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## **The Right to the City, the Right to Heritage – Material and Non-Material Traces of Scheibler’s ‘New Weaving Mill’ in Łódź**

The complex spatial nature of Łódź, its history and status of a post-industrial city have contributed considerably to selecting it as a kind of a testing ground for revitalisation in Poland. The gradual downfall of industry had its effect on the appearance of the urban fabric. Unfortunately, the industrial heritage was initially disregarded, and even today it is sometimes ignored. This is what Gałuszka wrote about the attitude of the municipality, inhabitants and representatives of the private sector towards the city:

Meanwhile, at the beginning of the 1990s, Łódź irretrievably lost a great portion of its industrial heritage as a result of not only illegal demolitions but also operations that were in accordance with the municipal regulations. Due to legal loopholes, similar demolitions take place in the city regularly. Thus, it would be difficult to agree that rhetorical references to the myth of industrial Łódź are reflected in dynamic municipal activities aimed at the preservation of the spatial and architectural industrial heritage (Gałuszka 2013: 9).

The case of Łódź as a city requiring and undergoing revitalisation processes is complex. The very chain of changes has to concern not only the fabric of the city centre, neglected quarters and tenement houses which do not meet the present housing standards, but also post-industrial buildings that are still

numerous despite all legal and illegal demolitions. This is significant not only for planning and economic reasons (improved visual and infrastructural aspects of the city), but also for social and cultural ones. The post-industrial heritage does not only include physical traces of a unique urban development but also its semantic meaning preserved in the consciousness of the city inhabitants. Charles Landry draws attention to the fact that a drastic change in the driving force of a city and its character from industrial to post-industrial is not connected with an equally sudden change from industrial culture to post-industrial culture, so it does not make the citizens immediately and readily abandon their old models of life and work related to the industrial context of the surroundings and shift towards the postulated open, 'creative' models. This is why it is so important for revitalisation changes to cover the post-industrial space so that, despite serving a completely different function, it is not left to annihilate and can remain a significant element the collective memory of the city inhabitants is built upon and can refer to (cf. Landry 2013: 128).

Łódź as such a city, looking for a new identity, is a very interesting case, with tensions and different attitudes existing, different forms of commemoration being tested as well as traces of neglect and oblivion.

Cities that undergo changes need new ways of talking about their space, activities taking place there, and the meanings that are assigned and deciphered<sup>1</sup>. These ways are to make it possible to describe the present, to recall the past, and to outline the future. It is thus worth paying attention to the possibility of including studies in the field of archaeology of the contemporary past in activities aiming to create a narrative of different types of urban space. As Anna Zalewska indicates when outlining the scope of interest of this field of archaeological research: "this does not mean, however, that the object of research in the field of archaeology of the contemporary past is limited to material remains of the acts of violence or violation of rights and dignity of individuals and communities" (Zalewska 2016: 22). Violence in this case refers mostly to typical, tragic events occurring throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The author draws attention to the fact that violence is not the only indicator archaeology of the contemporary past is interested in. Let us think about the possibility of extending the category of violence and the potential role of archaeological research in supplementing the narrative of economic and social violence. The sudden political and economic transformation after 1989 turned out to be particularly severe in the

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1 Interestingly, in her article *Self, Belonging and Social Change*, Vanessa May notes critically that it is unfair to perceive the past times, traditions and places as constant and unchangeable elements, frequently juxtaposed with the tangled present (May 2011). It is also worth realising that such a perception of cities is a part of a broader discourse and that it stems from earlier conditions, including philosophical and historiographic contexts.

case of Łódź. The lack of any system support for the textile industry (to various extents offered to the mining and shipbuilding industries) soon resulted in the collapse of many factories in the city, which, in turn, led to a huge increase in the unemployment rate. It is not without significance that a large proportion of employees in this industry were women who, due to the cultural and social context, were not a group the dissatisfaction of which would pose a threat to policy-makers<sup>2</sup>. There have already been some studies conducted by archaeologists and anthropologists into the transformation and attempts to restore/supplement the memory and history of the everyday operation of Łódź factories. An example of such studies was a project connected with the transformation of the former 'Monopol Wódczany' factory into *Monopolis* for commercial purposes, conducted by the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology and the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Łódź. The project coordinators were Prof. Dr Hab. Grażyna Ewa Karpińska, Dr Aleksandra Krupa-Ławrynowicz and Dr Olgierd Ławrynowicz.

