Agata Zysiak

Kamil Śmiechowski

Kamil Piskała

Wiktor Marzec

Kaja Kaźmierska

Jacek Burski

From Cotton and Smoke: Łódź – Industrial City and Discourses of Asynchronous Modernity 1897–1994

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INTRODUCTION

The city greeted newcomers with a mysterious "characteristic, dirty fog on the horizon, which constantly hangs above the capital of chimneys."[1] Directly on arrival "the smoke wrapped [newcomers] in some impenetrable, sulfurous atmosphere." Gradually, through this "gigantic cloud of smoke" "a forest of brick chimneys stretched to the sky", and with "a proud hatred belched smoke, fire and ashes up into the sky", creating "an impression that a legion of blazing volcanoes was embracing the proletarian city."[2] Entry into this urban area from its rural surroundings generated fascination and repulsion. It triggered a state of shock.

"Every age has its shock city."[3] This city can be a window which enables us to understand the contemporary world, its greatest achievements and it darkest horrors. Manchester was a shock city of 19th century industrial England—a theater of horror and fascination, a place that prefigured and indirectly shaped the path of industrial giants around the world. Not without a reason were many urban habitats baptized French or Finnish Manchesters. Rather than take Paris to be the capital of the 19th century, as did Walter Benjamin, Janet Wolff considers the paradigm of new ways of working and living to have been Manchester.[4] The fates of industrial cities in the 20th century differed. Most of them were hotbeds of urban contention where powerful ideologies stirred up mass political constituencies. Some of these cities enjoyed new prominence in socialist states as flagships of forceful industrialization, while others were exposed to the vagaries of transforming capitalism. Finally, all of them faced deindustrialization, crisis and attempts to reinvent their futures anew.

This book is about a place that epitomizes the experience of the rise and fall of industrial modernity in Eastern Europe, "the Polish Manchester." Łódź, in present-day central Poland, was a rapidly growing textile center, one of the few

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[1] Artur Glisczyński, "Łódź po zaburzeniach" [*Kurier Warszawski*, 1905] in: Piotr Boczkowski, *Łódź, która przeminęła w publicystyce i prozie: (antologia)* (Łódź: eConn, 2008), 495.

[2] Iwan Timkowskij-Kostin, *Miasto proletariuszów* (Łódź: Tygiel Kultury, 2001).

[3] Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 56.

[4] Janet Wolff, "Manchester, Capital of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 13, no. 1 (February 1, 2013): 69–86, https://doi.org/10.1177/1468795X12461413.

places which paved a way to industrial, capitalist modernization outside of the so-called West. Its history is a tale of struggle with modern social change in Eastern Europe. It is also a tale of modernity arising in a multinational empire, later redeployed within the borders of an emerging nation state, passing through state socialism, tormented by structural transformations and finally thrown into the whirlwind of the late-capitalist global economy.

This path exposed local populations to difficult challenges. Incoming rural migrants, people whose state-affiliation suddenly changed, postwar refugees and sacked female workers for over a century looked for means to find their way in the changing urban reality. They sought to become not only objects of modernization but also subjects actively envisioning their futures. One late 19th century newcomer of rural origin remembered how he came to the city which overwhelmed him with its pace of life and the power of machine production. Soon he bought a shared subscription to a "bourgeois" daily and started to discover the world around: "the fresh newsprint excited my mind and filled it with undefined longings for knowledge and its beauty. I was enriched by the scent of the newsprint itself."[5] The local press was a useful companion in making sense of modern life, and an outlet that nurtured numerous visions of improving urban reality.

The book examines local press debates at four pivotal periods of social and political dislocation that stimulated debate and self-reflection on the modern city. We construct an unusual multi-temporal case study with four cross-sections in order to historicize local struggle with urban modernity. These four moments are: (I) Rapid industrial growth in the framework of the tsarist borderlands; (II) State crafting in a highly antagonistic ideological setting after the First World War; (III) Socialist rebuilding of a structured city after 1945; and (IV) Hopes and disappointment of the transition and turbulent "Westernization" after 1989.

These four moments of the "urban question" epitomize broader debates in Eastern Europe about the city, the nation and the polity. Spanning over a century yet rooted in a down-to-the-ground analysis of primary sources in the provincial context, this book revisits the landscapes of intellectual means mobilized to interpret social reality and change it. Whereas cultural and intellectual histories paint a broad-brush picture of urban modernity, we chose prismatic perspectives zooming in on fragmentary rationalities, localized attempts to make sense of urban experience but also to actively transform it. Second-hand idea dealers and rank-and-file journalists were looking for peace of mind in describing, understanding and sometimes changing the modern reality around them. Thus, we decided to study those voices as an empirically traceable inscription of the confrontation with asynchronous modernity. These insights add up to a multi-faceted portrait of the 20th century urban experience in Łódź.

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[5] Lucjan Rudnicki, *Stare i nowe* (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1979), 176.

There Is a City in Europe

Arising from scratch, Łódź grew to prominence as a factory-town in the 1820s. It swiftly became one of Europe's fastest-developing industrial centers, reaching 300,000 inhabitants by 1900 and 850,000 in 1989. The "city of cotton", as it was soon baptized, was a "shock city"—a great urban center with all the problems that rapid capitalist urbanization triggered. German artisans, Polish peasants and Jewish small traders flocked to the growing city founding textile enterprises and tiny workshops, adding to a multi-ethnic industrial patchwork subsumed under a profit-seeking imperative.[6] Łódź took up the baton as the most significant industrial hub, simultaneously the biggest urban center between Moscow and Berlin, besides Warsaw.

