

Toward resurgence of cities. Place of culture in post-industrial Łódź.

Cities are constantly changing. In Europe, both in its richer and more developed Western part and in the less developed Central and Eastern parts as well as in the Americas, after a period of stagnation and fears for the future brought about by the relocation of the affluent population into the suburbs, today we are dealing with a pronounced revival. This syndrome of alteration raises an understandable interest, primarily public. It also provokes a cognitive and scientific curiosity. Perceiving the signs of a fragment of this syndrome, and the desire to investigate the results of the relatively recent development of the consumer and cultural infrastructure in many urban centres in Europe became the main motif for this dissertation. More precisely – a desire to look closer on the analogous, new points on the map of attractions of Łódź, i.e. concentrations of non-standard, commercial services arranged in post-industrial buildings, was the key motivation here.

This dissertation draws mainly from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, developed on the basis of anthropology and sociology, but also geography of the humanities, urban planning, philosophy and social psychology. It contains references from several related disciplines, directly or indirectly associated with the main subject matter. This is not a complete interdisciplinarity, as an anthropological approach is taken to the forefront and the remaining perspectives are the context of the determinants of the analysis and interpretation.

The subject of the description in this doctoral thesis are examples from Łódź, the city in which the once well developed textile industry and to a lesser extent also machinery industry left a lot of material traces. In the scenery of the abandoned factories, three concentrations of non-standard services and more ambitious forms of entertainment have emerged so far; The next ones are in the organization stage. The situations of these three concentrations are noticeably different. OFF Piotrkowska, which has been functioning in its present shape since 2009 (even though the first announcements were already installed in 2005), located on the main shopping and walking street of Łódź, has already won a group of mainly young and some elite customers and it is becoming of increasing concern to wide groups of the interested audience. Throughout the day, and especially in the evenings, OFF Piotrkowska resonates with the heck of conversation and music. The creative industry centre of the Wi-Ma in a huge complex of the former textile factory in the Widzew district and the third of them – an oasis of street food in Piotrkowska Street – Piotrkowska 217, slowly acquire the right of citizenship on the cultural and consumer city map. Nevertheless, they belong to the same family and are associated with the process of city resurgence. Therefore,

despite the obvious differences, three “places of culture” have been treated in this work as almost equal.

The primary concern of this dissertation are the cultural-social and empirical spheres of functioning of the places of culture, but – according to the elementary principles of the scientific inquiry in the cultural anthropology – the main emphasis is put on the socio-cultural dimension. This is related to the presence of people – shorter or long-term visitors, regular guests or occasional customers, tourists or curious residents. The visits in the adapted post-industrial spaces signal a new manifestation of urbanity, yet still not easy to define. However, it would be even less understandable without a cursory sketch of the conditions of resurgence of the cities; in the first place, the economic and social context of the current development phase of urbanization and the sphere of cultural economy, i.e. the mosaic of forms of entrepreneurship and services that replaced the former industry as a result of the change of the whole system of economy – from the typically industrial to the cognitive-cultural capitalism.

This work verifies, based on the empirical material and selected interpretive perspectives, two main research questions and the related hypotheses. The first one deals with how using the new kind of places worth visiting really functions and whether it has rooted sufficiently in the consciousness and routine of the selected categories of inhabitants and to what extent the potential users find the places useful. The second question has a more general scope, namely: is it justifiable to call these places manifestations of the next phase of urbanization, or, more precisely, the urban resurgence?

The places of culture are pro-interactive. They can be viewed as facing the second, more hidden side of the human nature: next to satisfying the need for modern communication and information technology intermediaries, they are the centres that reduce the interplay of space to the more easily accessible units, as opposed to any media, they enable face-to-face contacts, thus settling the superiority of direct relations over the mediated ones. In other words, they are the meeting spaces for other people which, in addition to many other conditions, are necessary to feel the values of the urban character. They serve to tighten the physical space and expand the interactive space. Using the anthropological perspective in this work I will make an attempt to show this phenomenon and cast some explanatory light to it.

Places of culture, in the anthropological and sociological perspective are, by default, micro-environments in which warm and friendly social relations may prevail, the community of language, habits, customs, similar lifestyles, the same kind of sensitivity or perception of the world is observed. They are also the area of watching individuals and taking into account their behaviour. Everyone else in the common interactive space is either “the audience” or a participant of these behaviours; Sometimes, these behaviours change completely in the face of the objects' awareness that they are being watched by “the audience”. “The effect of the audience” explains the behaviour, sometimes exacerbated, under the influence of consciousness of being the subject of observation. In the case of the “places of culture”, there is a similar division, typical of the public situation in which two-way relationships take place: consumers – staff, customers – sellers, service users and ordinary people. The difference between the ordinary and typical interactive situations in another space, and the ones

happening in the places described here, is also in the fact that the latter is happening as if on a specially arranged scene and in the particular setting.

