

studioMERZ

container city

Design concept for the city of Łódź in an era of permanent temporariness

container city

an introduction

The city constantly changes. It adapts to new times, to new wishes and new demands. Buildings are being abandoned, demolished, rebuilt, renovated or adapted.

In general, politicians, planners, developers and architects are mainly focused on the end result and seem less interested in the process of transformation.

Moreover, urban design / development is mainly presented in text and pictures that usually present a simplified view of reality:

- the actual and unwanted situation
- the plan with the desired situation
- the new situation.

Of course, in reality there is an extensive period of time between the present and the future situation. This is the period of transition, *the interim*.

The interim is the time during which land or buildings rest empty, awaiting a new designation. In most cases this temporary period between what was and what will be, is regarded as a loss: There is no revenue of the land or the building, offices stay empty and abandoned houses are boarded up and fenced in. Especially in times of economic setback, this occurs on many locations and can last many years.

studioMERZ works within the concept of *permanent temporariness*; in a world where developments are alternating increasingly faster, everything is always temporary.

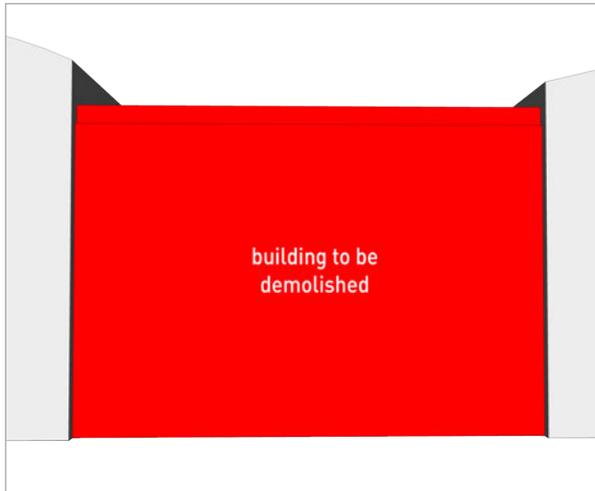
This calls for initiatives that exploit the full potential of it, economically as well as socially. The awareness of a permanent temporariness offers new possibilities and the creative use of the interim can enrich our cities. Design should be flexible to any new situation and, instead of hindering it, accommodate it.

In the inner city of Łódź, many demolished buildings leave empty areas awaiting new development. These areas are often simply abandoned, fenced, or used for parking and are visually unattractive.

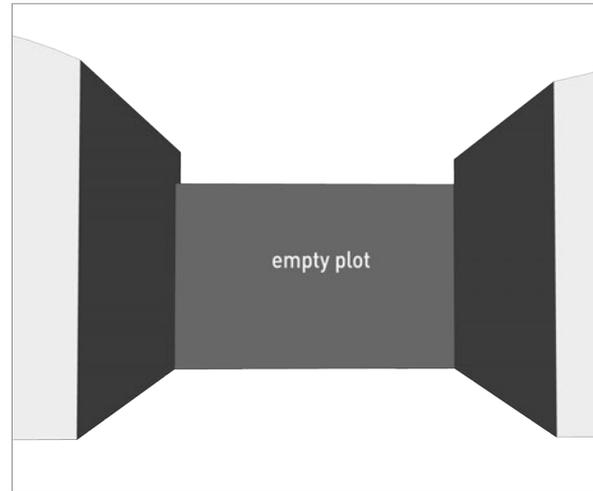
studioMERZ has developed a concept to use these empty areas during the interim, attracting people instead of keeping them out. *Container city* adds value to these areas and, instead of decay and stagnation, shows change and progress.

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Edwin Dekker
www.studiomerz.nl

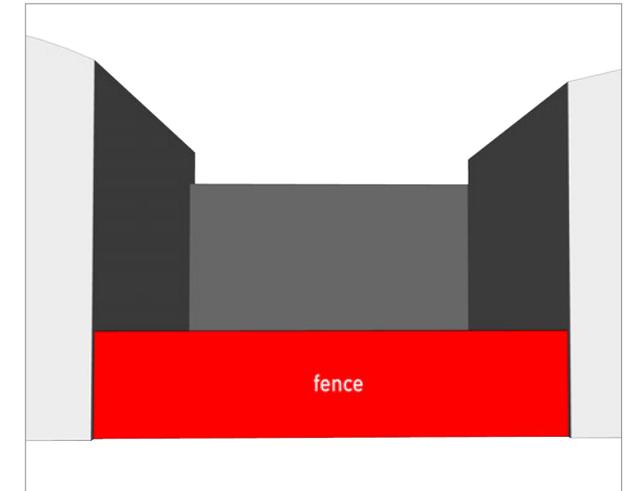
typical process in 3 steps



1. When a building is economically end-of-life, in a poor condition, or when a developer wants to realize a new building for another reason, the old building is demolished.



2. This leaves an empty area in the neighborhood. There is a period of time between the present situation (empty area) and the moment the build will start: the interim.



3. The interim is considered a loss with no revenue on the land or rent from a building. But for several reasons (like an economical / financial crisis) this period can last for many years.

