

ARCHITECTURE OF POST-WAR HOSPITALS AS A PART OF CULTURAL HERITAGE OF CONTEMPORARY ŁÓDŹ

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Introduction

In the period 1945-1989, the multidirectional spatial transformation of Łódź was accompanied by the development of hospital facilities, which are an essential part of the architectural and urban heritage of the post-war history of the city. Nowadays, their influence on the formation of Łódź identity seems to remain unrecognized or underestimated. Standards of architectural planning existing at that time do not always correspond with the contemporary idea of beauty, which is connected with the fact that the post-war history of the city was shaped by the communist ideology. However, the post-war hospital architecture in Łódź has become an essential element of the spatial and functional structure of the city, thus contributing to the concept of a magnificent, modern Łódź which has never been fully put into life. They represent a set of cultural, ethical and esthetic standards of their time, the knowledge and acceptance of which may play a key role in the development of the city tradition. In post-war Łódź, whose architectural landscape was not planned to evoke individual delight, the idea of functionalism *pro publico bono* was realized among others through health service facilities. Their presence in the city space reflects subordination of esthetics to the rules of expediency and usability, thus rejecting the model of architecture being a result of the individual needs of its promoters and future users.

This article is an introduction to the analysis of the developing for 70 years social role of the post-war hospital architecture in the context of the city's cultural heritage. The analysis includes selected issues connected with its past and the present perception, depending on the changing cultural and political factors. The Authors provide a synthetic description of the materialistic and non-materialistic elements of the discussed heritage as well as a general assessment of its significance for the city's landscape, which is expected to result in setting priorities and developing potential methods for its protection. The research includes preliminary selection of facilities representative for the studied period and essential for the formation of the identity of Łódź and its citizens.

Development of the social role of the Łódź socialist hospital

In 1945 Łódź required all kinds of facilities, an especially urgent need being the creation of a proper hospital base, which would enable establishing the state health care system for the constantly growing number of inhabitants. At the same time, architecture of medical facilities was part of the socialist propaganda. Populist slogans and postulates representing the imposed political direction seem to have had practical implications for the ideological layer of hospital architecture in the years 1945-1989. The after-war transformations also involved rejecting the tradition of church medical facilities by replacing their staff with secular workers and giving the places new non-religious names. In the late 1940s Łódź hospitals were referred to as social hospitals designated with consecutive numbers and later, according to the ordinance by the National Council of the city of Łódź, they were given the names of patrons.¹ The architecture of health care facilities was to become a symbol of anti-capitalism and egalitarianism. A beautiful modern well-equipped hospital providing medical care for the indigent and hitherto neglected social groups stood in contrast to pre-war poorly- equipped and overcrowded facilities as well as private clinics for the well-off members of the society. Thus, the radical rejection of the pre-war tradition became an indispensable element of forming the ideological layer of the new hospital.

Immediate extension and modernization of Łódź health care facilities was a result of both the real necessity and the socialist propaganda of a welfare state. The visible crisis in this field created an opportunity to emphasize the protective role of the post-war government, which offered modern facilities to a working man hitherto deprived of the protection from the state. This situation was convenient for the communist party, whose propaganda emphasized that: “the condition of health service in Łódź [...] is a constantly bleeding wound”². In the slogans concerning the development of the hospital care in the Polish People’s Republic, the authorities responded to the hopes and expectations of the citizens. „Through extending the hospital network [...] the socialist authorities were trying to make up for the long-lasting negligence in the field of health care for the working class”³ – they said. The Institute of the Polish Mother’s Health Centre in Rzgowska Street – hitherto the last Łódź hospital investment on such a scale – became a unique example in the history of the city. According to some contemporary researchers, the Polish Mother represented an essential element of the Polish propaganda during the martial law, as a symbol of the authorities’ respect for the tradition and the family.⁴

The whole period of 1945-1989 was characterized by the trend of building facilities which had a unique structure and shape easily recognizable in the architectural landscape of the city due to their cubature and spatial forms. It can be

¹ Fijałek, J., Indulski J. *Opieka zdrowotna w Łodzi od 1945 roku. Studium organizacyjno-historyczne*. Łódź: Instytut Medycyny Pracy im. prof. dra med. Jerzego Nofera. 1995, pp. 64-65.

² Ptański, J. *Walka o Łódź socjalistyczną*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkiego Komitetu Wyborczego Frontu Narodowego. 1952, pp. 12-14.

