected here or there, an appropriate plaque will be erected when the time comes to commemorate the deserved citizen. And this seems unmodern because the aesthetic dimension of the city must be planned in advance, before bad tradition slips into new districts at any time” [39].

The decade of the 1970s was not only a time of great transformations but also a period when the values of the city’s 19<sup>th</sup>-century legacy began to be noticed on a wider scale. This evolution of beliefs did not happen spontaneously but was influenced by several important events. In 1970, at the request of A. Szram, the then City Conservator of Monuments, W. Bald, Henryk Jaworowski and Irena Popławska prepared a historical and urban study of the city of Lodz and conservation applications for the master spatial development plan of the city of Lodz [40]. Then, in January 1971, an announcement by the City Conservator of Monuments was published in the Official Journal of the National Council of Lodz with an attached list of 230 immovable monuments in Lodz, including the urban layout of ul. Piotrkowska (development of the street on the section from Wolności Square to Główna and Mickiewicza streets) [41]. In turn, in November of the same year, on the occasion of the 21st National Scientific Session of the Association of Art Historians, a conservation exhibition, “Monumental architecture and industrial construction of Lodz,” was held, very favorably received and assessed by the event participants [42]. It was written about the exhibition that its authors:

“faced the difficult task of convincing recipients of the values of Lodz’s monuments. It is not easy, because the vast majority of architectural monuments in Lodz are not associated in the minds of its inhabitants with the concept of an object requiring protection due to the historical, aesthetic and other values it contains. Moreover, for many of them, these objects are a synonym for bad taste, a symbol of bad times gone by. It must be admitted that among professionals – architects, conservators and art historians – only relatively recently has there been a change in the judgments assessing the architecture of that time” [42].

In the 1970s, the value of the entire city center as an urban complex and not just a collection of selected objects for possible protection, was noticed for the first time [43]. The album

“Architektura Łodzi przemysłowej” (Architecture of Industrial Lodz) was also published, presenting, among others, architectural details of 19th-century buildings in Lodz [44].

Conservation studies developed in the early 1970s defined the scope of protection zones for the city’s historic values [45]. Four zones were distinguished (A, B, C and K), the most valuable of which was zone A, whose postulated guidelines included:

“preserving the historical street grid and the basic internal divisions of the area; maximum preservation of existing historic buildings. It is also necessary to appropriately adapt the character of the new development and to subordinate the intentions related to the adaptation of the layout to the new needs of the city to conservation conditions” [46].

This approach to design was consistent with one of the views prevailing in the architectural community at that time. During the ongoing reconstruction of large areas of the city and ongoing considerations on the future shape of Lodz, especially its downtown area, various positions were visible. The press published the voices of architects who presented their opinions on the city's reconstruction and the directions in which it could proceed. Two different views clashed – bold visions assuming a complete reconstruction and their opposite, the aim of which was to try to create a more peaceful city, adapted to the actual requirements of its inhabitants, dominated primarily by utility and humanism. A city with aesthetic spaces with attractive elements of small architecture, made of high-quality materials, demonstrating beauty and modernity. There was a call for a comprehensive approach to the design and reconstruction of the city. It was postulated to follow global trends to create attractive urban enclosures in the city center, appropriately shaped spaces providing attractive perspectives and scenic views, which Lodz was deprived of. In one of the discussions published in the press, Bolesław Kardaszewski, a famous architect from Lodz, said:

“[...] General attention should be paid to the spatial assumptions of the downtown reconstruction so as not to overestimate the importance of architectural dominants. The organization of full frontages of communication arteries is important; the period of arbitrary arrangements of individual buildings in favor of integrated complexes is coming to an end.

Our center construction program should take into account global trends that pile up and block buildings as much as possible, contrasting them with intense green areas. The shape of the center is greatly influenced by the problems caused by modern motorization. In the period of its rapid development, care for the harmonious relief of the terrain for pedestrians becomes more important. In the city center, Lodz is deprived of urban enclosures and architecturally oriented squares that provide perspectives and scenic views” [47].