Often the area is fenced or used to park cars.

examples in Łódź



All examples are less than 250 meters from ulica Piotrkowska.

These pictures are taken from Google Maps, so they might not represent the actual situation.

design concept #1

The building on this location of the main street ulica Piotrkowska was demolished some years ago and was to be rebuilt in old style. To this date, the developer has not started the construction although the completion was planned by the end of 2012.



The proposed concept uses the available plot to change the area into a temporary bar / restaurant while at the same time adding green to the streetscape.

A closed down, fenced plot is transformed into a visually attractive area with a commercial function. It adds value to this part of the street and attracts people instead of keeping them out.



design concept #2 /1

At the corner of Piotrkowska and Zamenhofa, more or less random kiosks conceal a "car park". Over the years the kiosks have fallen into decay and many of them are not in use.



There are plans to rebuild the plot of the "car park" but this is hindered by the fact that this area belongs to several different landowners.

studioMERZ proposes to replace the kiosks to improve the visual quality, and to show that progress is being made with the development of this part of the main street of Łódź.

This design concept incorporates a bar, two shops and a bike rental.



design concept #2 /2

Using ones imagination, the number of function of the containers is nearly limitless.

For special occasions they can accommodate a temporary branch of the Museum of Modern Art (Muzeum Sztuki).



The advantage of containers is that they are cheap, durable, strong and easy to transport. This makes them an excellent building material for temporary constructions.



design concept #3



In this concept the containers are used for promotional activities. Consequently designed, together with the new logo they are part of the corporate identity of Łódź.

Here placed near the Kaliska train station, they are a recognizable information office. For visitors arriving in Łódź, but also (maybe even mostly) for the inhabitants of the city.

Manned or unmanned, opened (exhibition space) or closed (information box), with pictures, text, audio-video or interactive, the yellow containers represent the communication between the city and the people who live there.



promised land



Łódź, once the promised land, is now a city with a negative image. Neither people from Łódź nor from the rest of Poland appreciate the city.

Following the political and economical changes after 1989, Łódź is slowly developing from an industrial city to a modern service-oriented city. But this takes time. At this moment Łódź is poor, faces a high unemployment and there is much overdue maintenance.

To change the negative image, it has developed a new logo: "Łódź kreuje". But this is not only a logo or a phrase; it is a promise:

**Łódź creates its own future,
Łódź creates possibilities.**

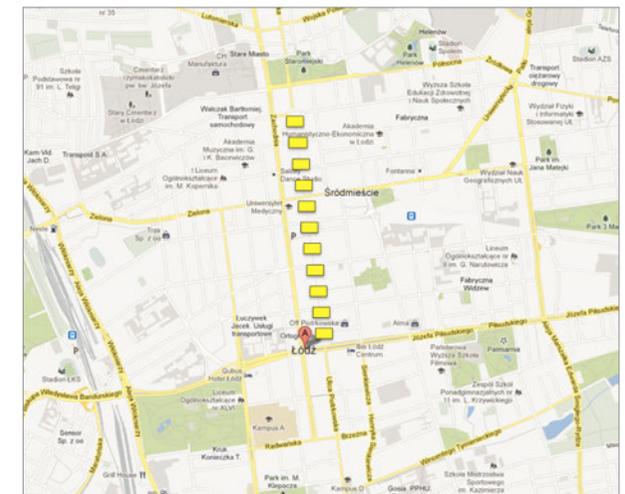
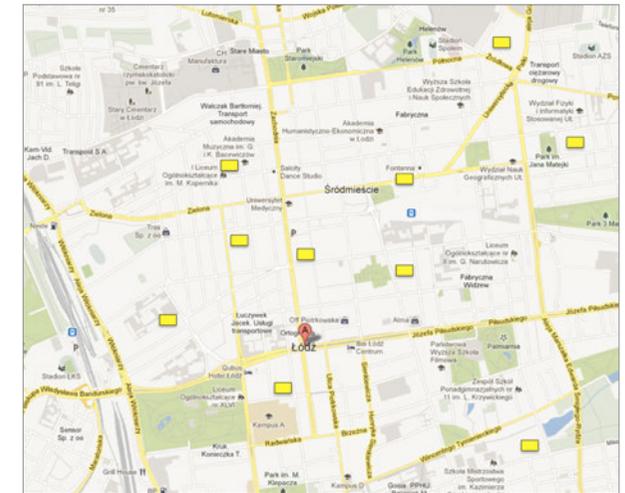
Container city supports this promise and fills the gap between the present situation and the future.

Like Łódź, *Container city* is creative. It uses the interim to actively show that the situation is changing for the better in the city.

The notion of progress is very important for people. Decline and stagnation feed the negative image, change and progress pave the way for a positive future.

Of course there are practical difficulties to overcome: unclear or scattered (land-) ownership, unwilling owners and developers, legal and social issues, financial restrictions. However, these difficulties hinder any new development; they are the exact reason for the present empty areas in the city.

Investigating promising areas where *Container city* can be executed, and overcoming these difficulties is the starting point for the development of Łódź. With *Container city* as the visual promise that Łódź is creating the future and that there is progress.



partners

Łódź

The key player in the project. Most specialists that are needed in this project work for the city.