In this dissertation, not only the manifestations of activity but also the meanings of the external forms of culture are subjected to the analysis. The conviction that their particular, post-industrial, disordered and not-so-clean “nature” is a real incentive for counterparts to ubiquitous, tedious modernity or pseudo-modernity will probably be confirmed.

Taking an even more holistic view, it can be stated that Łódź “places of culture” are a segment of a larger change that has followed one of the directions of transformation of the post-industrial cities in Europe and America by reviving them, after a recent stagnation or an early crisis, as a place of advanced and modern enterprise, cultural industries and concentrations of talented people. The appearance of a grouping of restaurants, pubs, bars, offices, boutiques and studios in OFF Piotrkowska buildings, a growing number of customers using various services of creative industries in Wi-Ma or crowds of culinary visitors at Piotrkowska 217 are the clear indicators of the expansion of unconventional consumption space which allow to conclude that these places of culture are also signs of urban resurgence in Łódź. They are also constructive examples of preservation the post-industrial heritage for the new needs, which would otherwise be doomed to a slow degradation. The preparation of this dissertation is accompanied by the awareness that the research questions and the hypotheses concerned are limited in scope, and so the bulk of the research proceedings is primarily, but not exclusively, reduced to the description of the selected objects. However, this situation is not unknown in anthropology. On the contrary, according to the typology of the Clifford Geertz's research methods, this will be a description that satisfies the methodological requirements of a thick description set alongside a thin description. Both these methods of research were developed on the basis of the interpretive anthropology. The thick description embraces culture as a broad context in which actions serve a purpose, but which, under the influence of these actions, continually undergo changes in a way that cannot be predicted in advance. It is not about the immutability or universality of the forms of culture, but about the understanding that culture is, to a large extent, a dynamic process of constant re-formulation and reinterpretation, which takes place through the actions of individuals. That is why a thick description is the research approach focused primarily on the analysis of the actions undertaken by social actors and the sense of purpose they themselves (and not the external observers) give to these actions under certain circumstances.

The research works used as a base for this dissertation are part of a research trend called *ethnography at home*. Due to the specifics of this type of research conducted in the area which is close and known to the researcher, their ultimate result (called the ethnographic authority) associated with the ethnographic writing, as pointed out by James Clifford, must take a polyphonic form. This author – one of the authors of the reflexive turn in anthropology, pointed out in his work, and in particular in the text “On ethnographic authority”, on the role of a researcher-anthropologist in the development of anthropological knowledge, then transformed into anthropological textual description in the form of text. This authority, in its classic sense, has the right to speak of a given section of the cultural reality, although at the same time the author claims that the interpretive anthropology demystifies much of what was

previously uncritically accepted in the construction of the ethnographic narratives, types, observations and descriptions.

The theoretical framework of the dissertation, for a better illustration, can be presented as a figure composed of three concentric circles. The outer, broadest circle is a reference to capitalism and the basic features of the contemporary development phase of this system. Closer to the centre of the co-centered figure of the theoretical reference culture is located, being at the same time a function of the constitutive substrate. Capitalism in its cognitive and cultural character attaches a special importance to individuals, communities and their culture, recognizing that, in urban environments, the fullest object is the point of contact between these spheres. It is important that one of the constituent components of cognitive-cultural capitalism is the cultural economy, which is one of the basic carriers of this system. Going back to the figure depicting the theoretical framework of this dissertation: its central place is the description and analysis of the places of culture which metaphorically can be termed as the fruits of several factors (their more extensive explanation is included in further chapters): cognitive-cultural capitalism, cultural economics, urbanization in its present phase and finally the cities' efforts to build a modern image (in the meaning of: creative), combined with the grassroots urban initiatives. This, in turn, is linked to urbanization and new urban movements, a sign that the people take control of their own surroundings or identify themselves with the city as a place which is worth conscious shaping.

Performing a research on cities and urbanity should be a long-term process, allowing for the gathering of the most varied research material, with all that adequately illustrates its variability over time. Nevertheless, this material will always be fragmentary, and the postulate of researching the complexity of cities is a model will remain to be pursued, but the researcher must be aware of his own limitations and of the nature of the object. The idea of adopting a specific point of view of the city is to be associated with an awareness of the complexity of its essence: patchwork, multilayered, made up of many fragments often overlapping, differing in quality or duration.

