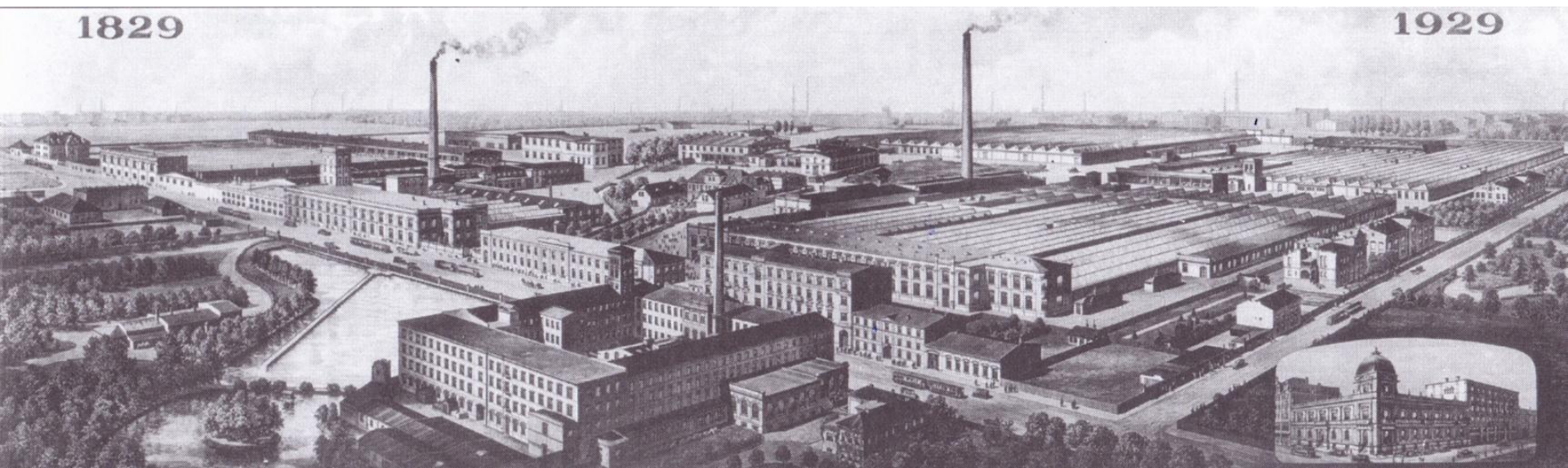


# Łódź – identity, conservation and conversion

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Łódź is located in central Poland. It used to be the second and now it is the third most populated Polish city. Łódź established its position in the 19<sup>th</sup> century thanks to rapid development of the textile industry. After being named a “factory city” in 1820, within just a few decades it evolved from a small settlement into a powerful, vibrant metropolis.

An architectural image of Łódź was also shaped in the 19<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of development of the textile industry.

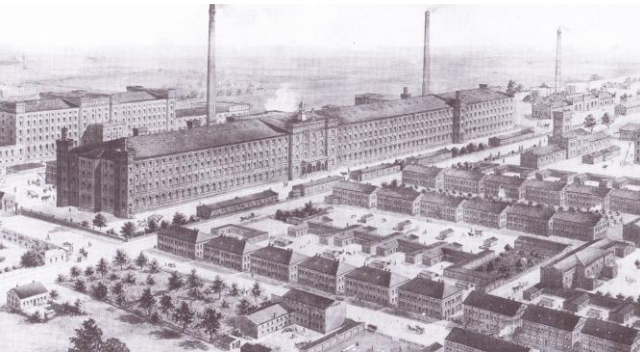


*Ludwik Geyer's plant. An advertising vignette from the beginning of XX<sup>th</sup> century.*



After the second world war, communist authorities heavily criticised the nineteenth-century past of Łódź. Despite ideological revolution and intense propaganda against factory owners and multicultural and multinational urban community, the city retained its industrial character.

The political transformation of 1989 brought radical changes to economic functioning of Łódź. As a result of deindustrialization many factories and plants inseparably linked with the city image went into liquidation.



*Karol Scheibler's factory complex with a monumental spinning mill and a working-class housing estate.*