The role of architecture and urban planning dating back to the 19th century, which distinguished Lodz from other cities in the country, began to be clearly emphasized. It was proposed that the reconstruction would not destroy this heritage while meeting the requirements for future generations. The already mentioned W. Millo warned against a quick and ill-considered reconstruction of the center. He said:

“the magic of volumes built using primitive ‘neighborhood’ techniques is not enough: this is the heart of the city, what determines its proper functioning, what gives rise to pride and what meets the needs on a city-wide scale. This requires imagination and a broad perspective of looking into the future, not just today. The present does not exist on a city scale; there is only the past and the future. Please don't accuse me of a lack of realism; it's simply the awareness that the heart of the city cannot be built up in any way as long as it's quick” [48].

However, the process of changing views among designers was not easy. Despite a clear, positive difference compared to previous years, there was still a visible dualism in the environment of architects and people responsible for the city's shape, both in the approach to the



design of urban investments and in the attitudes. On the one hand, uncompromising “nests” of the new center were created; on the other hand, more intimate projects that respected the existing context were created, concerning the reconstruction of Lodz quarters or concepts of new housing estates on the outskirts of Lodz [49-52]. One group of architects appreciated the historical values of the buildings in Lodz. In contrast, the other group, they were still “pseudo-monuments,” which is how, in 1969, E. Budlewski described the weavers’ houses that still existed at Piotrkowska Street, which, in his opinion, due to their scale, did not fit a large city like Lodz [53].

***d. 1980s – great crisis, recognition of the value of the city's historical heritage***

Unlike the previous one, the decade of the 1980s did not bring many bold visions that would radically change the city's character. However, it must be remembered that at that time the country was in crisis caused by the political and economic situation (including martial law introduced in the early 1980s), which also affected the situation in Lodz. More and more people were also aware that the implementation of large plans could take years and the results achieved did not meet the great expectations placed on them. This state of affairs was increasingly emerging, for example, from the construction of new parts of the city center (at the Fabryczna station and at Główna Street, Fig. 10).

The vision of a “modern” Lodz emerging in place of the old development, which consisted of modern and tall buildings with greenery and communication arteries between them, increasingly began to give way to the vision of Lodz with a more harmonized development, taking into account the human scale and the existing context.



**Fig. 10.** Mid-1980s. Crossroads of Piotrkowska Street with Mickiewicz Avenue and Główna Street. The photos show the foreground of one of the “nests” of the new center of Lodz. New commercial, service and office buildings, as well as fragments of surviving historic buildings, are visible. Photo: K. Muszyński (most likely), source: AIAiUPL

This approach to the problem of city construction was the result of appreciating the values of historical buildings. This re-evaluation was mentioned, among others, by Jerzy Sadowski, then the architect of the city of Lodz, who, during a discussion about the Śródmieście Residential District (ŚDM, a multi-family housing estate then being built in the immediate vicinity of Piotrkowska Street), said:

“Now, when, for example, Art Nouveau has become fashionable, the approach to old values has radically changed; so they wondered how to reconcile the new with

the old and integrate and harmonize the city. ŚDM is not and cannot be the beginning of replacing Piotrkowska Street; it must be incorporated into it" [54].

Thus, it was known that huge new investments could not replace old parts of the city and they should be designed in such a way as to blend in with the old urban fabric properly. The main goal was to organize the buildings in the city center, which in the future was to be supplemented with more individualized facilities that would enrich its character. The theory of harmonious coexistence of tradition and modernity was promoted [54, 55]. As architect and urban planner Mirosław Wiśniewski said:

"The era of skyscrapers at any price is over, but we must find a way to bring the unfinished projects [reconstruction of the city center] to completion. Next: respect more what history has left us – do not destroy or demolish but harmoniously integrate new buildings into the existing buildings. And – perhaps most importantly – don't get distracted. In Śródmieście, it is important to create representative urban areas that please the eyes of passers-by and tourists. Let Lodz finally be proud, if not of the entire Śródmieście, then at least of large parts of it!" [56].

Another architect, Zdzisław Lipski, also spoke in a very similar tone, saying about the city center:

"So we have a relatively large area with enormous material values. We also have an urban layout and buildings that are of undeniable cultural value. All this is extremely valuable. Meanwhile, the city, growing into new districts on its outskirts, stopped caring about what was inside. It was assumed that the center of Lodz was eternal. And now, 40 years after the war, we have reached a state of catastrophe. What we want to talk about today should be called an alarm for Śródmieście.