³ *Łódź wczoraj, dziś i jutro*. Łódź: Wydawnictwo Łódzkiego Komitetu Wyborczego Frontu Narodowego. 1952, p. 50.

⁴ Kenney P. „Pojęcie «Matki Polki» w języku opozycji i władzy”, in: Szarota, T. (eds.), *Komunizm: ideologia, system, ludzie*. Warszawa: NERITON/Instytut Historii PAN. 2001, pp. 338-351.

suspected that the splendor of architecture was dictated not only by the real needs but also by ideology. „Public health care facilities – it was said – are aimed at providing services for the community, which should be reflected in simple and purposeful design forms.”⁵ The forms were supposed to create a sense of pure scientific objectivity. Thus, Łódź hospitals are characterized by harmonious elevation, rigour and logics, ruling out unnecessary decorations. Modern architecture, as a multi-tool, had a great potential in terms of the hospital function. It enabled a synthesis of constituent parts, their space, construction and function into one inseparable symbolic form.

A socialist hospital as part of Łódź architectural heritage

Looking from the present perspective, it is hard to decide what line of development will be taken by the evolution of the architectural landscape of Łódź, which was started by the transformation processes and changed the character of the city. Due to the fact that the radical transformation of the socialist hospital architecture is going to generate exorbitant costs which will be impossible to cover in the nearest future, it is assumed that the modernization should be conducted in several stages. Therefore, introducing a rational spatial planning system as well as establishing the priorities and forms of protecting the pre-war Łódź architecture from untimely devastation have become an urgent need. The uncontrolled devastation could be caused by inadequate recognition of the role of the discussed period in the development of the city architecture and urban planning among the investors and the local community, whose perception of the city space is based on the traditional images established by the postindustrial style of the city.

„Social attitudes towards historic heritage [...] change with time from the full or partial acceptance to a strong desire for its complete elimination.”⁶ – as emphasized by S. Juchnowicz. Coming to terms with the past often takes a long time. There is an example of the changing attitudes of the inhabitants of Łódź towards the historic heritage created by previous generations. After 1945 the historic value of pre-war factories, tenant houses and palaces was not obvious and the architectural substance of the city was often treated as unwanted legacy, burden and limitation to the spatial development of the city. The indifferent and frequently hostile approach of socialist realism to old architecture did not encourage the acceptance of the 19th century tradition and only as late as at the beginning of the 1960s there appeared opinions suggesting that Łódź architectural heritage could be of great value and significance.

Following the changes in the political system in 1989, the ideas of social egalitarianism were rejected and the city landscape was given a new pre-communist value by e.g. bringing back the pre-war street names or getting rid of material identifiers of the communist ideology. A hostile attitude of the general

⁵ Juraszyński J., Nitsch A., Porębowicz S., Radwański Z. *Projektowanie obiektów służby zdrowia*. Warszawa: Arkady. 1973, p. 237.

⁶ Juchnowicz S. „Rola dziedzictwa kulturowego w projekcie rewitalizacji i rozwoju Nowej Huty i zdegradowanych terenów otaczających”, in: Walczak, B. (ed.), *Rewitalizacja miast przemysłowych – rola dziedzictwa kulturowego*. Łódź: PRO-REVITA. 2004, pp. 111-112.

public towards real socialism could account for the common rejection of social modernism in architecture, which was perceived as a part of the system in which it was created. The esthetics of that time identified with a poor version of modernism and general standardization, limiting individualism and creativity, evokes common criticism. This heritage seems to be an unwanted burden which „deserves complete eradication”⁷. Łódź architectural design in the second half of the 20th century still remains under some kind of cultural censorship. Ewa Nekanda-Trepka emphasized a role of the time factor in the perception of the architectural heritage values: „It is claimed that masterpieces of art and architecture in the first period obtain a high level of acceptance, which tends to fall dramatically after a few years.”⁸

In contrast to the common depreciation of the post-war achievements, the architectural and urban heritage of the period 1945-1989 is becoming a subject of consideration for many historians and architecture lovers, which could contribute to the popularization of social modernism or, at least, some of its examples described as *low-born*⁹ items of the world class. There has been an increasing interest in the work of post-war architects who, due to geopolitical conditions, were pushed to the margin of the world architecture and who, in defiance of the oppressive system, managed to develop solutions, the quality of which was not inferior to that of western architectural achievements. The practical implications of this interest should involve a variety of future initiatives aimed at promoting the architectural value of buildings which fail to be effectively protected against thoughtless devastation.