In this article, we would like to have a closer look at the remains of one of the largest industrial areas in Łódź, meaning the space of the *New Weaving Mill* in Kilińskiego Street, which used to be a part of Karol Scheibler's empire. We will use this example to present the tensions between the actors of the urban life and the related right to the city, which in this particular case is also the right to heritage. At the same time, we indicate the significance of involving different actors in the process of creating narratives (also those contributing to the extension of the research field) of it. This necessity to include changes in the status of different holders of the right to shape the interest in material artefacts is also mentioned by Zalewska:

...tendency to disregard the actual social and cultural factors that have a significant effect on the necessity to extend the social interest in material relics of the past. Ignoring or diminishing the role of stakeholders other than archaeologists in determining the scope of archaeological research that is significant in social and cognitive terms may stem from earlier habits according to which only scientists indicated the object of research (Zalewska 2016: 23).

Let us turn towards viewing this space as a space of everyday life and work, which was marked with an extraordinary event, namely the visit of John Paul II

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2 A paradoxical and significant exception is the Łódź hunger march of female textile workers of 1981, which is rarely mentioned within the general historical discourse. However, more and more activities are undertaken with the aim to bring this historical event back within such areas as herstorical currents.

in 1987. This, in turn, will be the point of departure for describing the strategies for commemorating/forgetting in the context of municipal practices connected with the creation and commemoration of heritage.

Karol Scheibler bought the land to build a factory as early as in 1873. Over the following years he built there a bleaching mill, a new finishing mill, dyeworks and warehouses, and in 1910 he finally managed to open the heart of the whole industrial complex – the power plant, which was one of the largest facilities of this type in Congress Poland. In 1899, the *New Weaving Mill* was also erected in Widzewska Street (today's 187 Kilińskiego Street). The building, which is U in plan, covered 3 ha. It was eclectic with some neo-Renaissance elements. After the First World War, two Łódź giants – the factories of Scheibler and Grohman – merged, forming the largest cotton conglomerate on the Continent at the time. After the Second World War and nationalisation, the buildings housed the Defenders of Peace Cotton Industry Plant 'Uniontex'. One could learn this name from a huge inscription on the New Weaving Mill, which employed more than 6,000 people. Initially, the factory manufactured cotton products but in the 1950s it started manufacturing products of artificial and synthetic fibres (such as elana, textra, argona). The production of Uniontex was sold in the country and abroad. At first, the extended offer translated into an increase in the number of employees (5 years after the war it was 14,000), however, over the following years, this number dropped due to modernisation. It has to be emphasised that women were always in majority among the factory's employees. And meeting female textile workers was one of the aims of John Paul II's visit to Łódź in 1987.

On June 13, 1987, during his third pilgrimage to Poland, John Paul II paid his only visit to Łódź. There were a few events planned during the visit, starting with the pope's meeting with the city inhabitants at the Łódź-Lublinek airport. The last event of the pope's visit to Łódź was quite unique as it was a meeting with the workers of 'Uniontex'. It was unprecedented mostly because it was the first time the pope would meet with workers (and in this particular case – female textile workers) in their workplace. It is also worth noting that the factory to be visited by the Pope was initially different: Julian Marchlewski Cotton Industry Plant 'Poltex'. As Dr Sebastian Pilarski, historian from the Historical Research Office in Łódź, Institute of National Remembrance, says:

The authorities did not agree to it because Marchlewski was too closely related to the period of the Solidarity union's legal operation. They chose 'Uniontex' instead because this factory was treated as a model socialist plant (as cited in Karcanewicz 2018).

It also seems significant that the employees of 'Uniontex' were mostly women. This might have affected the decision of the authorities who probably assumed that this would ensure a peaceful visit. The meeting itself lasted about an hour, and the factory management only allowed employees of that plant to participate. The meeting was not broadcast on television (thus, the only visual mementoes are photographs including the one you can see today on a banner hanging next to the former entrance to the factory) but only on the radio. Even though the authorities turned off the PA system so as to make it impossible for the people gathered near the factory to listen to the meeting, the crowd could hear the transmission from the radios people from the nearby houses put in their windows.