The scientific reflection on the urban issues has picked and is still picking up different paths, ways of interpreting the phenomena and choosing the areas of interest. It is difficult to state decisively if it is possible at all to determine what a city is. Ultimately, it is necessary to choose a particular way of conceptualization, despite the consciousness of its limitations. The perspective of a resurgence of cities as another act of urbanization seems apt and useful for understanding and describing the phenomena related to the ongoing transformations. It is also possible to define the places of culture and explain how they function in the post-industrial space.

Modern cities under capitalist conditions are slowly departing from the industry, not so long ago being their main life-giving employer. Main attention is now devoted to the development of innovative industries and the establishment of a thriving backdrop for all types of business services. As is evident from the world's current activities by states and cities, culture and creative industries play an important role in the economic and social development. The importance of the creative sector increases with the transition to the knowledge-based

economy. This urban policy orientation has become one of the hallmarks of the cognitive-cultural capitalism. Contrary to the earlier revisions of this system, when the material sphere was decisive, in this case this sphere of intangible, symbolic or the intellectual character is equal with the material one.

In this form of capitalism, the products of knowledge and culture dominate in the planning of production strategies, and the aesthetics and symbolic values play a special role here. Knowledge, that is research and so called “know-how”, technological solutions, innovations, educational activities as well as universities and laboratories, together with culture (from the activities of traditional cultural institutions, through mass events to the art of using art), contain not only the aesthetic, intellectual or symbolic values, but more – they are now treated as products subject to market rules and having a measurable economic value. The current phase of capitalism affects equally the socio-cultural aspects of life and the appearance of urban space. The manifestations of this impact must be recognized as the desire created in a growing number of cities to reconcile the role of the production centres and the centres of culture, entertainment or intensive urban life in the local or global dimension. We are dealing with two related dimensions which define the essence of this phase of capitalism. On the one hand, it is cognition and knowledge – which generally means a pragmatic application of knowledge, intellect and scientific solutions. This is evident in those fields where innovative solutions exist in many areas of life. This also applies to the sphere of science and research as the source from which the knowledge flows and in which it can develop. Hence the growing role of research centres as places of creative transformation of knowledge into practical solutions. Knowledge-based economy is based on the ability to reformulate the data collected into knowledge, information or opinions. This is directly related to the character of modern societies, often referred to as “informational”, feeding on information, which becomes a good and a value most often used in creating not only economic reality but other spheres as well. The economy must be also adapted to new forms of communication and information relays, where they can be interpreted or re-interpreted indefinitely by continuous interaction. In the crowds and constant change of the news, it is valuable to present them in such a way so that they are easily noticed and simply meaningful.

On the other hand, we deal with the notion of culture here. In foreign languages, for example in English, the adjective formed from the word is one, but it may have two meanings. In the Polish language, we can talk about two determinants or dimensions. In the case of cognitive-cultural capitalism, the first is an understanding of culture as a good, product or a result of an activity in the field of – for example – fine arts, literature or film. Such understanding of the new capitalism would also include activities in the field of entertainment or providing spiritual and emotional experiences related to diverse cultural areas.

At the same time, we cannot forget about the other way of understanding the notion culture – as a network of meanings in which its “participants” are depositors. In this view, culture creates a specific approach to consumption or to the valuation of the elements that make up a new kind of goods and services. This non-traditional type of economy is based on the ever-increasing flexibility of the production system, adapting itself precisely to the socio-cultural aspects, taking into account their diversity, constant variability and complexity.

The economy of culture deals with understanding and explaining the “production” of culture, adding that it is not about any human culture and not its holistic, anthropological approach, but it is about its representation, which is undergoes exchanging and marketing processes. Putting it in other words, the subject of reflection on this new branch of economics is that of cultural products intended for consumption. Characteristic for the economy of culture are the creativity and the innovation that influence its dynamics. They can be considered at different levels. In the case of places of culture described in this work, it seems most important to point to the elements that shape the specific communities around the culture that is created, distributed and eventually consumed. Competitiveness, mutual service, cooperation or exchange of skills and knowledge, characteristic for this sector of the economy, play an important role in the formation of spaces in which the representatives of the so-called cultural industries concentrate; Mostly they are the places of entertainment and leisure activities.