Local conditioning of the protection of socialist hospital buildings in Łódź

Post-transformation urban phenomena involve encroaching into the unprotected but precious in terms of culture areas of Łódź, the shape of which is a result of the activities that took place in the second half of the 20th century. It should be emphasized that in order to identify the continuity of the social and cultural progress made by the city, it is necessary to preserve the characteristic pieces of its structure having been developed in the past years. In the case of Łódź, a young organism built up almost from scratch in the 20th century, the protection of the post-war elements of the city landscape is of particular importance.

The analysis of the local conditioning in the aspect of shaping the functional and spatial structure of Łódź points to the need of taking care of selected realizations representative for the studied period of the city's structure formation. The analysed collection of facilities includes hospitals which are unique and require individual

⁷ Klein L. „Postmodernizm polski: od wielkiej płyty do architektury wczesnej transformacji”, in: Klein L. (ed.), *P1. Postmodernizm polski. Architektura i urbanistyka*. Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie 40 000 Malarzy. 2013, p. 24.

⁸ Nekanda-Trepka E. „Rejestr zabytków oraz gminna ewidencja zabytków a zbiór potencjalnych dóbr kultury współczesnej – refleksje na temat relacji i zasad ochrony”. Seminar: *Dobra kultury współczesnej w stolicy i zasady ich ochrony w polityce przestrzennej m.st. Warszawy oraz ich realizacja w miejscowych planach zagospodarowania przestrzennego*, 13-th June 2005. http://warszawa.sarp.org.pl/php/galeria/dobra/r_trepka.htm, (accessed 10.07.2010).

⁹ Springer F. *Żle urodzone. Reportaże o architekturze PRL-u*. Kraków: Karakter. 2012, p. 8.

instructions regarding their protection. These are among others: Maria Konopnicka's University Hospital nr 4 (Fig. 1), Medical University Clinical and Didactic Center (Fig. 2) and Polish Mother's Health Center (Fig. 3).

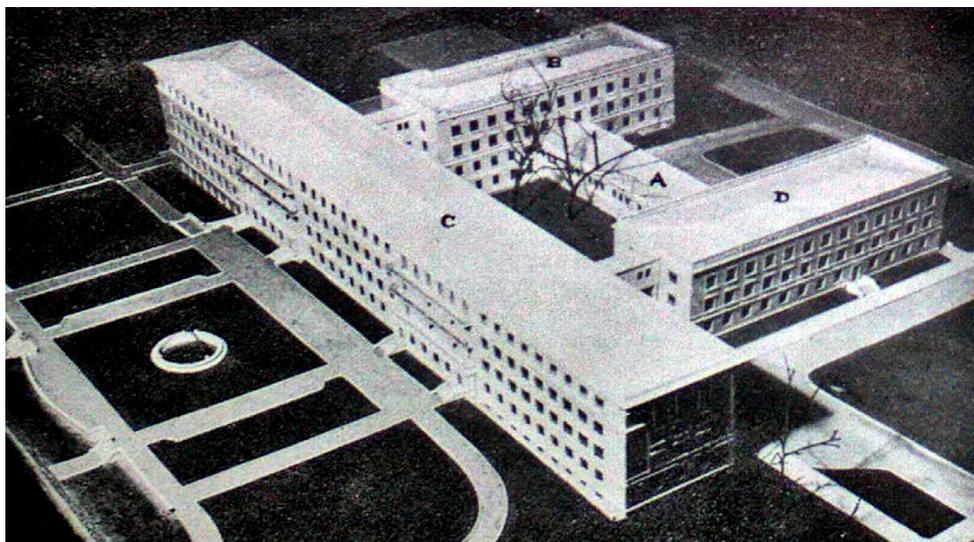


Fig. 1. Maria Konopnicka's University Hospital nr 4 in Łódź, 36/50 Sporna Street. The functional scheme of the hospital. Architects: J.Juraszyński, B.Żelaźnicka, J.Wesołowski
A – reception boxes; B – observation ward; C – bed wards; D – polyclinic.
Source: Juraszyński J. „Children Treatment”. *Architecture nr 4*, 1955, p. 98.

