

THE IMAGE OF INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE: THE CASE OF ŁÓDŹ

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Introduction – perception, image and heritage

For the purpose of this paper it is necessary to remind and discuss definitions of the most important words: perception, image and heritage.

Perception /pə'seɪʃən/ is an act of perceiving, which means either “to become aware of (something) through the senses, esp. the sight; recognize or observe” or “to come to comprehend; grasp”¹.

Image /'ɪmɪdʒ/ is a word with several meanings. Not all of them are relevant to the subject matter of this research. As a noun it may be understood as:

- a representation or likeness of a person or thing, esp. in sculpture;
- a mental representation or picture; idea produced by the imagination;
- (psychol.) the mental experience of something that is not immediately present to the senses, often involving memory;
- a mental picture or association of ideas evoked in a literary work, esp. in poetry.

The same word used as a verb means:

- to picture in the mind; imagine;
- to make or reflect an image of;
- to portray or describe.

Finally heritage /'hɛrɪtɪdʒ/ is a noun describing:

- something inherited at birth, such as personal characteristics, status, and possessions;
- anything that has been transmitted from the past or handed down by tradition;
- the evidence of the past, such as historical sites, buildings, and the unspoilt natural environment, considered collectively as the inheritance of present-day society.

¹ All definitions based on the Collins English Dictionary – Complete & Unabridged 2012 Digital Edition © William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd. 1979, 1986 © HarperCollins Publishers 1998, 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2012.

In the respect of the above it should be stressed that perception depends on personal abilities, education and senses. Experts may perceive something else than laymen. This may be well illustrated with the famous Plato's allegory of the cave². While the importance of senses may be explained by visually impaired people and their perception of surrounding environment.

This is of crucial importance, since an image – understood as mental experience or picture – is based on a perception. In other words – everything what we perceive and learn contributes to images we hold in our minds. The result may depend on a number of other circumstances – even on the length of time spent for perceiving. Visitors have usually different image of a place from that of permanent residents. This issue may be exemplified with description of Istanbul by Orhan Pamuk (NB probably the only architect given the Nobel Prize in literature)³. The whole book is an attempt to grasp a complex image of a multicultural metropolis, including records done over the centuries by visitors to the city:

Istanbul as shared melancholy, Istanbul as double, Istanbul as black-and-white images of crumbling buildings and phantom minarets, Istanbul as a city of maze-like streets seen from high windows and balconies, Istanbul as an invention of foreigners, Istanbul as a place of first loves and last rites: In the end, all these attempts at definition become Istanbul as self-portrait, Istanbul as Pamuk himself⁴.

If we agree that image is based on memory, we should accept its subjective nature built by emotions and experience. The latter provides link to contemporary concept of heritage⁵. The above-mentioned definition indicates that only this evidence of the past which is considered collectively as the inheritance of present-day society, may be regarded as heritage. This imply the importance of general public who is not only responsible for appropriate protection of historic objects, buildings and sites but also decides which of them to protect.

Negative and positive connotations related to industrial heritage

The social acceptance of heritage becomes problematic when industrial objects and buildings are to be considered. Cultural values of evidence of the past are justified with respect to historic, scientific and artistic qualities. Most of general

² Plato. *Republic*, Book VII, 514a - 517a, David Bloom (ed.) *The Republic of Plato*, New York: Basic Books, 1991, pp. 193-196.

³ Orhan Pamuk. *Istanbul: Memories and the City (İstanbul: Hatıralar ve Şehir)*, written in 2003 and translated into English by Maureen Freely in 2005.

⁴ Alberto Manguel. „My City of Ruins”, *Washington Post*, 26.06.2005.

⁵ Anetta Kępczyńska-Walczak. *Zarządzanie dziedzictwem kulturowym w społeczeństwie opartym na wiedzy*, Łódź: Politechnika Łódzka, 2014, p. 31-36; cf. Georgy Ashworth, „Can you move from the object to the experience?”, *Kongres Konserwatorów Polskich*, Warszawa 2005.

public judges, however, buildings and sites by their appearance, which was and continues to be almost everything. Therefore, the heritage is often anchored to aesthetic values rather than to any other consideration of function or history. As a result pleasant locations and visually appealing buildings are more appreciated than dull post-industrial areas associated with hard work and polluted environment. What is more, the concept of heritage is related with “otherness”, which may be given symbolic or material connotations and emotionally felt by people. Unfortunately, in post-industrial regions, factories are far from being part of another reality.

