

ISSN 2082-8675

nr 26 (01/2023)

KWARTAŁ

MAGAZYN SKN SPATIUM



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Łódź – The City of Contrasting Neighbourhoods

Keywords: city, neighbourhood, contrasts, Łódź, Bałuty, Teofilów, Śródmieście

Probably everyone living in the city can tell what district they live in, and what distinguishes it from the rest of the city. Moving through the city, it is easy to see that it is not uniform; on the contrary, it is composed of many, often completely different elements called neighbourhoods. Urban social scientists have always had trouble with the neighbourhood. The term is hard to define precisely, but everyone knows it when they see it. In Łódź we also have many different neighbourhoods which together create the unique atmosphere and character of this exceptional city.

Figure. 1. An old, neglected building in Stare Bałuty. Such grey, dilapidated buildings dominate the landscape of Stare Bałuty. For many locals and tourists, it is an unattractive and dangerous neighbourhood, but many residents have got used to its unique nature and cannot imagine their lives elsewhere.



Figure 2. A block of flats and the RELAX community centre in Teofilów – a neighbourhood built in the 1960s and 1970s from prefabricated panels in the utopian concept of a linear city.



Figure 3. Restored tenement houses on Piotrkowska street in Śródmieście. The vicinity of the street is appreciated by both residents and tourists for its unique urban, architectural and aesthetic values. It is one of the best kept streets in the city, where most of the old tenement houses are renovated.



The first differentiating aspect of neighbourhoods is the “structural characteristics of the residential and non-residential buildings: type, scale, materials, design, state of repair, density, landscaping” (Galster, 2001).

Figure 4. Teofilów Przemysłowy – the industrial part of the neighbourhood where factories and warehouses are located, including the main logistics centre and headquarters of Rossmann. The tall glass building can be seen from afar, and standing underneath it, we can feel overwhelmed by its size.



Figure 5. Rynek Bałucki in Bałuty is the largest retail market in Łódź. It is a place teeming with life from morning to noon. Residents of the neighbourhood come here not only to buy fresh fruit, vegetables, or flowers, but also to meet and chat with their neighbours.



Figure 6. "Off Piotrkowska" in Śródmieście – during the day, it is a centre of creative industries; in the evening, it is eagerly visited by young people, students and artists who, surrounded by industrial buildings characteristic of Łódź, spend time with their friends.



Figure 7. The modern, contemporary Tuwim library in Śródmieście has a green patio and is a great example of revitalisation in Lodz. It creates an ideal place for meetings and discussions or to sink into the reading in Śródmieście.



Also very important in terms of neighbourhoods are "sentimental characteristics: residents' sense of identification with place, [and the] historical significance of buildings or district" (Galster, 2001).

Figure 8. The inscription "Bałuty, gentlemen and ladies" in Stare Bałuty. Residents of this neighbourhood often express their thoughts in the urban space with the help of graffiti that covers tenement houses. Many of them are vulgar, and they additionally disfigure buildings, but there are also those with a positive message or that refer to Bałuty's identity.



Figure 9. The "TEO" monument in Teofilów was created on the initiative of residents with money from the participatory budget. The huge letters in Żeromski park cannot be missed. They are a beautiful symbol of neighbourhood identity.



Figures 10. Lamps with the sign "Piotrkowska" in Śródmieście. Piotrkowska for many people is an unquestionable symbol of Łódź. It is known to all residents and tourists who eagerly take pictures of themselves under the illuminated lamps.



To sum up, Łódź, like every major city, is composed of many different neighbourhoods of different character and building types, functions and residents: from Stare Bałuty with neglected tenement houses, where trade plays an important role in Bałucki Rynek, through Teofilów and its industrial buildings and prefabricated apartment blocks, to Śródmieście full of restored tenement houses and old factories, a centre of culture, tourism and creativity. The inhabitants of particular neighbourhoods feel attached to them and are often proud of their neighbourhoods; they emphasize where they come from, for example, by creating appropriate monuments and symbols. All of this creates one city of many faces, which is Łódź.

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