



Iwona Krawiec*

Analysis of spatial transformations and development of the main streets of the historic Nowa Praga district in Warsaw

Introduction

“Steel District” [“Dzielnica Stalowa”] – this is how the area of today’s Praga stretching between the streets Szwedzka, 11 Listopada, Inżynierska and Wileńska and the embankment of the peripheral railway line was described by Jerzy Kasprzycki in one of the volumes of *Korzenie Miasta. Warszawskie pożegnania* [Roots of the City. Warsaw farewells] [1]. Although such a district never formally existed, the estate has always stood out from the rest of Praga due to its different architectural and cultural character¹. Historically, this area belonged to Nowa Praga [New Praga], founded in the 2nd half of the 19th century, and distributed on a fragment of the former Targówek manor. Today it is part of the Praga-Północ [Praga-North] district, which, after many years of bad reputation, is gaining and becoming an attractive residential and cultural point on the capital’s map. This is due not only to changes in the urban infrastructure but also to the unique genius loci brought by historic tenement houses and factories which bear witness to the changes that have taken place on the right bank of Warsaw over the last two centuries.

In February 2017, the Masovian Provincial Monument Conservator initiated administrative proceedings regarding the entry into the Registry of Monuments of the historical urban layout of Stalowa Street, which resulted in the protection of the buildings located between the Szwedzka and Inżynierska streets. Three years later, the same procedure began for Środkowa Street – the oldest,

main street of Nowa Praga, which also ended with an entry in the Registry of Monuments². The increased interest of conservation services was connected with the increase in investment and construction activity in this part of the city, determined, among other things, by the intensive development of the public transport network (extension of the second Warsaw Metro line). The hitherto underestimated Nowa Praga began to be noticed by both the conservation milieu and the city’s inhabitants.

This article aims to trace the changes that have occurred in the architecture and urban planning of Nowa Praga from the moment of its foundation until modern times, as well as to attempt to determine the development prospects of this part of Warsaw. The research on changes in the spatial structure of the district described below was limited to the buildings located along two historically main streets: Średnia, which is the first communication artery in Nowa Praga, and Stalowa, perpendicular to it, which was initially only one of the side streets of Środkowa Street, that gained importance when a steel plant was established in the eastern part of the district. The scope of the research was limited to the area covered by two entries in the Register of Monuments from 2020 and 2021 [2], [3] (Fig. 1).

The state of research

The history of Praga as one of the oldest districts of right-bank Warsaw has often been the subject of numerous Warsaw studies. Researchers’ attention, however, focused mainly on the oldest history of the former town, today one of Warsaw’s districts, while much less attention was paid

* ORCID: 0000-0002-9765-8014. Faculty of Architecture, Warsaw University of Technology, Poland, e-mail: iwona.krawiec@pw.edu.pl

¹ The author draws attention to the architectural distinctiveness of Nowa Praga, as well as its natural separation from the urban structure by two railway lines (circulatory and Vilnius railway) and the line of the former esplanade of the Śliwicki fort.

² The decision to undertake conservation proceedings was, to some extent, determined by the “Streets of Nowa Praga” architectural competition conducted in 2021, the winning design of which assumed the transformation of Średnia Street into the so-called woonerf.