In his speech, John Paul II mostly referred to the specific character of his audience: women, textile workers, who performed a number of roles, and he appreciated the great amount of their everyday work. He repeatedly emphasised his surprise and how impressed he was by visiting a workplace that employed virtually only women. In his speech, he valorised women, including working women, in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church. The characteristic issues the message covered were: 1. the uniqueness of the place where women are in the majority; 2. he called them representatives of all working Polish women in different life situations; 3. he emphasised the relationship between women and Virgin Mary (the Catholic Church designated 1987 a Marian Year); 4. he recalled the history of the creation of man and woman (Genesis 1, 27) and the Biblical message according to which people should subdue the earth they were given; 5. he also cited the Old Testament story of the 'virtuous woman', which he interpreted as praise for the work of women (Book of Proverbs 31, 10); 6. he said that the work of women consisted of chores around the house, which was their workshop and the basic form of their work; 7. he emphasised the change that had taken place after the separation of home from work, and so leaving home for work, which was experienced by both men and women; 8. he reminded the audience about how arduous work and life in general could be; 9. bad working conditions lead to the destruction of women's health, which translates into the health of the children they give birth to; 10. to him, separation of home and workplace was particularly difficult for women, and he said: 'not, most of all, man for work, but work for man', which is why humanism is so important in the way people, and particularly women, are treated at work; 11. the woman is the heart of the house, giving life and bringing up children, and he added: '[...] of course, she is supported by her husband and regularly shares with him all parental and childcare responsibilities. However, it is known that the human body can no longer live when the

heart stops working. The analogy is quite clear. No family can survive without the one who is its heart [...]; 12. thus, the Church called for appreciating what women did at home as mothers and carers; 13. women's professional work outside home should respect their calling as wives and mothers; 14. he emphasised the significance of women's participation in strikes that spread all over Poland, including women from Łódź, mostly textile workers, fighting '[...]' for the dignity of man of work so that everyone can determine their fate and their work according to their capabilities and skills; so that everyone can choose their moral ideals, live following their beliefs, and publicly state and practice their religion [...]; 15. he recalled women's achievements in the history of the country, particularly during the hardest times, and said that '[...]' immeasurable are – throughout this history – the debts of the whole nation to Polish women: mothers, carers, workers... heroes [...]'<sup>3</sup>.

An interesting example of a 'reconstruction' of this event is Piotr Kosiński's film available on YouTube, in which contemporary black and white pictures/photographs of the devastated New Weaving Mill are juxtaposed with the recording of John Paul II's speech. In the film description, the author points to the presence of this event in memory:

The Uniontex factory is now in ruin. However, history recorded the day when the pilgrim, Saint John Paul II, visited this place, Łódź, in 1987. It is as if the words spoken then still resounded among the remaining walls of the Uniontex factory. What was then and what is now say clearly: *panta rhei*. This is my reflection whenever I go down Kilińskiego Street between Milionowa and Tymienieckiego Streets. The place is the same but the time is different and Łódź is different, and we are older. The time never stands still but the earthly existence can also be heartening. *Panta rhei*... let's listen to great thinkers who understood the world better than an average man (Kosiński 2017).

The New Weaving Mill in Tymienieckiego Street, also referred to as the Papal Weaving Mill, can be treated as a special case of a place in which memory and significance accumulate; a place connected with an event that was to be 'commemorated' through material transformation of the post-industrial space. The

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3 As cited on: <http://ekai.pl/biblioteka/dokumenty/x493/przemowienie-do-wlokniarek-z-lodzkich-zakladow-przemyslu-bawelnianego-uniontex/?print=1>. In his final words, John Paul II gave an example of Stanisława Leszczyńska as the most important Łódź heroine (from the point of view of the Church; she was declared Servant of God). She was a midwife born in Łódź in 1896. She was sent to the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp for helping Jews from the Łódź ghetto. In the camp, she also worked as a midwife. She did not agree to kill the babies born by prisoners even though she reported to Dr Mengele. After she left the camp, she worked in one of the Łódź hospitals. She died in the 1970s as a practising Catholic who was against the destruction of life.

disintegration and destruction of the New Weaving Mill are related to its deconstruction – decomposition into smaller categories and meanings, but also different ways of interpreting and constructing new semantic configurations. Places of remembrance, as understood by Pierre Nora, are owned by a group in the consciousness of its members and carriers of not only one value but things that are important for the community in general. But what happens when these values are not supported by classical commemorative forms such as statues, museums and restored or revitalised urban spaces? It might be useful to refer to the interpretation and deliberations of Dariusz Czaja with regard to anthropological categories that describe spaces: places of remembrance, non-places, and heterotopies, which, according to the author, seem to most closely correspond with the spaces exemplified by the New Weaving Mill.

Heterotopies are in a way beyond all places, however, one can point to their locations. They are significantly disparate (*heteros*), different, peculiar. [...] Heterotopies are located halfway between the familiar and known real places (*topos*) and places deprived of real space, which only exist as an imagined, thought-up being (*ou-topos*). Heterotopy exists but in a different way than places that are routinely available, visited and experienced. It maintains an incommensurable relationship with the rest of the surrounding space. It functions within it as a different, separate and distinct being. It is a breach in the ordered spatial structure (Czaja 2013: 14).



**Fig. 1.** A fragment of the buildings located at the main entrance in Kilińskiego Street – Alicja Piotrowska's private archive.