Andrzej Majer, in his book on the urban resurgence, presents the proposition of a triad of subsequent phases of urbanization, describing the transformation and condition of the cities in the 20th and 21st centuries. This process consists of the crisis, the renewal and the resurgence of cities and the transformation of the cities in the second half of the twentieth century exactly follow such a triangular scheme. Its first member is the “crisis” of the cities. The second link is the “renewal” of the cities. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, the efforts were underway to reverse the degradation and “repair” the urban economic and social structures; this turned out to be a breakthrough and salutary for the whole social policy. The third member of the scheme concerns the present day and reveals the symptoms of the next stage – the urban resurgence.

The resurgence of cities takes place on many levels and one can look for its manifestations in many fields. Allen J. Scott in his work mainly depicts the economic dimension, Andrzej Majer also shows the social and cultural mechanisms connected with the regeneration processes. Being aware of the indissolubility and mutual conditioning of these points of the scientific view, this dissertation seeks to add a handful of concrete data, focusing on the real parts of urban space transformed into the spheres of culture and assuming that these are the evidences of the “rebirth” of the city.

Urban researchers point to two parallel levels in order to indicate the existence or development of resurgence as a new phase of urbanization. The first one can be described as the demographic-economic level. The rebound in this case shows as an improvement in the demographic indicators (not always meaning an indication of an increase in the number of inhabitants, but also revealing a tendency to slow down their rapid decline), one of the markers of many cities' crises, as well as manifestations of an economic recovery, particularly in the areas of the cognitive-cultural capitalism. The second level of the resurgence of cities is socio-cultural. It includes, among other things, a vibrant revitalization and diversification of urban life, especially in the already restored or now being restored ones by the revitalization of the attractive urban centres and any public or semi-public spaces. It is also appropriate for the emergence and development of various grassroots initiatives and the actions taken. The resurgence of cities is also based on perceiving the potential of cultural and historical heritage

of the urbanized space, the local colours and the variety of lifestyles which are cultivated and transformed accordingly, become factors that increase an attractiveness and an opportunity in competition for good and interesting places dedicated to life and work.

This doctoral thesis is also discussing the forms of conceptualization, interpretation, perception and understanding of the space appropriate for the anthropological approach. This allowed us to judge, in a specific way, how to interpret and understand the essence of the places of culture, which are segments of the urban area, in order to present the course of experience or explain the meanings. The anthropological perspective corresponds to the concept of urban resurgence, especially when it comes to perceiving the role of historical and cultural aspects as closely related to and influencing it.

The common practice of researchers with an anthropological orientation is to analyze the communities, groups or fragments of their cultural universe through the prism of shaping and treating space. The mirror of space reflects the values, meanings, identity strategies and social relations. Besides the theoretical consideration of its differentiation or understanding, it is more useful to perceive the anthropogenic qualities of space and its users for the continuation of the main themes of this discourse. The social fabrication and isolation of the specific places within it brings to life a tamed, well-known and meaningful space built on the individual and collective relations.

The crisis of urban spaces, especially those of a public and post-industrial nature, consisting in their degradation and incompatibility to the changed conditions, provoked the passive and hesitant response at both levels – official, connected with the municipal authorities and their policy, and the unofficial level, implemented by the people concerned.

Revitalization is the most common concept, most often used to describe the remedial actions while announcing a strategy for transforming urban spaces and their desire to be reintegrated into cities. The way it is understood varies and it is often over-used as a key to explain any repair without an exception. Revitalization is, however, of particular importance and it must be characterized by a specific approach and characteristics to be considered as a strategy for action. First and foremost, revitalization should be understood as an introduction of changes on many levels, not limited to a mere renovation of buildings or improving their material condition. Refurbishing the façade of a town house itself or adaptation of an old industrial facility for a new use may be a part of the renovation work, but it is not enough to call it revitalization. Revitalization in such a correct edition should consist in transforming the architectural and urban tissue and focusing on the people and communities who are using the reshaped resources, with the aim of improving the quality of their lives while taking into account their history, needs, everyday life and the broadly understood cultural background.

The post-industrial objects and spaces in the modern cities can be used in multiple ways. Their adaptation in line with the tendency suggested by the concept of urban resurgence is one of several possible variants of their inclusion in the urban tissue.

Places of culture are examples of the resurgence in cities. It is also worth adding that it is about the direct attention paid to the socio-cultural aspect and more specifically – to the

daily, non-obligatory presence of users-customers. The dedication of these places of culture can be seen on two planes. On the one hand, it is cultural activities or events, or the cultural and artistic production that can take place there or can be created. On the other hand, there exist some places where live, unofficial (“not high-flown”) culture is performed. This creates space for the realization of some forms of cultural and identity manifestations that would not be accepted in the official cultural institutions. Places of culture are a manifestation of a spontaneous urban culture, symbolized by the prefix “off” in the name of the oldest case described in this dissertation.