*A print from the album of the company "Scheibler i Grohman", 1921*



*U Scheiblera lofts in former Karol Scheibler's spinning mill*

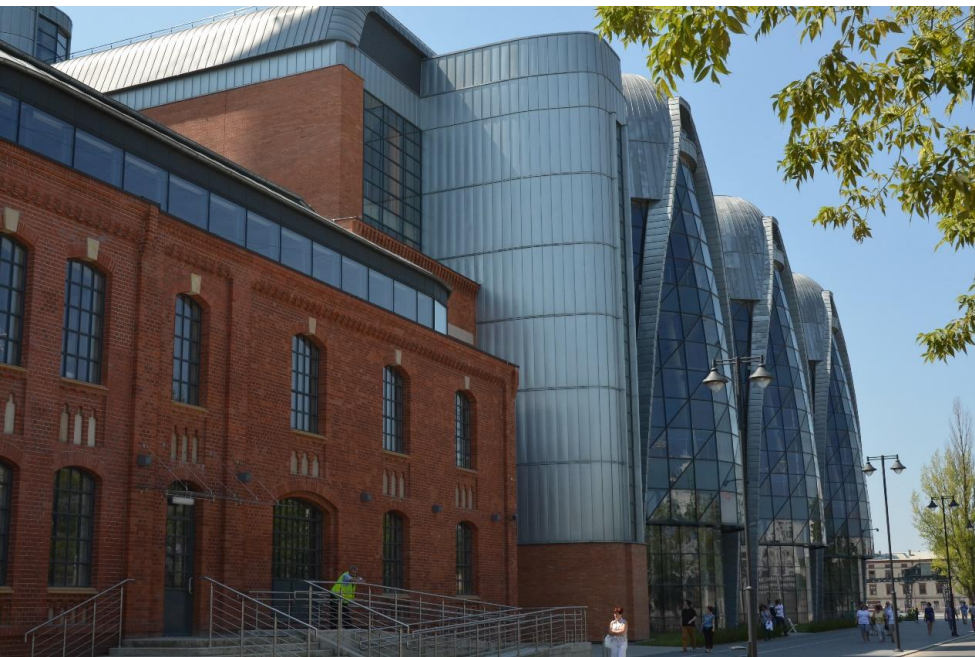


*The offices in a former building of the factory fire station*

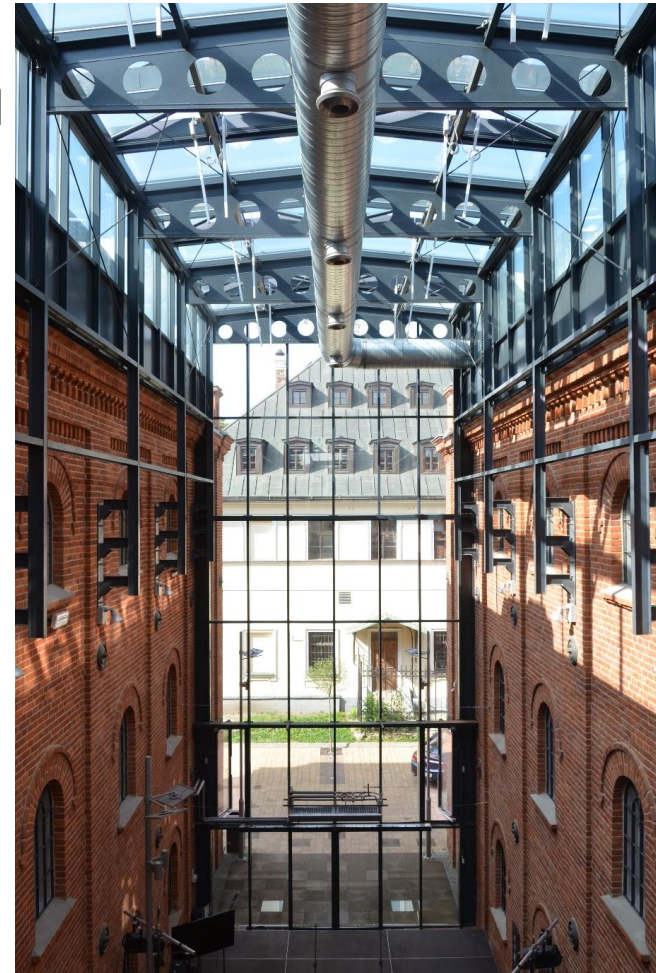


Empty factories became a characteristic element of Łódź of the 1990s. The problem was all the more significant that a characteristic feature of the city centre in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was a blend of residential function and industrial plants.

Since the 1990s, ways have been searched to save the decaying architectural tissue of Łódź and attempts have been made to build a new image and to find and redefine the urban identity with an important role played by the 19<sup>th</sup>-century architectural heritage.