As a result, Łódź used to have an ambivalent public image. It was soon christened "the Polish Manchester", and like the "original" it had a tarnished reputation as a "shock city" if not, even less ambiguously, as "a bad city." One should not be misled by the title of a renowned novel about the city, written by the Nobel Prize winner Władysław S. Reymont – "The Promised Land." This was an ironic slogan coined by the author to intrigue the audience before presenting what was actually an anti-urban and anti-cosmopolitan story lurking behind a realist facade.[7] After all, both the Victorian and Polish publics were equally immersed in similar anti-urban sentiments.[8] Industrial hubs were everywhere mercilessly criticized as aberrations of progress rather than its justified outcomes. The "shock cities", where dynamic development was accompanied by raging class conflict and social disorder, were spaces typical of 19th century capitalism, with its rapid urbanization and the industrialization of Europe. In Eastern Europe, however, this ambiguous position was further reinforced by the contrasts produced by asynchronous modernization.

In areas exposed to external impulses and encroaching global capitalism, economic change had an unequal and combined character.[9] Various social processes had their own pace, being differently integrated in transregional circulations and penetrated to a different degree by market relations. Furthermore,

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[6] Jan Fijałek et al., eds., *Łódź: dzieje miasta do 1918 r.* (Łódź; Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988); Julian Janczak, "The National Structure of the Population in Łódź in the Years 1820–1938," *Polin*, no. 6 (1991): 20–26.

[7] Karolina Kołodziej, *Obraz Łodzi w piśmiennictwie pozytywistyczno-młodopolskim* (Łódź: Piktor, 2009).

[8] Jerzy Jedlicki, *Świat zwyrodniały: lęki i wyroki krytyków nowoczesności* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!, 2000).

[9] Leo Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution & Results and Prospects*, trans. L. Nichol (Seattle: Red Letter Press, 2010).

technologies, radical ideas, cultural trends, consumption patterns and material aspirations were transferred selectively, not always in accord with each other or with extant realities. For instance, the higher social strata proselytized imported ideas and conspicuously consumed goods complicit with cutting edge "foreign" fashion. Exposed to such attractive examples, popular classes wanted to follow, but any broader demand for industrial goods could not be easily satisfied within an agrarian economy. This provided fertile ground for various, home-brewed, or imported, projects of radical social change, which promised universal prosperity but above all a reshuffling of global hierarchies.[10] Such a contemporaneity of the non-contemporaneous[11] augmented modern desires whilst simultaneously diminishing their possible satisfaction. It was in such a situation defined by asynchronous modernity that the modern debate in Łódź unfolded.

Łódź many times found itself a city on the edge of tomorrow, a vanguard and a victim of progress. Its history is a series of struggles to become modern, to be "just on time." When time sped up unprecedentedly for a sleepy rural backwater, when two world wars reshuffled the social order, and finally when the late 20th century brought "the end of history", the city and its polity were once again re-imagined anew. In Łódź, modernity forced its champions and victims alike to face its uneasy form, scattered, rapid and ruthless. At the same time, it offered the paradoxical promise of leaving itself behind. As Marshall Berman noted, modernity brought about a self-perpetuating dislocation, but simultaneously urged its objects to become subjects of the historical process.[12] In Łódź it triggered a constant will to become modern without asynchronous distortions, to achieve the harmony of a city that would finally meet the demands of the day. Thus, one journalist from the turn of the century believed that "a moment when meeting the basic requirements for a 'decent, healthy and harmonious personal and public life' will be possible, does not belong to the very distant future."[13] This longing, in its various renditions, fueled the mission of local journalists for the next hundred years and did not allow them to lay their pens, typewriters or PCs to rest.

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[10] Andrew C. Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World: The Politics of the Borderlands from Pre- to Postcommunism*, Nachdr. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).

[11] Ernst Bloch, "Nonsynchronism and the Obligation to Its Dialectics," trans. Mark Ritter, *New German Critique*, no. 11 (1977): 22–38.

[12] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983).

[13] "Z dnia na dzień," *Goniec Łódzki*, no. 78 (1900).

Translocal Modernity

What was their modernity really about? The question here is also, so to speak, a topographical one. How did modernity happen in the world? The question is usually answered either by concentration on a very few flagship sites of modernity or on almost abstract global processes. The vast majority of writings on urban modernity offer studies of the cutting edge metropoles: Paris, London, or New York.[14] Its counterpart is an examination of global and transnational shifts, exchanges and flows.[15] These paradigms of thinking signify the outermost poles of debate, and they easily overlook how modern experience was actively constructed when transnational processes and metropolitan voices hit urban debate at ground level.[16] Where did modernity take shape day to day?

As paradoxical as it may seem, the answer is: it was happening elsewhere. Focus on abstract processes gives us an understanding of the complex system that the global world would become. Earlier, the agenda of the day was a sociological analysis of a general process, allegedly happening in different places at a different pace, but essentially homogenous despite its variance. Modern metropoles were considered trailblazers on a world scale. The capitalist West and its experience of rapid development, inaugurated by the Industrial Revolution, became a classic paradigm of modernization and the dominant path to follow for many societies in forthcoming decades. The second half of the 19th century and (at least) the first half of the 20th were marked by undifferentiated and unambiguous concepts

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[14] Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 2012); David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Hagen Schulz–Forberg, *London–Berlin: Authenticity, Modernity, and the Metropolis in Urban Travel Writing from 1851 to 1939* (Brussels; New York: Peter Lang, 2006); Alan J. Kidd and Terry Wyke, *Manchester: Making the Modern City* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016); Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

[15] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many–Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Stefano Bianchini, *Eastern Europe and the Challenges of Modernity, 1800–2000* (London; New York: Routledge, 2015).