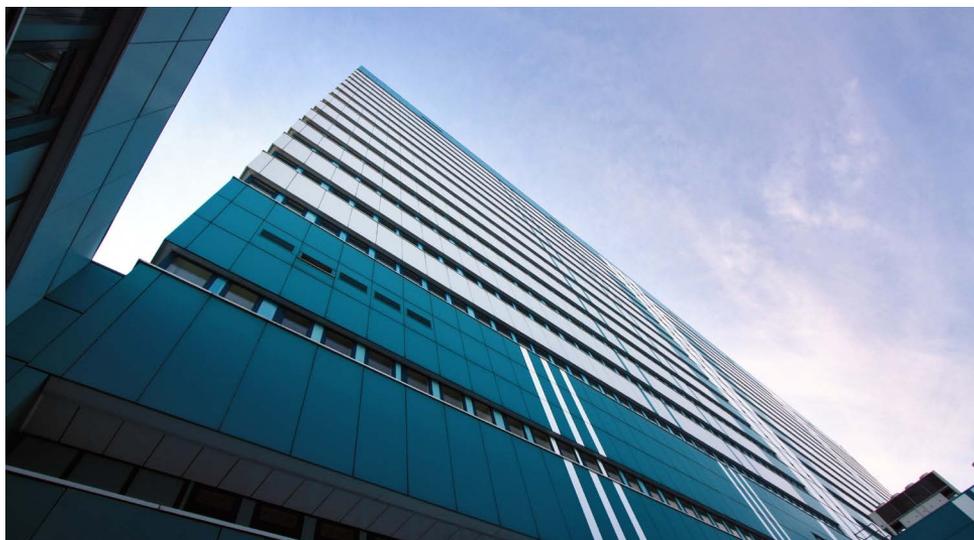


Figure 2. Medical University Clinical and Didactic Center in Łódź, 8/10 Czechosłowacka Street, 251 Pomorska Street. A contemporary view of the north elevation of building A1. Architects: Janusz Wyżnikiewicz, Jerzy Arent, Mieczysław Tomczyk
Source: J. Olenderek, J. Borowczyk.



Fig. 3. Institute – Center for the Polish Mother Health, Łódź, 281/289 Rzgowska Street
A contemporary view of the north-east elevation of the gynaecological-obstetric hospital.

Architect: Janusz Wyżnikiewicz

Source: J. Olenderek, J. Borowczyk.

The sources of the presented below preliminary selection of hospitals to be included in the protection scheme (Tab. 1) were the Authors' comprehensive reviews of post-war facilities, which followed the assessment criteria such as: the role of the facility in the spatial structure of the city and its rank in the processes of shaping the city landscape. As the first selection of the facilities has an open character, it requires further corrections and supplementation. It is necessary to observe the changes in the maintenance state and functioning of the buildings as well as the functional and spatial transformations of the city.

Table 1. List of hospital facilities in Łódź built in 1945-1989 and planned for the protection scheme – preliminary selection

Hospital name and address	Time of origin
Maria Konopnicka's University Hospital nr 4, Medical University, Łódź, 36/50 Sporna Street	1954-1959
Nicolaus Copernicus' Regional Specialist Hospital with an oncologic unit, Łódź, 62/74 Pabianicka Street	1961-1973
Medical University Clinical and Didactic Center; Central Clinical Hospital, Łódź, 8/10 Czechosłowacka Street	1975-82-...
Institute – Center for the Polish Mother Health, Łódź, 281/289 Rzgowska Street	1982-1988
Independent Pubic Health Care Unit of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Łódź, 42 Północna Street	1970-1972

Source: J. Olenderek, J. Borowczyk.

The synthetic assessment of the maintenance state of the presented hospitals performed by the Authors allows concluding that the facilities have been generally preserved in an unchanged form and without any significant alterations to their function. The hospitals have been partly modernized or are still being extended. In some cases their technical condition and functioning point to the necessity for further architectural and conservatory modifications. Due to the level of their degradation being a result of a long-lasting exploitation, some parts of the facilities require fundamental modernization, which would lead to the optimization of their functioning. The mentioned hospitals, as architectural and urban units have preserved their unique character, which has been well-defined in formal and functional terms.

General procedures regarding the ways and forms of protecting the mentioned hospitals include: preserving the authenticity of each unit as well as undertaking all available measures to restore its value. Undoubtedly, in the future it will be recommended to give up fragmentary solutions and turn to holistic and coordinated activities to avoid losing the coherence of the particular components of the facilities. The range of coordination processes should cover not only the hospital building itself but also the surrounding area and its vicinity. It is recommended that the facility and its environment, including the buildings, should constitute a harmonious well-planned entity.