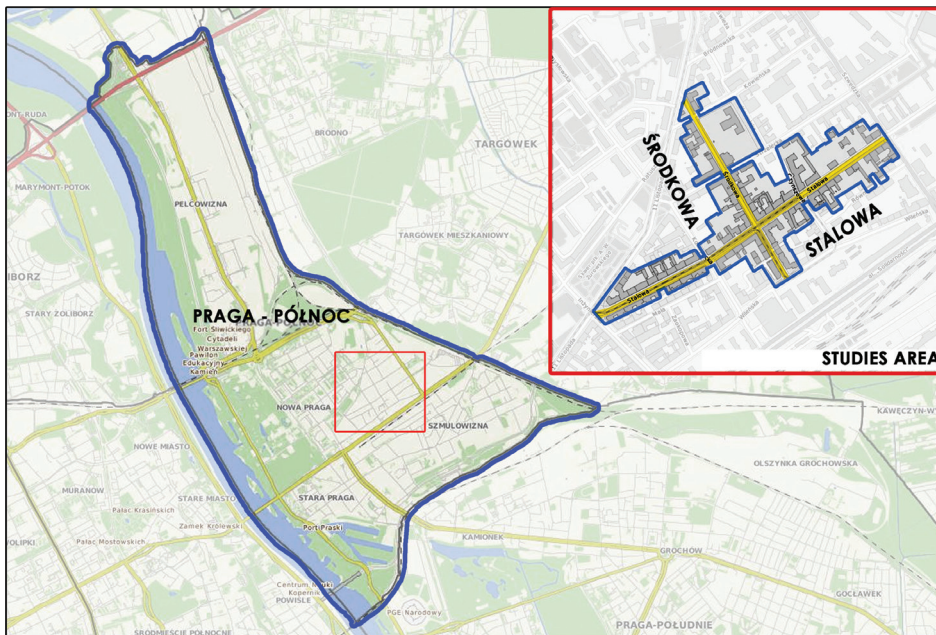


Fig. 1. Location of the studied area against the background of the Praga-Północ district (elaborated by I. Krawiec)

Il. 1. Lokalizacja badanego obszaru na tle dzielnicy Praga-Północ (oprac. I. Krawiec)

to the history of its younger parts, such as Nowa Praga or Szmulowizna.

One of the first and most extensive mentions of Nowa Praga appeared in the 9th volume of the *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego* [Geographical Dictionary of Kingdom of Poland] [4], published in 1888, which contained quite detailed information about the history of the establishment of subsequent parts of the Nowa Praga settlement and the state of development in this area in the 1880s century, i.e. before it was incorporated into the capital. However, the lion's share of the description was not devoted to residential buildings, but to industry and steelworks, the construction of which had a significant impact on the development of the suburb at the end of the 19th century.

Another collective study containing information about the researched area is the pre-war *Dzieje Pragi warszawskiej od czasów najdawniejszych do obecnych* [History of Praga in Warsaw from the earliest times to the present] by Władysław Wójtowicz [5], in which the author – like his predecessors – described the entire district, and devoted only a small part of the publication to the buildings of Nowa Praga, repeating the information presented in the *Słownik geograficzny*... [4].

After World War II, interest in Warsaw's Praga as a research area increased significantly. Further studies began to appear, including a collective work edited by Józef Kazimierski et al., *Dzieje Pragi* [History of Praga], in which a group of authors addressed both architectural and urban issues as well as socio-economic questions, constantly limiting themselves to looking at the contemporary district as a whole [6].

In addition to scientific studies, various guides and popular science publications have been published over the years. These include the above-mentioned study by the journalist and expert on Warsaw Kasprzycki *Korzenie miasta*, in which the author discussed selected facts and curiosities regarding the history of further streets in Praga, including Stalowa and Średnia [1].

Michał Pilich is currently the leading voice among the researchers dealing with the history of Praga. He has authored articles and monographs devoted to Praga, including the book titled *Ulice Nowej Pragi* [Streets of Nowa Praga], in which he was the first to deal specifically with this area of Warsaw [7], but without a comprehensive look at the urban planning and architecture of the former suburb.

In the rather extensive literature on the subject, no one has yet attempted to take a comprehensive look at the spatial and architectural changes in Nowa Praga, so it seems reasonable to carefully analyse at least a fraction of this part of Warsaw. In this context, the buildings situated along the above-mentioned most significant streets in Nowa Praga should be considered as the most representative area.

Research method

During the research, the collected source material was analysed and compared, juxtaposed with the information contained in previous studies, and drawings of subsequent stages of urban and architectural transformations were created on its basis (development of subsequent parts of Nowa Praga, construction and reconstruction of new buildings and demolition of old ones).