[16] Notable exceptions breaking away from this binary framework are Jennifer Jenkins, *Provincial Modernity: Local Culture & Liberal Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Hamburg* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); Paul Manning, *Strangers in a Strange Land: Occidentalist Publics and Orientalist Geographies in Nineteenth-Century Georgian Imaginaries* (Boston, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2012).

of social development. Later, a growing awareness of global entanglements rendered the dependencies and differentials more visible, showing that metropolitan modernity had an evil twin in the seemingly backwater realities of slave-holding plantations.[17] All those entangled places, peripheral, but globally connected industrial centers among them, reveal more about global modernity than the centers of the popular imagination such as London, Paris or New York. They *were* the global history.

Such industrial hubs, embodying global modernity in an exceptional, yet typical way, may be grasped by the notion of the "ordinary city."[18] They are not, however, places only embodying the modern struggle on the ground. There transnational trends struggled with local traditions and premodern patterns, revealing tensions between different time paces. Modernity is generally a translocal phenomenon—not only does it move between places and contexts, but it is also always conceptualized as being somewhere else, stimulating movement for those who debate it.[19] The will to keep up with such imagined centers of modernity was particularly powerful in Eastern Europe, where local power brokers struggled to fulfill their European aspirations[20] or launched radical projects of social reconstruction capable of reversing global hierarchies, be they fascism or communism.[21] But the alleged center is actually constructed through the margins as the polycentric model of multi-directional rather than linear flows of modernity demonstrates.

From Chana Kronfeld's argument about "minor literature"[22] or postcolonial studies to the multiple modernities approach,[23] many scholars have criticized

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[17] Robin Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery: From the Baroque to the Modern, 1492–1800* (London: Verso, 1999); Massimiliano Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 2012).

[18] Ash Amin and Stephen Graham, "The Ordinary City," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 22, no. 4 (December 1, 1997): 411–29, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0020–2754.1997.00411.x; Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[19] Tomasz Majewski, ed., *Rekonfiguracje modernizmu: nowoczesność i kultura popularna* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2009); Tomasz Majewski, Wiktor Marzec, and Agnieszka Rejniak-Majewska, *Migracje modernizmu. Nowoczesność i uchodźcy* (Łódź; Warszawa: Stowarzyszenie Topografie; Narodowe Centrum Kultury, 2014).

[20] Jan C. Behrends and Martin Kohlrausch, eds., *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890–1940* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014).

[21] Janos, *East Central Europe in the Modern World*.

[22] Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism: Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1996).

[23] Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002).

the unilineal idea of progress as well as a model and transmission or diffusion from center to peripheries. For instance, Susan Stanford Friedman introduced the "circulation model" which aims at contesting the Europocentric and reductionist model of modernization. She aimed at examining connections, links and conjunctures, in general, what is nowadays the focus of so much global academic attention: transnational networks. The resulting sensitivity underlines the interactivity as well as multiple agencies and centers across the globe.[24] Building on this, Harsha Ram tried to combine Friedman's perspective and the center/periphery model in order to tackle actually existing peripheral modernity in Tiflis/Tbilisi, a place plugged into the global cultural flows in a way not dissimilar to Łódź. However, the aim of this move is not to disavow "the dramatic asymmetries of power." While Kronfeld tries to understand regional articulations through the center, Ram proposes constructing the center through the margins. He concludes with a remark that should be kept in mind while examining Łódź.

> If modernism reflected not the triumph of modernization but rather its uneven, impeded and locally inflected geographical spread, then might not modernism have been most sharply and vividly expressed precisel/y where the process of modernization was only belatedly or patchily successful?[25]

In the case of Tiflis researched by Ram, and similarly in Berman's analysis of the Russian Empire, the modern public sphere, and the field of literature and art became a part of a worldwide network. They were substitutes for barely existing "material" modernization, simultaneously reflecting and shaping global tendencies. Łódź is an opposite case—it is its infrastructure, economic position, pace and insensitivity of development that follow Manchester or New York, but almost nothing more. Its public and intellectual sphere were only germinating, and many expressions in local debate rejected what was new, fluid and "modern" from the perspective of the core-cities. Neither type of modernism fits neatly into the rigid scheme of unilineal progress and thus they beg for a far-reaching reconceptualization of our spatialized teleologies.

One of these types has led to the history of Eastern Europe often being written in a way which underlines differences between the East and the West. This strategy of "differencing" the history of the eastern peripheries of Europe from its western core-centers may be helpful in tackling the general trajectories of vast arrays of dissimilar territories stretching longitudinally from Helsinki to Istanbul. However, it

[24] Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

[25] Harsha Ram, *City of Crossroads. Tiflis Modernism and the Russian–Georgian Encounter*, forthcoming book.

may prove a dubious strategy when analyzing the more detailed, spatialized social history of modernity. Multiple differentials embedded in the capitalist transformation of the world triggered uneven developmental processes on different spatial scales, often entangled within connections not necessarily deployed in their direct vicinity.[26] Consequently, rigid geopolitical frameworks and imagined geographies may reveal their limited explanatory capacity in more zoomed-in research.