In this way, we have reached an important moment in our discussion – the realization that the problem of the city center is not only a matter for specialists, nor only the authorities – it is a matter for the citizens of the city, the society of Lodz. It has relatively young traditions and as a result of the war, it became poorer by half of its inhabitants. There are – I guess – very few people in Lodz who are firmly convinced that this is the most beautiful place on earth. Yet foreigners can appreciate the beauty of 19th-century buildings. Therefore, we need to unlock social awareness and make people realize that the city center is the heart of the city and Piotrkowska is its symbol. I consciously used the word "unblock" because it is stuck somewhere in the social subconscious because people go to Śródmieście not only for shopping; they feel that there is a real city here" [56].

At the same time, in the decade of the 1980s, only a few "fillings" were built in the city center, filling gaps in the buildings and trying to fit into the existing context as best as possible. However, more investments were carried out outside its area. The emerging smaller housing estates tried to break the monotony of large pre-fab housing estates and their free, yet illegible spatial "composition." Their spatial arrangements referred to "traditional" assumptions in which it was possible to easily indicate, for example, the spaces of streets and squares. Although the objects themselves were made using prefabricated elements, the buildings were more diverse, ranging from their general form and shape to the details used.

## Conclusions

In the period 1945–89, ideas about the shape of Lodz of the future and design trends changed, but above all, the awareness of the value of Lodz's historical heritage also shaped and changed.

Already in the first post-war years, there were a few voices recognizing the value of some Lodz buildings and urban layouts. This type of approach was consistent with the then prevailing doctrine and vision of the socialist realist city, as evidenced by, among others, a discussion in the press from the early 1950s regarding plans to “clean up” the most important square in Lodz – Wolności Square.

However, then, in the 1960s, this vision gave way to a new trend of a “modern” city, when the dismissive attitude of architects and urban planners towards the historical buildings in Lodz became particularly visible. The same applied to many residents of Lodz, who often expressed their disapproval of the existing urban fabric. The most radical ideas for the transformation of the center of Lodz came from this period, in which the compact quarter buildings were to be replaced by “modern,” tall and free-standing buildings. Greenery, communication arteries and parking lots were planned between them. Lodz was to be the capital of the entire urban agglomeration, concentrating the most important metropolitan functions.

The situation began to change in the early 1970s. At that time, the values of Lodz's 19<sup>th</sup>-century heritage began to be noticed to a much greater extent and the views of some designers regarding historic buildings also changed. This evolution of beliefs did not happen spontaneously but was influenced by several important events. It was then that the first conservation studies were created and many old buildings were listed in the register of monuments. Urban layouts are also protected, including Piotrkowska Street on the section from Wolności Square to Główna and Mickiewicza Streets and Wolności Square itself. The actions of the then City Conservator of Monuments, A. Szram, also contributed to popularizing the issue of monument protection (publishing an album presenting architectural details in Lodz). People also wondered what role Piotrkowska Street should play in the city. This street, despite its urban and architectural values, still remained an important communication artery connecting the north and south of the city. Ultimately, when developing a detailed development plan for the city center, it was recognized as a full-fledged part of the rebuilt city center and the actual service and commercial center of Lodz. It was also to remain the axis of the new downtown, which was justified by its functional and historical importance. The old and new fragments were to create a harmonious whole by appropriately transforming existing elements and planning new ones. The historic architectural and urban complex of the street was to undergo only limited transformations [57]. Despite positive changes, dualism in views regarding the city's historical heritage was still noticeable.

A clear recognition of the value of the city's existing old heritage could be seen in the 1980s. Then there was a clear turn, involving a return to “traditional” urban values and striving to harmonize new buildings with old ones. The vision of a “modern” city gave way to the vision of a “harmonious” city, where the existing conditions, actual possibilities and needs of the city were taken into account to a much greater extent. The historical heritage was considered a particularly important element of the residents' identity, which they should be proud of and which should be taken special care of.

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