Such connotations have a long tradition reaching back to the early 19th century, when the first negative results of Industrial Revolution emerged. At first because aesthetical criteria were influenced by the “arcadian daydream of an urban dweller”⁶, only buildings of so-called “visual delight” became the subject of interest. This preference for the imagined beauty of the past as opposed to the disadvantages of the contemporary built environment can be illustrated by Pugin’s well-known book *Contrasts*, published in 1836. It consists principally of paired illustrations intended to draw distinctions between “old” and “new”; e.g. the imagined beauty of a “Catholic Town of 1440” is contrasted with the contemporary built environment of “The Same Town in 1840” to the latter’s great disadvantage. In other words the need for the preservation of medieval past was set opposed to the industrial present. Thus, when the foundations for the modern heritage protection and conservation were being laid, the manufacturing buildings were regarded as something inferior.

What is more, such an image of industrial cities was strengthened by their descriptions in literature. For example a novel *No Mean City* by Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long, which provided an account of life in the Gorbals, a slum district of Glasgow, for many years was regarded as the definitive account of life in the city as a whole, and its title became a byword. Such a situation was typical for most of industrial centres in Europe. Former textile manufacturing cities in Britain were associated with “dark satanic mills” – a phrase derived from William Blake poetry⁷.

Łódź – a major textile production centre in Poland – was also described by a number of renowned novelists, including *Ziemia Obiecana (Promised Land)* by Władysław Reymont (one of Polish Nobel Prize awardees), *Bracia Aszkenazy (The Brothers Ashkenazi)* by Israel Joshua Singer (brother of Isaac Bashevis Singer), or *Złe Miasto (Bad City)* by a journalist Zygmunt Bartkiewicz. It is necessary to underline that the authors of all these accounts were not permanent residents of the city, and – what is more – all the above-mentioned descriptions represent a blend

⁶ Lester Borley. „Why is industrial heritage so important to Europa Nostra?”, *Europa Nostra Magazine*, No. 12, 1996, pp. 2-3.

⁷ The hymn „Jerusalem” from the preface to *Milton: A Poem in Two Books*, 1804-1810.

of fascination and disapproval. This is not a surprise – it has been already noted by Walter Benjamin that:

If we were to divide all the existing descriptions of cities into two groups according to the birthplace of the authors, we would certainly find that those written by natives of the cities concerned are greatly in the minority. The superficial pretext-the exotic and the picturesque – appeals only to the outsider. To depict a city as a native would call for other, deeper motives – the motives of the person who journeys into the past, rather than to foreign parts. The account of a city given by a native will always have something in common with memoirs; it is no accident that the writer has spent his childhood there⁸.

In other words - visitors to the city – although know it superficially are stimulated by the experience to describe it. In case of Łódź, apparently authors felt oppressed by the every-day hustle and bustle of a dull industrial city. The negative impact of these descriptions is of twofold importance – it affects the external image of city but also diminish its value in the eyes of its inhabitants. The latter is even worse, since an identity is based not only on the individual but also collective memories⁹.

Luis Loures rightly points that only few towns or cities escaped factory closing in recent decades. As a result post-industrial landscape and associated spatial and economical problems are a commonplace in Western civilisation. Their “complete physical and functional decadency, contributed to enlarge the negative public perception about these spaces”¹⁰. With a decline of industrial activities, the affected cities attempt to find economic alternatives and new models of social identification to sustain the cohesion of local communities. John R. Short describes this situation in following words:

To be seen as industrial is to be associated with the old, the polluted, the out of date. A persistent strand of urban (re)presentations has been the reconstruction of the image of the industrial city¹¹.

This is why all post-industrial regions faced the problem of negative image (The case of the German Ruhr district serves as a well-known example of this process), but only some managed to brake with it.

Although vacant industrial sites often fascinate and charm some people (typically – artists and designers), being considered as “ruins” containing, as Tim

⁸ Walter Benjamin. „The Return of the Flâneur” in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings II 1927-1934*. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1999, pp. 262-267.

⁹ Leszek Kołakowski. *Mini wykłady o maxi sprawach*. Cracow: Znak. 2006, pp. 246-252.

¹⁰ Luis Loures, „Industrial Heritage: the past in the future of the city”, *WSEAS Transactions on Environment and Development*, No. 8, Vol. 4, 2008, pp. 687-696.

