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## TRANSMUTATIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF ŁÓDŹ IS ALWAYS INNOVATIVE

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### TRANSMUTACYJNA ARCHITEKTURA ŁODZI ZAWSZE INNOWACYJNA

#### Abstract

The article presents students' conceptual projects of public utility buildings created in the last few years within the framework of semester and diploma courses at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning, which are in their avant-garde vision of the continuation of the achievements of the architecture of inter-war Łódź. At the same time, they contain innovative, often ecological, material, functional and formal solutions in line with the modern guidelines for the shaping of public space in Poland. The projects concern the full expression of public facilities located in the conditions of the big city of Piotrkowska Street, which as a historical passage called „Piotrkowski Passage” is now undergoing comprehensive transmutation.

*Keywords: Architecture, projects, innovations, Piotrkowska, Łódź, transmutation*

#### Streszczenie

W artykule prezentowane są studenckie projekty koncepcyjne obiektów użyteczności publicznej powstałe w ostatnich kilku latach w ramach zajęć semestralnych oraz dyplomowych w Instytucie Architektury i Urbanistyki PŁ, będące w swej awangardowej wizji kontynuacją osiągnięć architektury Łodzi międzywojennej. Jednocześnie zawierają innowacyjne, często proekologiczne, rozwiązania materiałowe, funkcjonalne i formalne zgodne z obowiązującymi we współczesnej Europie wytycznymi kształtowania śródmiejskich przestrzeni publicznych. Projekty dotyczą pełnych ekspresji obiektów publicznych usytuowanych w uwarunkowaniach wielkomiejskiej ulicy Piotrkowskiej, która jako historyczny pasaż zwany „Traktem Piotrkowskim” przechodzi obecnie wszechstronną transmutację.

*Słowa kluczowe: architektura, projekty, innowacje, Piotrkowska, Łódź, transmutacja*

One of the biggest problems of most cities, Łódź included, is problematic and expensive parking space. This is especially evident in the Piotrkowska St. area (which is constantly being modernized), one of the longest trading streets in Europe. It is around 4,2 km long and runs to the south in a straight line from the Wolności Square to Niepodległości Square.

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It was the focal point for the city development. At first, it served as a traveling route, which connected Piotrków Trybunalski with Zgierz (there was a small settlement called Łódź, which was adjacent to this route, located in a forest area). In 1821, Rajmund Rembieniński started to reshape the settlement factory buildings. This settlement was named the New City and it was located south from the „old” Łódź. The design, made by a geometrician named Viebiega, was a road line with cross streets and standard one land measure plots (width 17,5–21 m), assigned to weaver craftsmen. A standard house-workshop was created, which was situated front to the road, while the rest of the plot was a „garden” for the owner’s family. Withtime, the street turned into the city „calling card”, commerce and entertainment centre, where the life of the spreading industry city was concentrated<sup>1</sup>. *It is the Łódź people biggest care to fit everything on Piotrkowska Street.* (Jan Sztaudynger). Between 1945 and 1990, the street was continuously degrading. Until the middle of the 1970’s, a score of tenement buildings was demolished. During the 1980’s, elevation adornments would fall off buildings endangering pedestrians; therefore, they were removed from walls and some buildings were being renovated. The character of the streets changed after 1990, when due to the actions of the architect Marek Janiak, a member of the artistic group ŁódźKaliska, The Piotrkowska Street Foundation was created, with the goal of modernizing the street and create a pedestrian area, which would be similar to old town marketplaces in other cities. PiotrkowskaSt., is not formally a walkway. This situation changes only during mass celebrations, when the street is closed to traffic, e.g. during the “Łódź Days”. Piotrkowska is not signaged as a pedestrian area but is a street with limited car traffic. Due to the length of this section and a lack of standard public transport, rickshaw transport took over. It began in 1993, due to the Piotrkowska Street Foundation initiative, which won the right to use bicycles along the whole street length, as well as support the creation of companies which organize such transport<sup>2</sup>.