Today, the New Weaving Mill, just like many similar post-industrial spaces and abandoned urban spaces, is a heterotopy attracting with its suspension between the known and the unknown. Degraded places are, among others, destinations for the so-called urban exploration, one of the main aims of which, apart from spending free time and pursuing an alternative form of tourism, is a certain objection against the deprecation and the abandoning of some elements of the urban fabric for others; fight for commemoration (mostly through photographs and films) and the right to understand heritage in

different ways, including those inconvenient or, in the case of the New Weaving Mill, 'postponed' ones, where the material (market) value turned out to be more important than the immaterial value (remembrance, heritage, events).

After the transformation in 1989, the factory grounds (including the New Weaving Mill) had a few owners. First, it was bought by a known Łódź construction company 'Varitex'. Then, the land was bought from an official receiver by the owner of the E.Leclerc hypermarket chain with the intention to build a large-format store there. However, the municipality did not want to approve this plan. After a series of negotiations, the mayor of Łódź signed an agreement with the investor, pursuant to which the property could be sold to an entity selected by the municipality. The store was not built, and the factory was deprived of any supervision, which was when the gradual robbery of scrap materials started. The best proof of the failure of these plans is a nearly faded billboard with an image of the pope. The next owner of the property was the 'Opal Property Developments' company. In 2007, some activities were undertaken to create a place commemorating the visit of John Paul II to the weaving mill of Uniontex in the grounds of the former weaving mill, next to purely commercial facilities. In the notarial deed confirming the purchase of the property from the French company, the new owner obliged himself to create such a space. Even a competition for a design of the centre was organised. Investors presented their ideas for the development of the area purchased. 'Priest's Mill Estate', i.e. an artistic and business urban space for the inhabitants of Łódź and tourists, was supposed to be an exclusive example of the transformation of post-industrial space for commercial purposes. The investment was to cover 37,000 square metres, with the first stage including 6,000 square metres. It was to house cafés, coffee bar clubs, interiors shops, sports shops, clothes shops as well as architecture offices, advertising agencies and photographic studios.

In the meantime, other ideas for the development of this space appeared, such as the idea to build a city stadium named after John Paul II in the grounds of the former weaving mill, put forward during one of the meetings of the Municipal Sports Commission.

From 2014, the owner of the property connected with the former empire of Karol Scheibler has been the Griffin Group company, which bought it for PLN 26 million at a collector's auction. The company is going to transform the former factory buildings into a commercial and residential centre. The contractor is the Echo Investments company, and the work is underway. This time, the investor decided to involve inhabitants and the potential target public at the construction stage and invited them to take guided tours of the buildings,

including the power plant, which is most attractive visually. This is a very interesting idea proving the awareness of the growing popularity of urban exploring – in this particular case everyone can experience and see the abandoned urban spaces under controlled conditions. The Art Nouveau power plant designed by Latvian engineer Alfred Frisch became representative of the whole investment – a kind of a symbol. Thus, the first stage of the work connected with residential construction takes place around it. It is difficult to say whether the remaining part of the area will be adapted for new purposes. Information about the investment available at the moment concerns the part covering the area between Tymienieckiego Street, Milionowa Street, Art\_Inkubator and the planned extension of Słowiańska Street.

The future fate of the New Weaving Mill, the progressing degradation of which is already very advanced, remains unknown. It has been gutted for further investment, then scrap metal collectors got interested in it, and finally its roof collapsed. Moreover, in May 2012, there was a dangerous fire in the weaving mill, which only made the damage worse.

The New Weaving Mill can be analysed as an example of space that can give rise to the right to use and shape the urban space as a place of conflicts of interest between its users (past, present and potential) and those who dispose of it on the decision-making level. Peculiarly, space is the most tangible thing a deficit of which is immediately visible, at the same time being the most desired, which is why it falls prey to all forms of appropriation. Concepts of the right to the city emphasise the undeniable fact of the value of and the fight for space, and help us see the danger described by Harvey as follows:

This is, surely, a far better tale by which to explicate the true tragedy of the urban commons for our times. Those who create an interesting and stimulating everyday neighbourhood life lose it to the predatory practices of the real estate entrepreneurs, the financiers and upper class consumers bereft of any urban social imagination (Harvey 2012: 117).

In contemporary cities, we often see the taking over of attractive spaces which are centres of cultural life or are conveniently located. Sometimes, however, these takeovers are not hugely successful.

On the part of owners and investors, commemoration connected with the New Weaving Mill, limited in this case to one event/Pope's pilgrimage, basically has had the form of unattractive banners, paper plans and declarations used as bargaining cards in negotiations with the city authorities (who also used this space and promises to transform it as campaign promises). The present investment in this area remains an open question.