The analyzed and interpreted places of culture in this work differ from the standardized and widely used cultural institutions or entertainment and commercial centres. The elementary divergences are that the places of culture are often created in an easily accessible, abandoned post-industrial setting by the interested groups themselves. It is (to a greater or lesser extent) an independently funded, grassroots initiative. Artists or city activists “discover” these specific places and bring their own lives to them, giving rise to another function in the urban space. The status of such places depends on the determination and power of rooting in the consciousness of the audience and on how successful the restoration of its new life will be, and whether it will be permanently incorporated into the collective imagination and representative of the district or the whole city. Furthermore, the fact that such initiatives need supporting by the authorities or circumstances facilitating their realization, must not be overlooked here. The officials more and more often “wake up from paresis” and attempt to help sanction the process of the grassroots initiatives.

Each of these culture places, in the right way, contributes into the modernization of the city, being the links of the process of the city “rebirth”. The arguments that confirm this conviction are not so much even provided by the space to be renewed but the arranged there modern companies, undertakings or events. The forms of active participation in the activities described in this paper are different from the traditional cultural institutions: the sense of a kind of elitist “off” (whatever that may actually mean) is connected with the non-compulsory voluntary participation. Even if these places are deliberately arranged (and they certainly are because they have to be managed and maintained in order), this arrangement is carefully masked – as evidenced by the deliberate maintenance of their natural state and certain spontaneity. Undoubtedly, in terms of invitations to participate in the proposals of typical cultural institutions, both “high” and “low”, Łódź places of culture provide some innovation. It can be claimed (by the slightest simplification) that their originators are also here in the position as if they were “the hands” of all the participants, tenants and customers, offering them further suggestions, but this also creates a discrete and relatively benign situation, which stimulates spontaneity. Studies have verified the belief that an adaptation to the cultural space is one of the most appropriate examples of the space recovery for the new functions. Unfortunately, the questions of whether they should be treated as a manifestation of new urban lifestyle and whether the adapted post-industrial spaces have found a lasting place in the consciousness of a wider group of people, are not granted the same level confidence. However, another aspect seems to be a bit more certain here. Bearing in mind that it is difficult to assume the possibility of a mass participation in the activities of an elitist culture

institution belonging to the typical constituents of “urbanity” such as the opera or the dramatic theatre, the examples in question prove the reality of “returning to the city” as a result of an interest in urbanization taking place in the setting (partially arranged) of spontaneity and naturalness. It was, among other things, the cause of the decision to research the novelty in the landscape of the Łódź cultural institutions and to place it in the context of the “resurgence of cities.”

The resurgence of cities, as an interpretive concept, not only attempts to capture in framework the present reality but it also shapes the way of speaking about this reality by the fact of being an interpretive proposition. This interpretation, along with other aspects, assuming a change of view over the contemporary urban spaces in which the crisis has been overcome, at the same time shifts the narrative accents of the contemporary cities. It does so in order to show the qualitative aspects of the cultural, local, historical or simply symbolic contexts playing an indispensable role in shaping the foundations of the cultural-cognitive capitalism.

At the most obvious level, you can see the signs of resurgence also through the changes in the way we speak about the actions taken in places of culture. It uses the mechanism of creating the reality by means of speaking about it, so that the characteristics of the discourse could also stimulate the desired form of action. This narration comes from both those who are involved in the maintenance of these spaces and their users. It revolves around such concepts as creativity, diversity, locality, urbanization, alternativity and grassroots activities. All of them are supposed to emphasize the uniqueness of the space intended to be the answer to the need to go beyond the mass, unified consumption and entertainment.

The use of the already existing cultural and historical resources as part of the city's industrial heritage is one of the elements of the revival tendencies. Searching the “life forces” of the city in its specificity and the social and cultural capital also characterizes the cities on their way to resurgence. The described places of culture are spaces whose function can be interpreted as based on the cognitive-cultural change of capitalism in which the products of art, culture or entertainment are acquired and consumed, but also where certain values are created. It is also possible to say that in the case of the places of culture we are dealing with a specific feeding on the urbanity and the urban lifestyle being the elements of creation of our own identity and the community spirit based on the principles of the consumer culture. These places as alternatives to the mass culture create new patterns of spending time outside of work and are involved in the broad spectrum of acquisition, gathering or experiencing goods – both of material and non-material nature.

It was not the purpose of this work to issue the final evaluation of the cultural sites or the symptomatic changes to the process of urban resurgence. It was, however, an indication of their existence, showing the different possibilities of transformations and the various ways in which the city inhabitants responded towards them.

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