Therefore, the proposition of creating a multi-storey car park in the vicinity, by the Nawrot St, should be welcomed. The Master’s thesis *Multi-storey car park with theoffice-service area in Lodz* by Emilia Filutowicz, written under the tutelage of dr. inż. arch. MaciejOlenderek. On the Łódź City Council website is an information about the planned construction of the multi-storey car park by the Nawrot 3/5 St. Currently there is a neglected one-storey car park on that lot. The Nawrot St., despite neighbouring the Piotrkowska St., is avoided by the city residents and serves as a one-way access road to other city districts. The creation of a car park with theoffice-service area would increase its attractiveness. At the same time, the street parking area could be changed into a green line for the local inhabitants. The lot is the property of the city and its northern part is next to the Piotrkowska St. OFF area. The student designed the object into the existing street very well, with service, office and gastronomy space in the front. Part of the front of the building (above the service space) was lightly extended over the street, the ground floor (the Nawrot St.) is made of glass, with a part designed diagonally to expose the main hall entrance. There are two terraces available for the office workers. Due to the lack of greenery in the city centre, the eastern wall is covered with vertical green lines overgrown with ivy. They serve not only as a decorative element, but also compensate

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<sup>1</sup> See: A. Rynkowska: *Ulica Piotrkowska*. Łódź: Łódź Publishing, 1970.

<sup>2</sup> See: M. Zbigniew Wojalski: *Kieszonkowa kronika dziejów Łodzi*. Wydawska Zora Publishing House. Łódź 1996.

the surrounding inhabitants for the new building in the area. There is an additional exit for the car-park users (southeast), which provides access to the Piotrkowska St. OFF area. The other entrance (beside the main one leading to the office hall) is located deeper in the block. Additionally, from the Nawrot St. side, there is an entrance to the service area and a cafe. There is one entrance to the car park (405 park spaces, 23 for disabled persons), which is located near the Piotrkowska St. The office part is made of five floors, the car park of seven with the ground floor. The Nawrot St. side is made of stone slabs in two shades, exposing the original plot division [ill. 1].

On the western side of the Piotrkowska St., the Nawrot St. changes into Ludwik Zamenhofa St. The teachers of *Designing Public Utility Buildings* subject decided that the modern public utility building is to be situated on a corner lot of these two streets. It was agreed, that commerce – recreation – service program would be best for the structure shaping of this visible building. Therefore, students presented a variety of shopping centre design concepts, which in a more or less avant-garde way shape the space of this junction in the Łódź urban structure.

An example is the Kenzo Brand Centre, designed by Paulina Pastuszka and Maksym Kilańczyk. Minimalistic building shape with translucent white sides with an expressive red corner area, which symbolizes a perfume bottle [ill. 2].

Karina Mazur and Miłosz Majzner similarly shaped the structure of the shopping mall connected to a skatepark [ill. 3].

Monika Daroch and Ewa Drobczyńska used a similar design. The main entrance to the shopping mall (which fills the entire plot) is situated from Piotrkowska St. side [ill. 4].

Stanisław Sybilski and Piotr Wódka proposed a modernist shape around an inner patio. In accordance with classical Corbusier rules, its minimalistic shape contains corner entrance (arcade), freed ground floor and enormous four-storey storefront in rhythmical, horizontal, section shaped, reinforced concrete and glass border sections [ill. 5].

How to recognize the work of modern architecture? The new style created a new shape language, which Le Corbusier used in architecture. First of all, it relies on simple shapes – orbs, cones, cubes and basic colours, which according to Jeanneret and Ozenfant affect people at a universal level and are understood by everyone. In the second half of the 1920s and at the beginning of 1930s, Le Corbusier designs a number of perfect, purist villas. He incorporates purist art postulates – using basic shapes and colours. Two are noticed by the world – Stein villa in Garches (1927) and Savoy villa in Poissy. Both followed the *Five Points of Architecture*, which Le Corbusier developed. The building in Poissy was the perfect embodiment of these rules. These five rules were connected with the possibilities of new technologies – particularly the reinforced concrete construction based on a network of pillars and ceilings, which after centuries of using thick brick walls, freed the building walls from the support role. Now the inner, independent construction would bear the weight of the building and the outer walls (facades) could be shaped at will. Le Corbusier developed five points to take full advantage of the modern technology:



1. House had to be built on freestanding supports (pilotis, meaning pillars), thanks to this, the ground floor was free, and under it, car traffic could take place or it could be used as another garden;

2. Garden on the roof – it allowed to exchange high-pitched roofs with flat ceiling roofs;

3. The interior should be designed with an open plan in mind, since the interior became independent from construction. It could be shaped according to personal needs but with an emphasis on creating open spaces, not closed, small rooms;

4. The pillar construction allowed for freedom in shaping the elevation;

5. In the facades (freed from load-bearing functions) huge windows should be installed, preferably ribbon shaped, horizontal, around the whole building, which supplies more sun than traditional point windows.

The Savoy villa was constructed between 1929 and 1931 as a weekend house for rich clients. It is a huge white cuboid, which levitates off the ground due to the support of ground floor pillars. The ground floor is retracted and painted in dark colour, which further emphasizes the impression that the building levitates. The curved ground floor was designed with car turning radius in mind, which could park between the pillars. The ground floor contains the main hall, servant's quarters and utility rooms. The hall leads to the living quarter's floor by aspiral staircase or a ramp. Ramps are a permanent feature of Le Corbusier creations. The floor is L shaped, though it looks like a cuboid from the outside, since the facades surround the open terrace as well. The ribbon shaped windows surround the whole building, they are also in the terrace walls but without glass. The floor leads to the roof (by ramps), where a second terrace is located, with solariums (round walls protecting from the wind) where one could sunbathe in peace. The strong and aggressive shape of the white box in the landscape, impresses some and angers others even today. Frank Lloyd Wright criticized Le Corbusier that it is only a *box on stilts*. However, its ideal proportions, perfect harmony of geometry bring it closer to Greek temples and The Parthenon, which Le Corbusier considered as the best example of architecture in the world<sup>3</sup>. There are three more rules in the building (apart from the other five) which he used in city planning: *light, space, greenery*. The building is spacious, full of greenery on the terraces and its whole shape promotes healthy living: solariums on the roof, jogging ramps, relaxation terraces, bathrooms which function as bathing

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<sup>3</sup> See: Le Corbusier, *Kiedy katedry były białe. Podróż do krajuludzinieśmiałych, (When the Cathedrals Were White: A Journey to the Country of Timid People)*, Warsaw 2013.

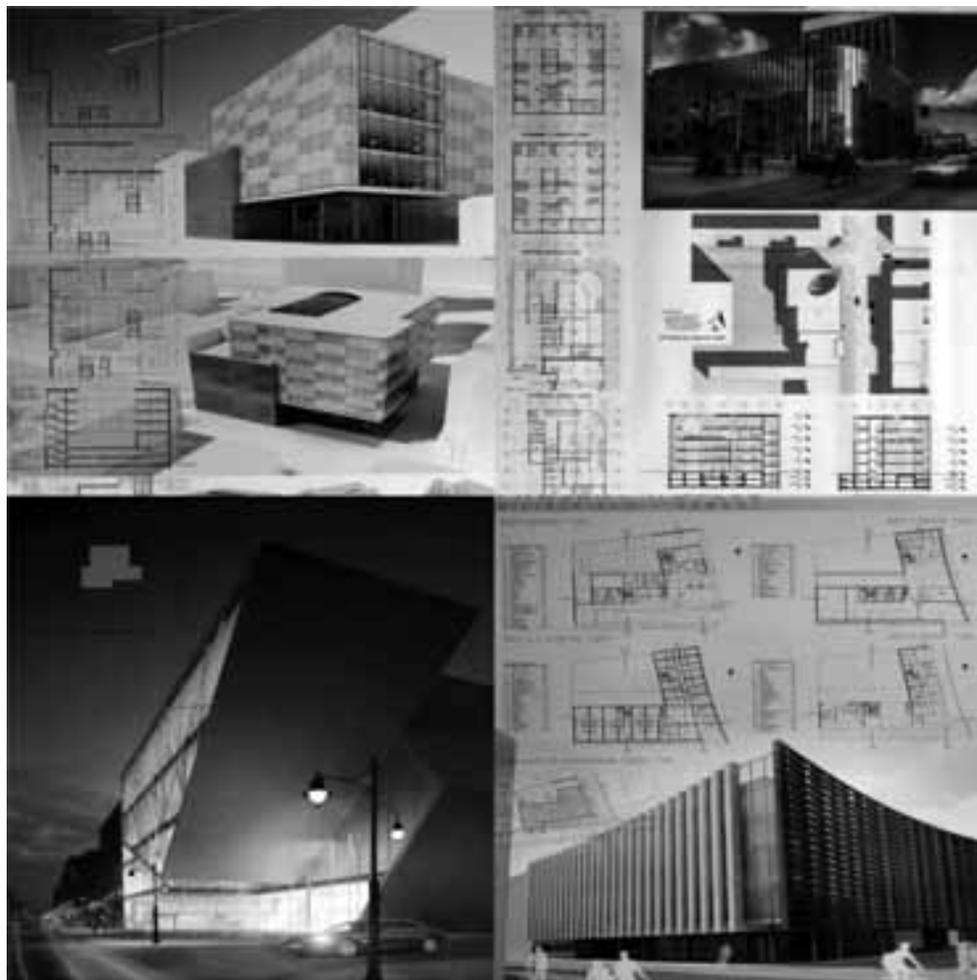
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III. 1. 'Design for a multi-storey car park with administrative and service area in Łódź, photo by the author