¹¹ John R. Short. „Urban Imagineers: Boosterism and the Representation of Cities”, in: Andrew E.G. Jonas; David Wilson (eds.), *The Urban Growth Machine. Critical Perspectives, Two Decades Later*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1999, pp. 37-54.

Edensor notices, the “promise of the unexpected”. What is more, the aesthetics of industrial dereliction epitomize a sort of “modern gothic”, part of a wider sentiment, which emerges out of a “post-industrial nostalgia”¹². The situation is similar to the beginnings of contemporary heritage protection, which in 19th century was purely an elitist case. The principal aim is thus to bring industrial heritage physically and emotionally close to wider sectors of the population and to use it with success in processes of economic regeneration. For example Glasgow has made a great effort to build a new narration using other – positively perceived – elements of local tradition, especially art and design based on the achievements of Charles Rennie McIntosh. Such an approach is often described as „urban branding”, which has to do with shaping the „urban imaginary” understood as a:

... coherent, historically based ensemble of representations drawn from the architecture and street plans of the city, the art produced by its residents, and the images of and discourse on the city as seen, heard, or read in movies, on television, in magazines, and other forms of mass media¹³.

In an era of ever increasing globalization, accompanied by a growing competition between cities and urban regions, „identity” becomes a key notion. To attract companies, residents, tourists and events, cities are challenged to develop an appealing urban identity or „image”¹⁴. According to recently adopted in Genk (Belgium) *European Strategy for Promotion of Industrial Heritage*, there is a vast potential to use industrial heritage for promoting a positive regional image and as unique selling point, e.g. it can be related to pioneering spirit, traditions and innovation capability. This may be exemplified by the first promising projects done on European level – including European Capitals of Culture focused on industrial heritage (e.g. Glasgow 1990, Lille 2004, Liverpool 2008 and Essen 2010) and the European Route of Industrial Heritage platform¹⁵.

¹² Tim Edensor. *Industrial Ruins: Spaces. Aesthetics and Materiality*, Oxford, New York: Berg, 2005; cf. Gabriela Campagnol, „Post-Industrial Sites as Canvas”, *Architecture and Urbanism*, No. 521, 2014, pp.70-75.

¹³ Miriam Greenberg. „Branding Cities. A social history of the Urban Lifestyle Magazine”, *Urban Affairs Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2002, pp. 228-263.

¹⁴ Nancy Meijsmans. „Developing an urban identity from the spatial context’s permanence”. *Life in the Urban Landscape – International Conference for Integrating Urban Knowledge & Practice, Gothenburg, Sweden, May 29-June 3, 2005*. Stockholm: Formas, 2005.

¹⁵ *European Strategy for Promotion of Industrial Heritage: Suggestions for the Further Development and Implementation of the Resolution 01924 (2013) „Industrial Heritage in Europe”*, adopted by the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe Acting on Behalf of the Assembly, on 8 March 2013. Freiberg: TU Bergakademie, 2014.

Łódź – dramatic growth, change and collapse

The case of Łódź is different from a number of other industrial centres in Europe – mainly due to its unusual (one may say: awkward) history. The pace of industrial growth made the city singular not only in Poland. There was no real textile industry in Łódź during the 1820s, when in Britain it had been developing since the 1770s, and was very well established by the date. When Manchester was the biggest cotton industry basin of the whole Europe, Łódź was a small agricultural town, lost in the forest, inhabited by less than 800 people. Some fifty years later, however, during the 1870s, one could find mills comparable with those in Lancashire and Yorkshire, housing the same machinery. Eventually Łódź became a leading textile centre and the largest textile town in the central part of the continent¹⁶.

No other textile region in Poland (taking into account all former partitions and territories gained after World War II) matched the importance and pace of growth of Łódź's industry. Without doubt the city was truly created for the industry and by the industry. There were 264 textile enterprises with 525,000 spindles and 11,000 looms in operation in 1884 – the city earned the nickname of “Polish Manchester”. There is, however, no analogy of the development Łódź **AS A CITY** with other great textile industry centres like Manchester, Lyon, Lille, Milan, Chemnitz. Every European city of a similar size had already been an important centre of the trade, coal mine or port at the advent of the Industrial Revolution. Their growth started usually in medieval times and continued until 17th century, while the development of Łódź started **AFTER** introduction of the industry. During the years 1800-1910 the population of Łódź increased six hundred times (sic!), while the populations of other European cities increased up to twenty times!¹⁷

As a result the urban structure reflected “lessez faire” governmental policy toward its development. In fact, it was not a real city – it consisted chiefly of industrial premises and workers housing. There were a few public-use building, and their position was insignificant in the townscape dominated by huge factories and chimneys dotting the sky. Social structure was similar – factory masters, workers and tradesmen. There was no middle class (or town dwellers) being depositary of local tradition in other European cities. A small group of intellectualists was not strong enough to develop local cultural life. In a consequence, there were few written records expressing emotional links with the city:

Niech sobie Ganges, Sorrento, Krym | Pod niebo inni wynoszą, | A ja Łódź
wolę! Jej brud i dym | Szczęściem mi są i rozkoszą!