**Fig. 2.** A banner next to the gate in Kilińskiego Street – Alicja Piotrowska’s private archive.

However, these forms of commemoration are accompanied by grassroots, private initiatives: there is a metal image of the pope and a wooden cross on the main gate.



**Fig. 3.** The gate in Kilińskiego Street – Alicja Piotrowska’s private archive.

The city, which functions as a centre of activities and a centre of influence and disposal of different goods, is also perceived by some researchers and activists as a centre, an arena of fight for power over the characteristics and possibilities it offers. Such an approach suggests viewing the city not as a set of properties and assets but jointly used and owned goods.

Thus, the right to the city is mostly the right to activity within the urban space. As David Harvey emphasises, it is collective and focused (Harvey 2012: 188). Its holders are not only the authorities or elites. Its aim is to extend the group of people making decisions about the city: from this perspective, city inhabitants become its rightful owners. Ideologically, it is obviously connected with the belief that the dominant system of management should be accompanied by a certain anti-capitalistic way of talking about the city and its development. Urban exploring can also be an objection against the aggressive taking over of places by investors whose aim is to profit and not to shape the urban space in accordance with the needs of its functional and symbolic inhabitants. Moreover, activities connected with urban exploring (publication of photographs, films and frequently their descriptions in the social media together with discussions about different interesting locations) can also be seen as practices including other narratives and other ways of viewing the past, history and cultural heritage in the public discourse, or even a different way of perceiving the city, also in the tourist context (cf. Robinson 2015: 142).

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In contemporary cities, we often see the taking over of attractive spaces which are centres of cultural life or are conveniently located. At the same time, this is not only about intercepting places but also the values they represent and incorporating them into a tale about ownership that is convenient for the new owners (this is what the so-called SoHo effect is). The basis for the right to the city is the equality of diversity characteristic of its inhabitants. It is not only connected with urban space and its use but also requires a shift in the way of thinking about it and about the way urban character is implemented as a lifestyle. This is why the author of the concept, Lefebvre (2012), says:

The right to the city is like a cry and a demand [...] The right to the city cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life (as cited in Majer 2014: 184).

Thus, a city is to be mostly open to diverse possibilities of living in it, with the diversity becoming its major value. As we wanted to show, from this perspective, its essence gives rise to the right to diverse heritage and the ways of commemorating, cultivating, appropriating, and forgetting it.

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## Summary

### The Right to the City, the Right to Heritage – Material and Non-Material Traces of Scheibler's 'New Weaving Mill' in Łódź

The paper presents the case of post-industrial space of the New Weaving Mill in Kilińskiego Street in Łódź, which was a part of Karol Scheibler's empire. We use it to illustrate the tensions between actors of the city life and the related right to the city including the right to heritage. At the same time, we indicate the significance of involving different actors in the process of creating narratives (also those contributing to the extension of the research field) of it. In our discussion, we mostly perceive this space as everyday space – space of work that was marked with an unusual event: the visit of John Paul II in 1987. Thus, we consider the practices and strategies for commemorating/forgetting in the context of urban practices connected with the construction of heritage and the right to it.

**Keywords:** city, post-industrial space, Łódź, material heritage, non-material heritage, right to the city

## Streszczenie

### Prawo do miasta, prawo do dziedzictwa – materialne i niematerialne ślady „Nowej Tkalni” Scheiblera w Łodzi

W artykule przybliżamy przypadek przestrzeni postindustrialnej Nowej Tkalni przy ul. Kilińskiego w Łodzi, będącej częścią dawnego imperium Karola Scheiblera, który posłużył nam do zaprezentowania napięć pomiędzy aktorami życia miejskiego i związanego z tym prawa do miasta, w tym także dziedzictwa. Jednocześnie wskażemy na istotności włączania różnorodnych aktorów w proces kształtowania narracji (również tych wpływających na rozszerzenie pola

badawczego) o nim. W swoich rozważaniach wykorzystaliśmy przede wszystkim perspektywę spojrzenia na tę przestrzeń jako na przestrzeń codzienności – pracy, która została naznaczona wydarzeniem niecodziennym – wizytą Jana Pawła II w 1987 r. Zastanawiamy się więc nad praktykami i strategiami upamiętniającymi/zapominającymi w kontekście praktyk miejskich związanych z konstruowaniem dziedzictwa oraz prawa do niego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** miasto, przestrzeń postindustrialna, Łódź, dziedzictwo materialne, dziedzictwo niematerialne, prawo do miasta

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