III. 2. Kenzo Brand Centre, photo by the author

III. 3. Design for a shopping mall connected to a skatepark, photo by the author

III. 4. Shopping centre in Łódź, Piotrkowska St. area, photo by the author



III. 5. Shopping mall, corner of Piotrkowska and Zamehofa St., photo by the author

III. 6. Design for a shopping mall at Piotrkowska and Zamenhofa St., photo by the author

III. 7. Design for a shopping mall in Łódź at Piotrkowska St., photo by the author

III. 8. Design for a hotel, Kilińskiego – Nawrot St., photo by the author

salons with windows and exits to terraces. These rules can be found not only in Le Corbusier buildings but also in many others, constructed in Los Angeles, through Paris, Berlin and even Warsaw or Łódź<sup>4</sup>.

A design team of three individuals: Bogusława Kowalczyk, Agnieszka Kozimińska and Hubert Domienik shaped the shopping gallery in a way that connects to the elements typical for the interwar Streamline style. The spin-formed corner is enriched with an ellipsis shaped patio with a much-needed tree (downtown area) [ill. 6].

Among the aforementioned student utility building concepts, the most avant-garde, the innovative architectural shape was proposed (the author's decision) by Aneta Kmiciek [ill. 7].

Łódź also needs hotels in the downtown area. We recommended that students design such objects at the Nawrot and J. Kilińskiego St. crossing. In response, we received a number of interesting designs, from which one deserves discussion. The authors are: Magdalena Grzegorzczak, Paulina Jaklewicz and Elżbieta Janiszewska. It is an eight floor building, with the main entrance in the corner area, a ramp leading down to an underground, two-storey car park (from the inner yard). The building is L shaped. The functional outline is made of eight parts. Two underground zones contain the car park, storeroom and a nightclub. The ground floor contains the main hall entrance, cocktail bar with support area, various services, administration and entrance to the yard. The first floor contains a conference hall, foyer with a banquet hall, restaurant with supply area and exit to the terrace (inner yard side). The other floors contain one and two person hotel rooms and corner zone apartments. The last floor contains a presidential apartment and a spa zone with terrace exit (in retracted from the front closed areas). The building is shaped in neomodernist style, both horizontally and vertically [ill.8].

To sum up it can be hypothesized, that the presented designs are (in avant-garde vision) a continuity of the interwar Lodz period architecture. At the same time, they use innovative, often pro-ecological material and functional solutions, which are formally compatible with current European standards of shaping the urban public spaces.

## References

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- [4] Le Corbusier, *W stronę architektury*, (*Toward an Architecture*), Warsaw 2012.

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<sup>4</sup> See: Le Corbusier, *W stronę architektury*, (*Toward an Architecture*), Warsaw 2012.