This concerns, for instance, those places fixed in the "spaces of capital"[27] in a way that enmeshes them in transregional commercial networks (while drawing extensively from local resources such as land, water, laborers), yet simultaneously isolates them socially from their direct surroundings. In a word, Łódź was one of the huge industrial centers which mushroomed in the 19th century across the globe, as it was positioned on the increasingly porous borderland between the Russian world-empire and European networks of knowledge and technology transfer. Thus, it used to have much more in common with its far away industrial counterparts than with places it directly neighbored.

Whilst a typical modern city, it stood out from the local context. Exploiting local resources and attracting surrounding rural populations, it was a foreign body against the backdrop of local social and cultural ties. With its embeddings in transregional commercial borderland networks consisting of external capital perpetuating accumulation on the one hand (and in one direction) and export-driven production on the other (and on a different vector), Łódź epitomized a form of exceptional normality. Hence, such a theoretical decision about the understanding of modernity has its reasons in actual, asynchronous and entangled modernization processes.

Printed Modernity

The starting points for discourse of the modern on and within industrial cities were similar. The debate on the urban question established a considerably stable set of meanings and images, which was later developed, reused and changed.[28]

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[26] On differentials in surplus extraction connecting distant places see Tomba, *Marx's Temporalities*. On global conjunctures of uneven development of production in localized outcomes see Kacper Pobłocki, "Learning from Manchester. Uneven Development, Class and the City," *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, no. 3(19) (2013): 237–67; Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, *How the West came to rule: the geopolitical origins of capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

[27] David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[28] About the importance of thinking in terms of questions, see Holly Case, *The Age of Questions Or, A First Attempt at an Aggregate History of the Eastern, Social, Woman, Ame-*

Beginning with the rise of the textile hub, local debates mirrored the main bones of contention and narratives of their respective times—from the hygienist movement and an orientalizing gaze on the urban poor in the late 19th century, to the ideologically saturated urban community of nation or class in the interwar period, to a socialist city and postwar infrastructural development, and last but not least, to re-emerging market society, foreign investments and technocratic management of the city in 1990s. Visions of modernity were important coordinates for multiple agendas of critique and reform. Zooming in, we capture moments of reflection about modernization, urbanization and what a modern city is and should be, writing an urban intellectual history of sorts.

Discourse research and intellectual history started to attract historical sociologists just after the humanities as a whole had been changed by the linguistic turn.[29] Text-oriented historical research is grounded in a general awareness of the indirect and language-mediated status of primary sources. Researchers turned to discourse as the missing link between the materiality of production (so stressed in Marxist approaches) and modern experience.[30] Just as the harbinger of this trend—labor history—incorporated language and discourse in its entire methodological edifice, designed to scrutinize modern class subjectivities, so do we, also aiming at text-oriented historical research. Along the lines drawn by discourse theory, we believe that all existing objects and actions are meaningful due to a historically constituted set of rules.[31] All human cultural activity is symbolically deployed and meaningful due to its being patterned like a language. Therefore, we analyze entire cultures (and pluralized modernities) as language-like sign systems. We see discourse as a generalized matrix of social practice, perpetuated by attempts to stabilize meaning, limit uncertainty and conceal the very fact of its ultimate unavoidability. That is why urban visions of modernity are always projected upon the screen of purported time sequences. Teleology brings peace of mind.

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rican, Jewish, Polish, Bullion, Tuberculosis, and Many Other Questions over the Nineteenth Century, and Beyond (Princeton: Princeton University Pres, 2018).

[29] Peter Wagner, "As Intellectual History Meets Historical Sociology," in: *Handbook of Historical Sociology* (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 2003); Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009); Elías José Palti, "The 'Theoretical Revolution' in Intellectual History: From The History of Political Ideas to The History of Political Languages," *History and Theory* 53, no. 3 (2014): 387–405, https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.10719.

[30] Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (1991): 773–97.

[31] David Howarth, *Discourse*, Concepts in the Social Sciences (Buckingham [England]; Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2000); Jason Glynos and David Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory*, Routledge Innovations in Political Theory 26 (London; New York: Routledge, 2007).

The transfer of such comforting narratives between modern visionaries, second-hand idea dealers and local populations tightened when the modern press connected all these groups into a single feedback loop. Discourses of the modern exercised increasing influence on the social imaginary when readership numbers grew. The press accompanied the birth of the modern city and for its inhabitants this was one of the core means of their making sense of the city. This role was intensified in industrial hubs, growing rapidly and attracting new populations, who also found their way in urban life through the press.[32] As a truly modern form, the press evolved alongside the city and its inhabitants.

While the late 19th press catered to the barely politicized common sense of the urban dweller, there emerged in the interwar period more partisan visons of organizing urban polity which pitted them against each other in a highly polemical mode.[33] Later the press became the vehicle of the more ordered ideological transfer of an emerging postwar socialism, just to enter the 1990s as an unconfident soothsayer trying to make sense of a pivotal social transformation and find a new language in a plural political setting. Thus, it is the press which offers unparalleled lenses through which to follow vernacular modern critique and modernization dreams from almost the beginning of Łódź's modern history.

The role of newspapers is not limited to creating the "imagined communities" of assumed readers. There is a widely-shared consensus among scholars of the social role of the press that "newspapers have always created readers, not news, as their primary function."[34] Newspaper language can be seen very much as a "social semiotic" which, in its generic range, draws particular social groups into particular styles of presentation.[35] Such coagulated forms of discourse have the capacity to reproduce social relationships with considerable power. Local intellectuals' efforts to make sense of a changing world, to describe it, and to harmonize with assumed benchmarks and multiplying expectations produced situated

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[32] Peter Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998); Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*, chap. 3.