Many source materials have been preserved to this day, including maps, photographs and drawings, as well as pre-war press releases. The most helpful cartographic materials include map collections made in Lindley's workshop in the years 1883–1915 [8] and materials created by the Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy (BOS). Moreover, most of the buildings along both streets were photographed in 1979 and are kept in the Archives of the Masovian Provincial Monument Conservator Office and constitute a valuable source of information. A similarly large collection of archival photographs of Nowa Praga buildings is in the collection of the National Digital Archives (NAC).

Fig. 2. Reconstructions of the planning phases of Nowa Praga: a) the first (Konopaczychzna) and the second (Kurakowszczyzna), b) third (limited to military esplanade) and fourth (further development of buildings) (elaborated by I. Krawiec)

II. 2. Rekonstrukcje faz rozplanowania Nowej Pragi: a) pierwszej (Konopaczychzny) i drugiej (Kurakowszczyzny), b) trzeciej (ograniczenie wojskową esplanadą) i czwartej (dalszy rozwój zabudowy) (oprac. I. Krawiec)



The history of transformations of the urban layout of Nowa Praga

Konopaczychzna

The spatial development of this part of Warsaw began in 1844, when the surrounding land belonging to the Targówek manor³, owned by Józef Nosowski, was divided into several colonies. Two of them were purchased by Ksawery Konopacki and Joachim Kurakowski [4], [7]. In 1857, Ksawery Konopacki purchased the colony number 12, covering *12 morgens and 12 rods* [old units of land area] [4, p. 16], and then began parcelling and selling the purchased land. He probably predicted the development of Warsaw and the increase in land prices east and northeast of Praga⁴. In 1861, surveyor Ludwik Sikorski prepared, at Konopacki's request, a regulatory plan for the estate, which was finally approved by the Russian authorities in 1865. The plan assumed dividing the trapezoidal-shaped area into about 100 plots. The first street routes were marked out, and the main one was Środkowa Street running north-south [7]. Outside it, a network of streets was designed, most of which have not changed their course to this day.

The main artery streets were marked out: Strzelecka, Brudnowska (now Bródnowska), Kościelna (now Kowieńska), Wileńska and Nowopragaska, which was later renamed Stalowa, as well as several streets located north of Średnia Street. The plan of the completed colony was published in one of the issues of "Tygodnik Ilustrowany" on January 26, 1867⁵.

The first stage of the new settlement was built on undeveloped land located between Stara Praga [Old Praga] in the west and the sandy dunes of Targówek in the east, which made it possible to use a simple, orthogonal street layout. The development of the new suburb was undoubtedly positively influenced by the proximity of the newly built railway line to the Petersburg Train Station at Wileńska Street, which constitutes the southern border of the colony (Fig. 2a).

Kurakowszczyzna

The initial low price of the land sold by Konopacki⁶ [4] caused great interest in purchasing a plot in the new settlement, and just a few years after the establishment of Konopaczychzna, the new development began to extend beyond its original boundaries. From the areas neighbouring it to the east, the so-called Kurakowszczyzna region, was named after the new owner – Joachim Kurakowski [2], [3], [9]. It was planned on the basis of the existing street network of Konopaczychzna. On maps of Warsaw from the 1860s, it can be seen that the mentioned streets extend from the east beyond the border of Konopacki's estate. As "Tygodnik Ilustrowany" reported in 1867, buildings numbering about 30 houses began to be built in the new areas along the streets [10]. Despite the changes that have taken place in Nowa Praga since then, the old, diagonal borderline between the Konopaczychzna and the Kurakowszczyzna region is still visible in the ownership division (Fig. 2a).

Esplanade

The next stage of the spatial transformation of the settlement was related to the Śliwicki fort, built in 1835–1838 in the Gołędzinów area. An esplanade was marked

³ The areas of today's Nowa Praga, Targówek Michałowa, Industrial and Residential Targówek, Szmulowizna.