A chance of protecting the cultural value of the Łódź hospital architecture from the period 1945-1989 could be granting the status of the „contemporary culture heritage” to some selected facilities, which could lead to their better promotion in the future and evoke greater interest of the community as well as potential investors on a local, regional and national scale. Thus, prevention debates and research studies aimed at establishing priorities and procedures for protecting the potential „contemporary culture heritage” from thoughtless degradation are of great practical importance. „Is it true that contemporary culture monuments and facilities constitute two separate groups? – asks Ewa Nekanda-Trepka - They rather seem to be two sets that belong to one bigger group which is heritage.”¹⁰

The protection of post-war hospitals, which are characteristic for the city, as potential „contemporary culture heritage” is regulated by statutory duties described in appropriate legal acts and depends on the spatial policy of the local authorities, as well as the recognized value of the facilities and social acceptance. In the opinion of the Author of the paper:

Cultural heritage understood as contemporary culture products is, according to the lawmaker, a kind of heritage which has a material character in a form of buildings – spatial creation of human mind, however, the spiritual – emotional aspect involved both in the act of creation and the social perception or acceptance of the masterpiece by contemporary and, particularly, future generations is equally important in the assessment of its timeless value.¹¹

¹⁰ Nekanda-Trepka, E. op. cit.

¹¹ Olenderek, J. *Polityka ochrony dóbr kultury współczesnej Łodzi. Opracowanie studialno-koncepcyjne. Etap II*. Typescript. Łódź. 2008, p. II.205.

Summary

With the end of the German occupation, when Łódź and the whole country were included in the zone of the communist influence, the city began a process of transformation into a modern metropolis proud of its thriving social, cultural and scientific life. The spatial and functional changes such as building new hospitals permanently shaped the architectural layout of the city. It should be noticed that these transformations led to the improvement of the living conditions and a change in the negative social perception of the „evil city”¹².

After 25 years of the new political system in Poland the heritage of the communist period still remains an unsolved issue. The involvement in unfavorable ideological and psychosocial circumstances makes the process of legitimization of the Polish socialist architecture extremely complicated. There are contradictory opinions concerning the readjustment of facilities from 1945-1989, their quality, artistic value and rank in the city landscape. Elements of the city formed in the post-war period belong to those phenomena of culture and art which generate many doubts and uncertainties. Independently of an affirmative or a critical view on the socialist achievements, in the after-war hospital architecture in Łódź one can find a particularly precious record of the history of design and line of transformations following the requirements of evolving technical knowledge and trends in the Polish architecture of the second half of the 20th century. The post-war architectural heritage of Łódź includes first of all a good quality structure, positively verified by time and meeting many criteria postulated for the post-war legacy.

Nowadays there is a possibility of increasing the cultural and material value as well as the social role of the Łódź hospital facilities of 1945-1989 through proper recognition, preservation and rational exploitation of their architectural advantages. The article presents those of Łódź hospitals which are characteristic and particularly precious with reference to the achievements of the post-war architecture of the city. The results of the research are expected to lead to establishing detailed procedures for the protection of the facilities.

The process of developing and preserving the identity of Łódź largely depends on proper, based on the solid knowledge of the subject, understanding of the specificity of the elements of the city architecture and urban forms. The quality and authenticity of the Łódź spatial structure do not only influence the living conditions of individual citizens but they also decide about the development of the social processes in the city, and thus have an impact on the economic and technological progress. At the same time, the ongoing development of the citizens' society, characterized by high activity and ability of self-organization as well as setting and achieving goals requires raising the awareness of the social needs and the pursuit to satisfy them, also through complex actions aimed at restoring the utilitarian value and exposing the cultural heritage of the city, the attitudes to which

¹² Kaczmarek, R. „Zarys historii miasta”, in: Rosset, E. (ed.), *Łódź w latach 1945-1960*. Łódź: Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Łodzi. 1962, p. 3.

are going to evolve in the direction which cannot be predicted at the present time. The future seems to carry a burden of public opposition to the reminiscence of the socialist reality, its modern urban planning and aging architectural styles. However, Łódź post-war hospitals are units and complexes which are well-established in the contemporary city landscape. They have been shaping the city space and building the identity of the citizens for a few generations and have become places with which the inhabitants of the city have been connected through the history of their lives.