[33] Bernhard Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[34] Martin Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers: Socio–Historical Perspectives*, Advances in Sociolinguistics (London: Continuum, 2010), 8. On imagined communities, see Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 2006).

[35] Michael A. K. Halliday, *Language as a Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning* (Baltimore: University Park Press, 1977); See also Allan Bell, *The Language of News Media*, Language in Society (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991).

modernity projects with their own agency to forge urban policies.[36] What follows is an attempt to scrutinize such modernity projects enmeshed in the local press discourse.

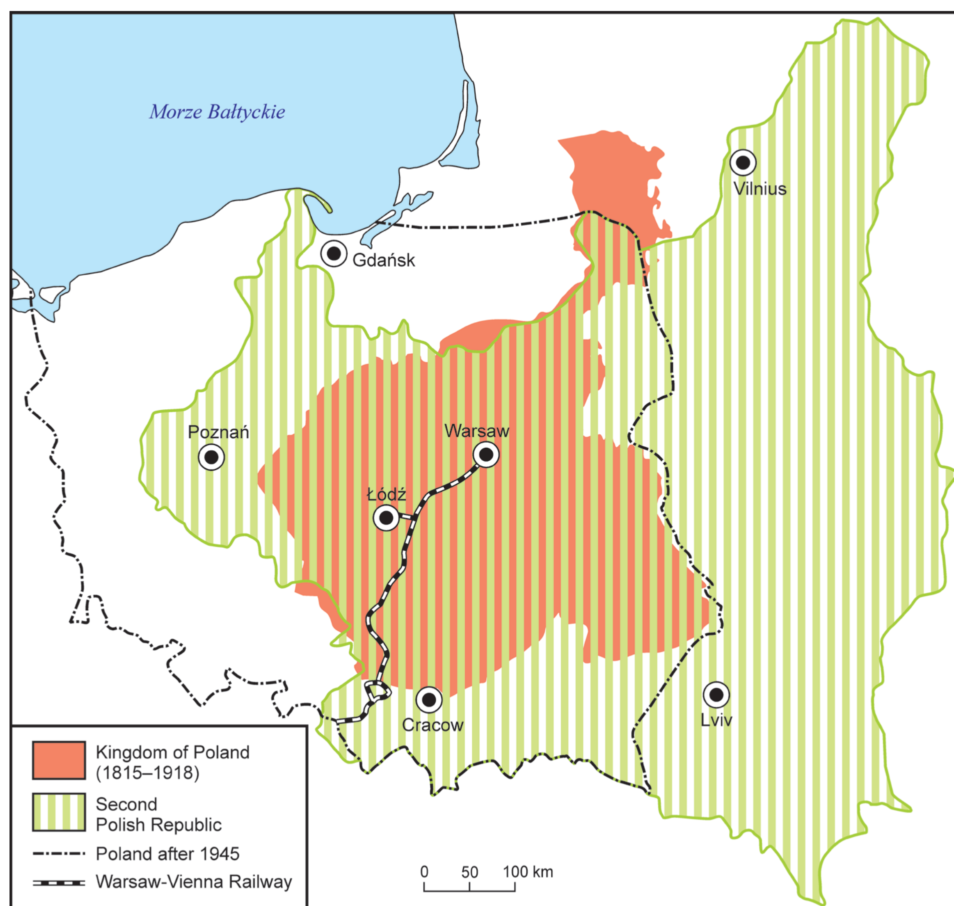

Figure 1. Łódź and its shifting position regarding state borders.

Journey Through a Century

In **Chapter 1** we examine the "shock city" at the turn of the century and the foundations of Łódź's urban discourse. This period witnessed an anti-positivist turn in Polish intellectual culture; there was a rethinking of the rural lower class-

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[36] Fulda, *Press and Politics in the Weimar Republic.*

es' political agency and nation-building capacities. Correspondingly, the cosmopolitan bourgeoisie and an urban lifestyle began to arouse suspicion rather than evoke occidental dreams. In the era of accelerated class formation and modern politicization in the Kingdom of Poland before and during the 1905 Revolution, Łódź took up the baton as the most significant industrial center in the country.[37] It was the ground zero of modern Polish nationalism and class-oriented mass movements. Łódź, largely populated by economically influential Germans and Jews, posed the Polish public an overriding challenge. Likewise, the local Polish intelligentsia had a hard time finding a relevant springboard for its own vision of the city.[38] It had to acknowledge actually existing predicaments including the weakness of the local cultural elites, distance between local reality and the dominant Polish culture, class tension, exploitation and the acute underdevelopment of the urban infrastructure. No wonder that the chief questions of modern life were ardently debated.

Journalists actively re-conceptualized the social bond, moving from a moralized critique of the poor, to philanthropic projects supplementing deficient institutions, to explicit ideas of welfare provision organized by the state in the common interest. Urban citizenship was considered an important factor of a functional polity. Various groups were invited to actively participate in urban life—in a way more inclusive than envisioned in the ethno-nationalism that already held sway in Warsaw-based debate. The local press shaped provincial public opinion by issuing the first complex analyses of the city's condition and forging visions of its future.[39] Once broadcast, these soon became a bone of contention in the evermore polarized public sphere.