- geographers, urbanists & architects
- other urban specialists
- legal specialists
- city promotion specialists

Developers / land- & building owners

They have a commercial and a social concern. Participating in the project can also be part of the marketing strategy.

NGO's

Organizations of social importance. They can use the containers for promotional activities or as a temporary work- or exposition space.

Firms

Established firms as well as startups can benefit from the lower than average rent to try out new concepts and / or new locations.

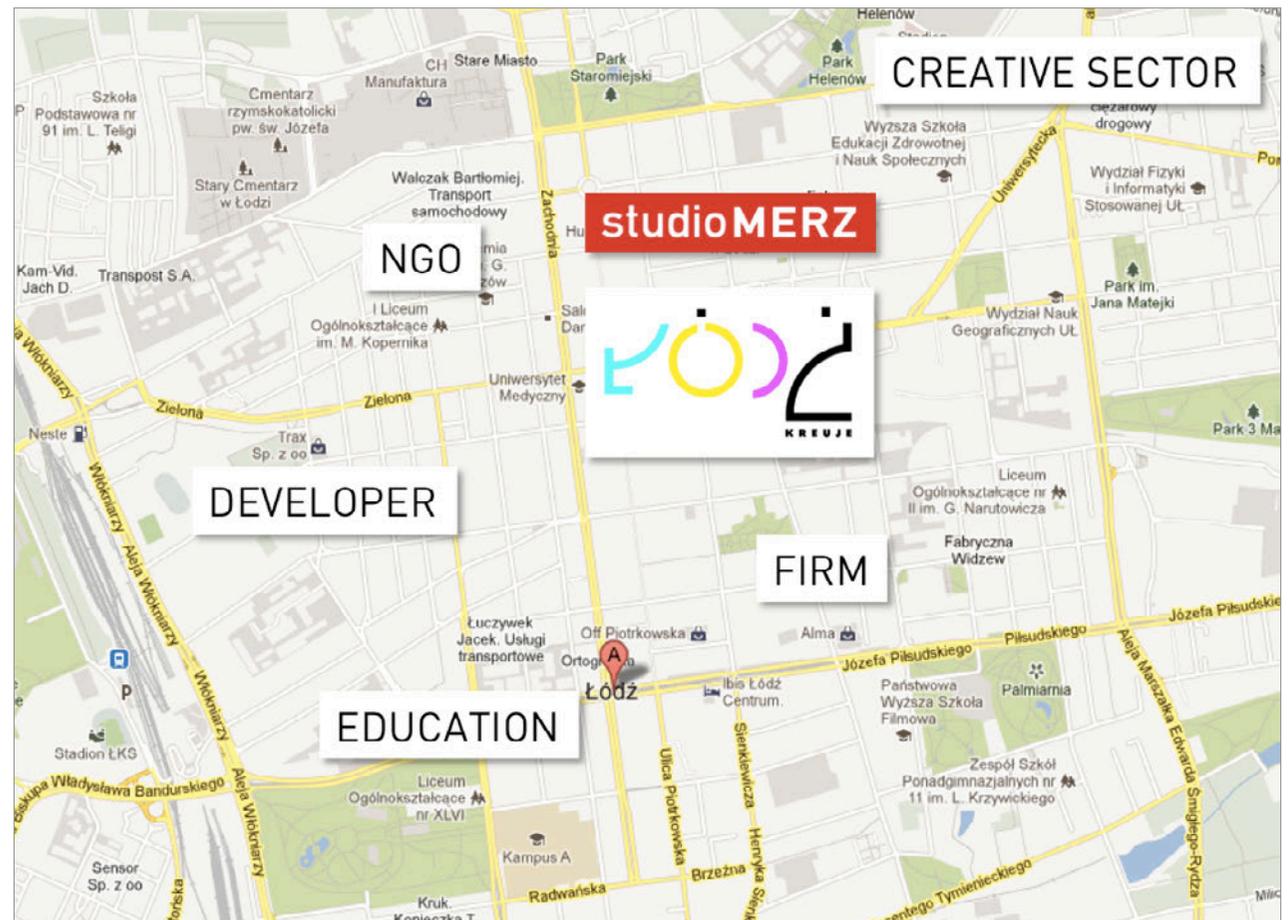
Education and the creative sector

Container city offers a possibility to bring science, knowledge and art to the streets. To bring theory into practice and give exposure to special projects.

- popup stores, kiosks and restaurants
- project spaces
- studio's and workplaces
- exposition spaces for art and music

studioMERZ

Project advisor, concept developer, designer of the containers and execution advisor. "Project evangelist" and sparring partner for everybody involved in the project.



conclusion

Container city is a flexible solution to improve the quality of the urban environment and (commercially) use empty areas in an age of permanent temporariness.

The containers represent movement, change. They are the promise of the city to its inhabitants: "We're working on it".

All partners of the project work together to create a new future for Łódź:

Łódź kreuje

studioMERZ

Edwin Dekker | interior architect
www.studiomerz.nl