⁴ The current Old Praga, already part of Warsaw, incorporated into the capital in 1794.

⁵ Additionally, two versions of the Konopaczychzna plan have been preserved. The oldest of them, dating from 1863, is included in the collection of mortgage book documents, ref. no. 220 in the State Archives of the Capital City of Warsaw.

⁶ At first, one cubit cost 20 kopecks, and around 1880 the price increased to 2 rubles per cubit.

in front of the fort, the initial width of which was 850 m (later it was widened to 1,300 m) [11]. Due to the creation of a free zone surrounding the fort, the development possibilities of the emerging suburb were significantly limited. In 1875, part of the area of Nowa Praga became part of its borders and was purchased by the Board of the Warsaw Military District. The existing buildings on the purchased land were demolished and the construction of military infrastructure began: barracks complexes, provision plants and warehouses [2], [3]. The buildings in the northern part of the settlement were liquidated, including: Boczna, Nowa, Grodzka and Stolarska streets, as well as several properties on Średnia Street, from the north (Fig. 2b). The border of the designated at the time military esplanade became today's 11 Listopada Street – previously called Esplanadowa and Śliwicka Streets (in parts).

Further development

Although, as a result of the expansion of the fortifications of the Warsaw Fortress, some of the buildings in Nowa Praga were demolished and the area of the settlement was significantly reduced, the young suburb did not stop developing. In 1878 in its eastern part, behind the line of today's Szwedzka Street, the construction of a factory by the

Warsaw Steel Factory Joint Stock Company began. It operated for a relatively short time and was finally closed in 1889, but its creation was a strong impulse for the development of the suburb [2]–[4]. The location of the plant in the district increased the importance of Stalowa Street, which became the main communication artery of the suburb.

A breakthrough for Nowa Praga was the year 1891, when, together with the areas of Szmulowizna, it became one of the districts of Warsaw. The discussion on incorporating it into the city boundaries began much earlier, but due to the need to spend large amounts of money on organizing and maintaining the new district, the decision to create it was postponed [4]. When it was undertaken, streets were regulated, sidewalks were separated, roads were paved, and lighting and urban transport in the form of a horse-drawn tram were introduced. The mortgage numbering of plots was also adjusted to the system used in the capital [2], [3].

When Nowa Praga was incorporated into the capital, Stalowa Street acquired its current name. Over time, a new section of the artery was marked out, extending it westwards (up to the esplanade line), which was named Nowostalowa Street⁷. The street has retained its length to this day. The last modification of the street network was introduced a few years ago during the construction of one of the multi-family buildings (Stalowa 39), when Czyszowa Street was extended towards Strzelecka Street. Its irregular course is a relic of the former border between the oldest parts of the site (Fig. 2b).

History of architectural transformations

A multi-phase reconstruction of the development of buildings in the studied area, which maintained the division into wooden and brick buildings was made, based on the collected cartographic and iconographic material.

In the first years of the Konopaczyna's existence, mainly wooden buildings were built on parcelled plots [4]. Brick buildings appeared sporadically at the intersections of main streets (Fig. 3a). The Ksawery Konopacki Palace, preserved to this day, dates back to the first period of Nowa Praga, built between 1861 and 1866. It was the first brick building in this part of Praga, hence, due to its magnificence and decorative character compared to neighbouring buildings, it was commonly called a palace. Maria Galeotti's tenement house, standing at the corner of Strzelecka and Średnia Streets, and the buildings on the eastern side of Średnia Street, between Strzelecka and Stalowa Streets (Środkowa 12, 14, 16, 18) [3], have also survived to this day, although in a changed form.