Seeking to explore this polarization, in **Chapter 2** we study the early years of the interwar period, marked by the nation-state building project. The chapter characterizes the years of the First World War as a period of economic crisis and also of simultaneous political activation. It was a hard time for the city, which rapidly lost the base of its economic development—open access to the Russian market. Local polity had to struggle with economic decline and polit-

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[37] Robert Blobaum, *Rewolucja: Russian Poland, 1904–1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

[38] Winson Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 117–18; Wiktor Marzec and Agata Zysiak, "Journalists Discovered Łódź like Columbus." Orientalizing Capitalism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Polish Modernization Debates," *Canadian–American Slavic Studies* 50 (2016): 235–65, https://doi.org/10.1163/22102396–05002007.

[39] Kamil Śmiechowski, *Łódzka wizja postępu. Oblicze społeczno-ideowe "Gońca Łódzkiego", "Kuriera Łódzkiego" i "Nowego Kuriera Łódzkiego" w latach 1898–1914* (Łódź: Dom Wydawniczy Księży Młyn, 2014).

ical conflict. In the uncertain conditions of the nascent post-Versailles Polish state, notions of the urban community and the place of the city in the nation were to be radically redrawn.[40] In this context, we shed light on how the process of democratization affected the dynamics of political disputes and changed the discourse of the Łódź press.

Two competing visions of a desired social order developed in the 1920s: "national capitalism" and "municipal socialism." The former ideal propelled the arguments of the political right. This was displayed in a gradual dying down of Polish-German conflict and its replacement by Polish-Jewish antagonism, strengthening in 1930s after the Great Depression. The proposed remedy was a rebirth of the national community through economic cooperation and ethnic solidarity. In turn, the idea of "municipal socialism" marked the thinking of the Polish Socialist Party, who governed the city during the first postwar years. In this milieu the city was envisaged as a battlefield for a better future. The working class and its needs became the main determiners of urban policies. Nationalists' and socialists' visions of the "good city" were grounded in different political philosophies and concepts of society—a disciplined, organic and ethnically homogenous community struggling with its outer enemies vs. present class antagonism, struggle for the future emancipation of the workers and active social policy in real time, respectively. Aside from the reconstruction of their logic and applied argumentation, the unexpected resemblances in their rhetoric have also been explored. The last sections discuss the main stages of rivalry between socialism and capitalism in Łódź in the second half of the 1920s and in the 1930s. The dynamics of this conflict mirrored the wider history of the "European civil war" of 1914–1945.

Chapter 3 focuses on the period following this war. We study the postwar reconstruction from 1945 to 1948 and the accompanying press debate envisioning socialist modernity. Because the Jewish population of the city had mostly perished, and the German inhabitants were expelled, at the end of the war Łódź appeared to be the biggest, and simultaneously least destroyed, Polish city. The working-class city of a newly constituted state, the future People's Republic of Poland, seemed to be the perfect imaginary, if not institutional, capital.

This was the time of the so-called Gentle Revolution, when space for debate was relatively broad, only later tightly grasped by Stalinization. We examine briefly the situation of Poland and Eastern Europe within the postwar order, which was the context for emerging visions of modernization. Łódź was without doubt an industrial city. It was not, however, a socialist city like Magnitogorsk[41]

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[40] Chu, *The German Minority in Interwar Poland*.

[41] Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

or Nowa Huta.[42] As an industrial center with a 19th century genesis and a strong working-class ethos it offers a slightly different insight into socialist urban reality. We propose the term "modest modernization" in contrast to a later rise of a "gigantomania" in investment. Paradoxically, the possibility of a working-class capital in a working-class state meant the city's marginalization. Politically, workers appeared too defiant for the new government and major investment skirted the textile hub to focus on heavy industry instead. At the same time, local debates still nurtured a specific language of postwar modernization. This encompassed productivist mobilization and legitimization of the new regime, with a rhetoric of appeasement as well.

Quite elaborate strategies were developed to make sense of sewage pipe leaks and supply shortages. The core concept of a socialist city was developed in the press, but this was accompanied by more daring visions of a functionalist city proposed by the Łódź-based artist—Władysław Strzemiński. Dreams of becoming a metropolis reappeared in one of the most important urban centers of the nascent People's Republic of Poland. Thus, we later on examine what being a metropolitan center meant to contemporaries. The final part focuses on the breakdown of the first postwar discourse from 1948 onwards and the emotions triggered when it became clear that Łódź would not be a flagship urban center of socialism. What seemed to be the perfect historical moment for the proletarian city, turned out to be a yet another disappointment.

This would not be the last disappointment in the history of Łódź. In **Chapter 4** we examine discourses about Łódź that emerged following the 1989 implosion of state socialism and the industrial form of life. The situation was particularly dramatic not only because it came in the wake of years of negligence, but also because of a lack of any supportive programs for either the textile industry or former textile workers. Here the highest feminized workforce in the country intersected with low levels of education and traditional Catholic values. These kept female textile workers in their homes, while miners or shipbuilders were out fighting for their rights on the streets of Warsaw. The poverty, frustration and social derailment that ensued were framed as the unavoidable costs of modernization.

The economic situation fueled an identity crisis that was proclaimed in press discourses. Once the socialist era had come to an end, working-class heritage was denied legitimacy. Thus, a desperate struggle to build a new identity began. This involved the shibboleths of Łódź the fashion city; Łódź the trading city; and Łódź the center for international fairs. The rejection of working-class lore was the common ground of two opposing narratives: that of the creative city—resilient, enterprising and open to investors and also that of the fallen city—blighted, poor

[42] Katherine Lebow, *Unfinished Utopia: Nowa Huta, Stalinism, and Polish Society, 1949–56* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013).

and devastated. As in most of the former "Manchesters", the neoliberalization of the economy brought deindustrialization and social decline—the vicious circle of history revived the ideology that had made the industrial centers grow, but this time its return brought about their ruin.