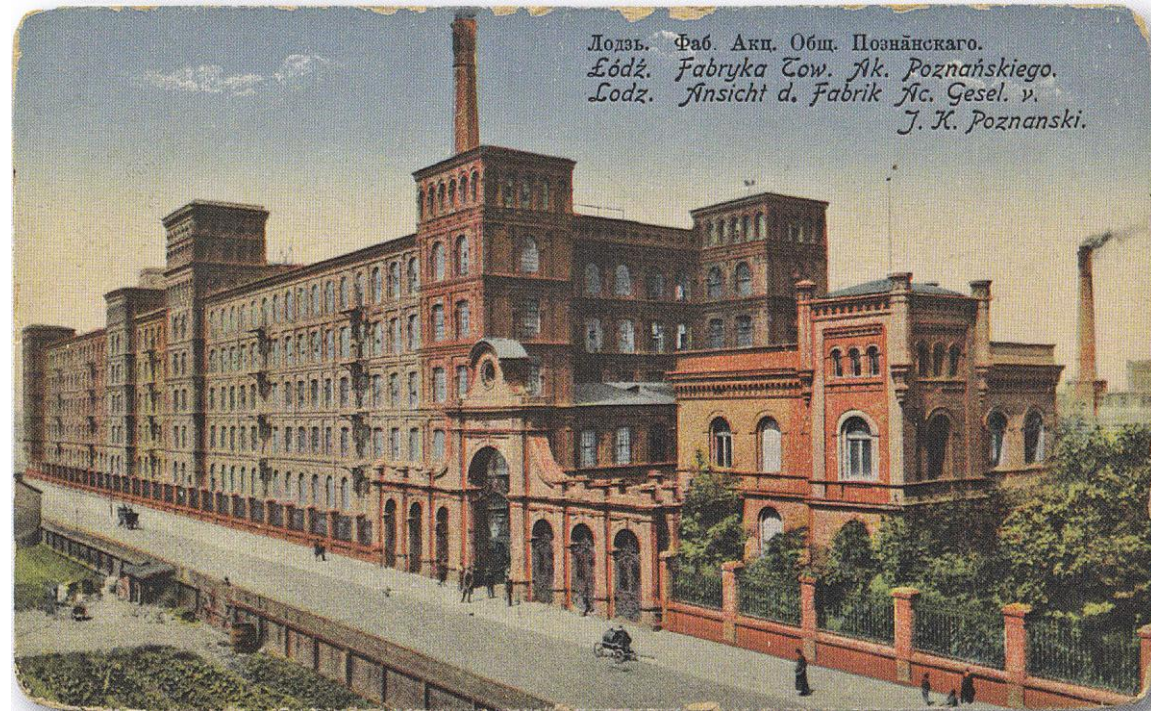
*Renovated and rebuild area of former EC1 power plant*



*Art\_Incubator in 19<sup>th</sup>-century factory halls*



The most visible form of changing attitude towards the city history and an attempt to create a bridge between the past and the present is large-scale adaptive reuse of Łódź post-industrial architecture, adapting it to the new function and its modernisation.



*Izrael Poznański's industrial complex in 19<sup>th</sup> century (a postcard) and nowadays*



Architecture plays an important role in establishing identity of the city and, at the same time, secures its cultural continuity. Despite changing surroundings, it is an element of stability, a feature with particular social and cultural significance, being an important reference point for the local community, as it gives the sense of being rooted and a possibility to self-identify.

Taking into consideration great social importance of converting historic textile mills, a particularly interesting Łódź project is Off Piotrkowska, where grassroots activities undertaken by the local community became the main change catalyst.



*Off Piotrkowska Center on the premises of former Franciszek Ramisch's cotton factory*

Initially, a developer wanted to turn the site of a former cotton factory of Franciszek Ramisch, located on 1,3 ha directly at Piotrkowska Street, into a shopping and office complex and a hotel. The works were going to start in 2008. However, due to the economic downturn, the project was not launched.

Yet, an independent association of young enthusiasts of the Łódź industrial architectural heritage („Fabrykancka”) was allowed to undertake alternative cultural activities in post-industrial buildings. Concerts, workshops and discussion meetings were held in the facility, provisionally arranged by the users.



*Off Piotrkowska Center*





With time, the place began to evoke positive associations, and thanks to bottom-up initiatives, vacant buildings became a lively creative space. These changes inspired the developer, for whom it was a starting point to formulate a further concept of the place, planned in a long-term perspective.

A transition from free grassroots activities to implementation of a carefully thought-out plan was carried out very smoothly by slowly introducing the desired changes. Without establishing clear boundaries between the successive (informal and formal) stages of the project.

*Off Piotrkowska Center*



Destroyed and neglected post-industrial buildings were taken over by fashion designers, architects, as well as other designers, but the atmosphere of the place was determined primarily by bustling culture cafés and restaurants.





It is not easy to implement a project based on long-term cooperation between grassroots initiatives and formal investors, which results in obtaining and maintaining values that are important for both parties. There is the temptation of commercialization, which can also be observed in the activities undertaken recently at Off Piotrkowska.





Active involvement of the local community in shaping the project of adaptive reuse of architectural heritage is significant from the social point of view.

It is an interesting and useful way to initiate or build upon an intense relationship with the place, as the community is directly involved in “creation” of the functionally new place and its contemporary history; it means that the adaptive reuse project is not imposed by the investor as a finished product.





What seems valuable in this context is projects in which the officially developed concept is so open that it leaves room for active and, importantly, creative involvement of the residents in its implementation.

In this way, the emotional connection with the place, which nowadays is also pointed out as an important part of intangible value of the architectural heritage, is strengthened or even renewed.

The community feel then not only as a user but also as a “creator” of the place.



Thank you!