Let the others Ganges, Sorrento, Crimea | rise to the sky | I prefer Łódź!

Its dirt and smoke | are my happiness and delight!¹⁸

¹⁶ Anetta Kępczyńska-Walczak, Bartosz M. Walczak. „From the Manufacturing Settlement to the Industrial City”, *Historical Lab 4 - Urban Quality & The Perception of Landscape*, Como-Cernobbio 2007.

¹⁷ Bartosz M. Walczak. „The Importance of Industrial Heritage for Cultural Landscape of Lodz and its Local Identity”, in: E. Wittbrodt, W. Affelt (eds.) *International Conference Heritage of Technology – Gdańsk Outlook 4 Proceedings*, Gdańsk 2005.

¹⁸ Julian Tuwim. „Łódź” (translated by Bartosz M. Walczak).

Local community was, however, strongly bonded with the city. They were proud of their achievements – self-made city of self-made men. The local identity was strengthened with peculiar social structure: German and Jewish entrepreneurs, Polish workers and Russian administration. This multinational character made Łódź different from other cities in Poland.

The situation changed dramatically after the World War II. German and Jewish members of the community disappeared (as did Russians after the World War I). The thin thread of local identity spun by previous generations was broken by the influx of new people without any sentiment towards local history as well as the Communists narration against the city image as a result of capitalism. The situation was, however, gradually shifting from the early 1970s, but the outbreak of post-communist transformation in 1989 marked the real change. With the collapse of textile industry the city had to be invented anew. The following words – although used in other context – fit perfectly to the situation in Łódź at the early 1990s:

The hopes and fears of men and women ran through the fluctuating economic and cultural systems of industry, deindustrialisation and its aftermath where destabilisation and chaos allowed new social relationships and meanings to be formed¹⁹.

The role of industrial buildings and structures for the new image of Łódź

The issue of the image of the city can be analyzed in different ways, depending on whether it is studied by a psychologist, a semantics, an architect, an urban planner or a geographer. There is, however, one common denominator of such considerations – metaphorical understanding of this concept. The symbolic construction the city's image, as it was mentioned above, has two dimensions. One – internal – refers to the image of the city developed and reproduced by its residents. Another – external – is perceived by the people from the outside. While the first one is usually well defined and complete, the second is usually simplistic, based on stereotypes. The result of these approximations and cultural reductions is the production of a geography of *place-myths*²⁰.

In this respect a heritage has a dual role to play: it is the central focus of the visitors activities whilst at the same time being a fundamental element in the construction of local community identity. The same heritage stimulates, however, different images both for its depositaries and for tourists. Moreover, the fact that post-industrial premises occupy some 20 percent of the inner city area in Łódź indicates the importance of this legacy for the city's image, its identity, and its regeneration.

¹⁹ Tim Edensor. „Waste Matter: The Debris of Industrial Ruins and the Disordering of the Material World”, *Journal of Material Culture*, No. 10, 2005, pp. 311-332.

²⁰ Alberto Vanolo. „The External Images of Helsinki and Turin”, *Working Paper Research and Training Network Urban Europe*, No. 8, 2004.

A very important feature of industrial objects is the irretrievable loss of function. Therefore, adaptation should be considered as a basic form of their protection. However, abandoned industrial premises were a commonplace in Łódź during the first decade of transition. Investors were interested in post-industrial properties, due to their attractive locations, not the qualities of objects standing there. As a result a number of demolitions occurred. This resulted largely from a lack of imagination what you can do with an old industrial building. This was instigated by a common belief that it is cheaper to demolish and build anew. Sadly, the objects erected at the site of demolished factories only in exceptional cases matched the quality of historical buildings. There were created neither new architectural values or attractive urban spaces. Fortunately a number of spontaneous adaptations secured old factories for more appropriate re-use in the future. Nevertheless, the overall image of the city was shaped by the post-industrial decline.