Despite changing social circumstances and abrupt geopolitical shifts, these discourses that circulated for over a century are marked by common elements. All these projects would often have a patterned shape, characteristic for a form typical of the modern discourse.

The Structure and Content of the Modern Discourse

Across time, all four cross-temporal case studies of the modern urban discourse, reveal common features. argumentation in the press was often structured in a similar manner. Starting with a statement describing reality, it subsequently points out current deficits and problems, as well as the reasons for the undesirable situation, just to conclude with recommendations or appeals for change. This recurrent form of perception is a scaffolding which allowed social actors, in this case mainly journalists, to make sense of the rapidly changing reality around them, describe imperfections of this reality and propose meaningful pathways to change it. The thread leading from diagnosis, to critique, to prospective vision, represents the basic timeline of modern thinking oriented toward self-assertion and reflexive reform.[43] This pattern is much more than a construction of text; it is a particular paradigm of action, expressed in thinking, writing and practice.

Exploring this logic, one can observe that many modern discourses promise a harmonious modernity—a state of fulfilled and integrated being keeping up with the promise of the modern challenge. At the same time, they clearly picture what prevents this fullness appearing as a sworn political enemy, foreign yoke or long-term negligence. This addition is necessary, as a harmonious modernity will forever remain an unfulfilled promise; the experience of reality always denies the illusion of its possible full realization.[44] The modern condition, as a self-perpetuating movement, is exactly grounded in this paradoxical experience.

Correspondingly, modern discourses are grounded in an implicit utopian horizon. This may not be very perceptible but without it the modern form of thinking would be impossible. The utopia—an idealized scenario—is a promise of achieving that harmonious modernity, which is denied by the virtually created,

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[43] Reinhart Koselleck, "Einleitung," in: *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Klett–Cotta, 1972), xiii–xxvii; Reinhart Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis: Enlightenment and the Pathogenesis of Modern Society*, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1988).

[44] Agnes Heller, *A Theory of Modernity* (London: Wiley, 1999).

fantasmatic enemy. The latter ultimately brings into the field of vision the threat of dystopia—a disaster scenario.[45] While the diagnoses, obstacles and visions differed for different political options, the logics of modern discourse still remained similar. The clue lies in the obstacle itself, which is, at the very same time, the foundation enabling the appearance of any utopian project at all.[46]

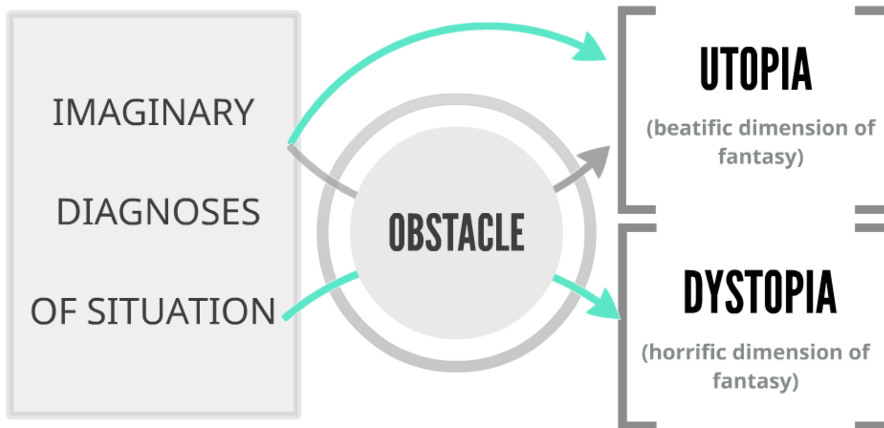

Figure 2. Structure of discourse of the modern (author: Agata Zysiak).

This underlying structure could lead to different, often contradictory, projects of modern change. Moments of social and political dislocation, such as the threshold periods studied in this book, stimulated such modern visions and pitted against each other polemists advocating differing senses of the future. As Reinhart Koselleck noted, modern times are marked by a separation of the space of experience and the horizon of expectations.[47] What is envisioned as to come is no longer directly embedded in knowledge of the past. This change challenged the sense of the obviousness of presence and stimulated various concepts of movement, dynamic ideas of time and imaginings of the future. Correspondingly, we see the specific discourses of urban modernity as complex figurations expressing

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[45] Glynos and Howarth, *Logics of Critical Explanation in Social and Political Theory*.

[46] This issue is described in detail in Agata Zysiak, "The Desire for Fullness. The Fantasmatic Logic of Modernization Discourses at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Century in Łódź," *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, no. 3(13) (2014): 41–69, https://doi.org/10.14746/pt.2014.3.3.

[47] Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

assumptions about time, space, community and order, and simultaneously envisioning their movement in history. Thus, in subsequent chapters we trace changing attitudes regarding these dimensions.

Various attempts to build a convincing narrative about the modern urban challenge may also be seen as historically changing imaginings of the future, or to use Koselleck's phrase, futures pasts.[48] As longings not always realized, they nevertheless shaped the actions of historical actors in real time, as they were past futures true and meaningful at the time of utterance.[49] The question of time also encompasses the "regimes of historicity" present in particular modern discourses.[50] In particular, we mean the varieties of the assumed timelines and self-ascribed place within them pushed by local actors. We ask how these regimes of historicity were negotiated on the ground in the press, as well as who populated the assumed timelines—what benchmarks of progress were used and what modern places stimulated local aspirations.

As was widely documented, such prospective discourses very often had a direct spatial reference, most aptly expressed in the very notion of utopia.[51] Urban imaginations from the very beginning of utopian thinking contained detailed visions of space which would foster the harmonious life of the moderns. In actually

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[48] Koselleck.

[49] Georges Minois, *Geschichte der Zukunft : Orakel, Prophezeiungen, Utopien, Prognosen* (Düsseldorf: Artemis & Winkler, 1998); Lucian Hölscher, *Weltgericht oder Revolution: protestantische und sozialistische Zukunftsvorstellungen im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Stuttgart: Klett–Cotta, 1989); Lucian Hölscher, *Die Entdeckung der Zukunft* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer–Taschenbuch–Verlag, 1999); Peter S. Fisher, *Fantasy and Politics: Visions of the Future in the Weimar Republic* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen in Deutschland 1918–1933* (München: Oldenbourg, 2008).

[50] Alexander Escudier, "Temporalities and Political Modernity," in: *Political Concepts and Time: New Approaches to Conceptual History*, ed. Javier Fernández Sebastián (Santander: Cantabria University Press; McGraw–Hill Interamericana de España, 2011); Diana Mishkova, Balazs Trencsenyi, and Marja Jalava, eds., *"Regimes of Historicity" in Southeastern and Northern Europe, 1890–1945 Discourses of Identity and Temporality* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[51] Richard Dennis, *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space, 1840–1930* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Behrends and Kohlrausch, *Races to Modernity: Metropolitan Aspirations in Eastern Europe, 1890–1940*; Daria Bocharnikova and Steven E. Harris, "Second World Urbanity: Infrastructures of Utopia and Really Existing Socialism," *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 1 (2018): 3–8, https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144217710227; Stephen J. Collier, *Post-Soviet Social: Neoliberalism, Social Modernity, Biopolitics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

existing spaces of modernity that visibly questioned such ideals, the urge to order space remained at the core of urban discourse. The late Victorian city was in the eyes of social reformers the infrastructural grid modeling modern liberal citizenship.[52] Similarly, industrial Łódź was a place where various spatialized imaginations were forged. A tangible lack of infrastructure urged journalists to propose various visions of reconstructed urban space. This spatial sensitivity reemerged after the Second World War when the paradigm of the socialist city spurred on bold ideas of reconstruction. Space was to be shaped in a way capable of keeping up with the new times and modeling a new human.[53] We investigate these in order to reveal tacit assumptions about space in the urban discourse.

Projected spaces were closely related to envisioned forms of community. The press was an important factor in forging modern subjectivities, and also as a body of collective actors acting on the historical scene. The role of newspapers is not limited to creating "imagined communities" of assumed readers in terms of national belonging.[54] In addition to that, the early press catered to the general metropolitan audience, thus creating a sense of new social cohabitation—the modern industrial city.[55] We study this sense of citizenship promoted in the local context. This task was willingly continued after the creation of the Polish nation state. It is worth asking how the highly polarized ideological projects bid for the support of new working class readers, and what kind of affiliations they offered. In the post-Second World War context, attempts to construct the unity of the rebuilding Poland was rivaled by the socialist incentive to construct a new popular identity of the working citizens. The shape of this fragile balance is also our object of scrutiny. Similarly, we want to check how after 1989 general optimism that turned into disappointment fostered an emergency sense of community. During the same period, however, the new capitalist order required the construction of new social hierarchies and urged the elite milieux to distance themselves from the popular classes. All these dimensions contain two recurring elements: the modern will to improve and the resurfacing of narratives of order.

The press in Łódź was an agent of urban improvement. Journalists were restless in diagnosing problems and devising interventions, not always considering

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[52] Chris Otter, "Making Liberalism Durable: Vision and Civility in the Late Victorian City," *Social History* 27, no. 1 (2002): 1–15; Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London; New York: Verso, 2003).

[53] Michael Ellman, *Socialist Planning* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Slavomíra Ferenčuhová and Michael Gentile, "Introduction: Post-Socialist Cities and Urban Theory," *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 57, no. 4–5 (2016): 483–96, https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2016.1270615.

[54] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Conboy, *The Language of Newspapers*, 8.

[55] Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900*.

the agency of people whose conduct was targeted for reform. Self-appointed specialists in urban planning, infrastructure and civil society left their imprint on local authorities and the civility of urban dwellers, trying to remake society from the bottom up. This "will to improve" has had a long and troubled history.[56] We ask about enduring continuities from the imperial period to the 1989 transition. In detail, we explore areas of intervention, benchmarks against which the pursued improvements were measured, and the desired state of affairs. Profound social and political transformations fanned the fear of uncertainty. The corresponding negative pole of signification is anarchy and chaos: unpredictability vis-à-vis time, urban disarray vis-à-vis space, and the dissolution of ranks vis-à-vis society. We trace how the will to order migrated through these domains, signifying the specificity of urban modern visions in different periods of European history, finding its embodiment in Łódź press debate.

The result is a landscape of visions and attempts to improve urban living, always confronted with unintended consequences and external constraints. In this way the book provides insight into the situated intellectual history of Eastern European modernity. A summary of subsequent strivings in all four periods may be found in the concluding section of the book. Chapters in the book are presented in approximate chronological order, narrating dislocations in turn, posing milestones in our common struggle to be modern. As we are perfectly aware, such a strategy is a yet another truly modern attempt to narrate contingency in a way which makes it intelligible to us, modern subjects.

[56] Tania Li, *The Will to Improve. Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).