The first symptoms of change in attitude towards the local industrial heritage could be seen at the turn of the 21st century. Despite the inferior quality of undertaken interventions, these projects confirmed that the Lodz textile factories could be interesting alternatives for newly constructed buildings. The local office of *Gazeta Wyborcza* in a former ribbon factory to this day may be regarded as one of the most successful examples of an industrial building conversion and an image enhancement alike. It was, however, higher education that appeared to prime re-use method. The Lodz University of Technology was a pioneer in converting old factories for this purpose. This soon have become a fashion among other local universities and colleges, both public and private, to conduct educational activities in former textile mills. This was of great importance. A positive emotional link with old industrial buildings was established among young people. This process coincided with a concept of associating Łódź with its multi-cultural past. A number of festivals and concerts were organised in factories once owned by German and Jewish entrepreneurs²¹.

But the real breakthrough was opening of a new commercial centre in one of the largest industrial complexes. Former I.K. Poznański factory was acquired by a French developing company as a whole – almost 30 hectares close to the city centre. Next to the old mills a new shopping mall was built. On the one hand, it created a great threat to local retailers, on the other hand it has allowed residents become familiar with the post-industrial heritage during everyday activities. The result exceeded all expectations. Not only dwellers of Łódź beloved “Manufaktura”, a number of visitors came to the city to do shopping in an unusual environment – to experience something new. Owners of other post-industrial premises followed the example. Some of them even decided to rebuild previously knocked-down mills (although in a primitive, superficial manner). Now re-using post-industrial buildings is a commonplace in Łódź. Old textile factories provide accommodation

²¹ Anetta Kępczyńska-Walczak, Bartosz M. Walczak. „Lodz: Changing Unwanted Heritage into Creative Force”, in: *Journeys of Expression II conference proceedings*, Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 2003.

for new uses of any kind: culture, tourism, housing, etc. Neglect has been replaced with acceptance. The architectural quality of interventions is constantly improving and the city has become renown for post-industrial conversion. And, what is even more important, local community consider this obvious method of dealing with local heritage.

A concept of image developed by Kevin Lynch and Christian Norberg-Schultz refers, however, also to the symbolism of its tangible and intangible components that shape the lives of the inhabitants of the city²². A record of such acceptance are paintings by Lawrence Lowry, showing in a very subjective manner the atmosphere of industrial districts in northern England. The emotional links with industrial heritage in Łódź have been recently proved by the campaign to preserve traditional name of the main railway station, which being entirely rebuilt was proposed to be renamed from Fabryczna (Factory) into Central Station. Another example might be a call for memorabilia and testimonies of every-day life and work at former vodka factory which met with considerable response from local society²³.

Conclusion

According to Halina Skibniewska every city has its own image, its unique expression. This applies even to those cities where a lot has been done to spoil their image and downgrade their identity²⁴.

The problem of Łódź – like many other post-industrial cities – is how to handle the heritage and to create a new positive image, which is of crucial importance in constant competition for new investments. Local governments over last 25 years tried to promote Łódź either as a city associated with Art Nouveau and Avant-garde art of the 1920s or as an ideal place for creative business. The external image remains, however, inferior as compared with other Polish cities. The pejorative connotations remain in contrast with a strong local identity and growing acceptance from the local community.

A status of “Monument of History” recently given by the President of Poland to the “multi-cultural landscape of industrial city in Łódź” is of twofold significance. First, the cultural value of local heritage has been recognised, secondly the positive results of regeneration have been emphasised. This also confirms the importance of re-use of former textile mills, since this helps to build emotional links with industrial heritage. What is more, each generation places a different interpretation on the past and derives new inspiration from it – “ex-industrial toxic legacy is being

²² Kevin Lynch. *The Image of the City*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1960; Chistian Norberg-Schultz, *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, New York: Rizzoli International, 1980.

²³ <http://www.monopolis.lodz.pl/> (accessed: 10.06.2015).

²⁴ Halina Skibniewska. „Tożsamość miasta”, *I Kongres Architektury Polskiej*, Gdańsk 1998.

transformed into the post-industrial business-leisure-culture patchwork, ready to host the new global elite”²⁵. In other words – frustrations of older generation have been replaced with enthusiasm of new urbanities. It seems of crucial importance, since if residents like their own city, accept local heritage, fill the historical space with new ideals and narrations, then the city will be attractive for them and visitors alike.

²⁵ Aleksandra Stupar. „The Role of Urban Symbols in the Global Competition”, *41st ISoCaRP Congress 2005*.