After the steelworks were established

The dynamics of the street's development were undoubtedly influenced by the opening of a steelworks in 1879, which became a workplace for a huge number of workers. At the beginning, it employed 896 employees

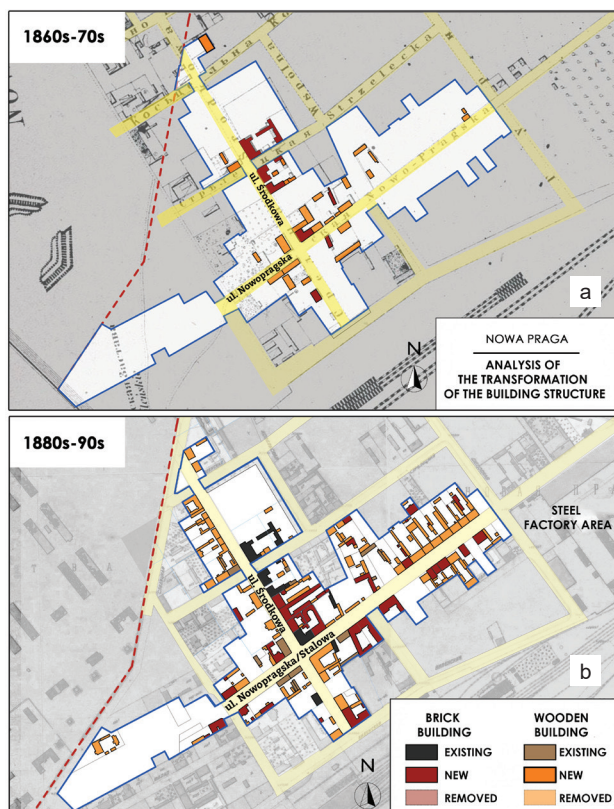


Fig. 3. Reconstruction of the building system:
a) in the first years of the existence of Nowa Praga,
b) during the lifetime of the steel factory
(elaborated by I. Krawiec based on [12], [13])

II. 3. Rekonstrukcje układu zabudowy:
a) w pierwszych latach istnienia Nowej Pragi,
b) w okresie istnienia stalowni
(oprac. I. Krawiec na podstawie [12], [13])

⁷ Around 1920, it was officially attached to Stalowa Street.

(including 330 foreigners), and a year later it employed 1,037 people (114 foreigners). At its peak, the factory employed over 1,100 people, making it one of the largest industrial plants in the agglomeration [4].

In the 1880s, there was a sharp increase in construction activity in the suburb, due to the proximity of a prosperous factory whose employees needed a permanent place of residence located close to the steelworks. Although mainly multi-family brick houses were built at that time, the characteristic wooden houses still dominated the landscape of Nowa Praga (Fig. 3b). Most of them housed workers of the steelworks and the Warsaw–Petersburg Railway, and the brick buildings were inhabited by the owners of nearby factories and production plants and the middle class.

According to statistical data, in 1888 there were 253 buildings in Nowa Praga and 17 houses in the area belonging to the factory. The population was 4,211 people (excluding migrant workers who were not included in the permanent population records) [4]. At that time, a number of brick one- and two-story tenement houses were built (currently Stalowa 21, 28/30, 33). Some of the buildings for which a building permit was issued were never built or were later demolished (including the current Stalowa 29, 37, 39, 47).

The closure of the plant after only a decade of operation⁸ and the numerous fires that in the 1880s and 1890s consumed the houses of Nowa Praga (a.o. in 1880 and 1893) [2], did not stop further development of the district and in the last decade of the 19th century it was enriched by further tenement houses (today Stalowa 14, 25, 34, 52, 54).

Despite the visible change in construction trends, wooden houses were still willingly built in a layout typical of brick tenement houses (front building and side annexes). At that time, a series of buildings was built on Stalowa Street on the section between Czyszowa and Szwedzka Streets (mainly on the northern side), as well as along Średnia Street (on the entire length – mainly between Strzelecka and Kowieńska Streets).

The single-story house located at 9 Średnia Street is the only witness to the times of wooden Nowa Praga that has survived to this day. It was most likely built in the 1870s or 1880s for Elżbieta Sikorska⁹. In the following years, it housed the seat of the Municipal Court, and in 1933, in the wooden house was located the Society of the Friends of Street Children created by Kazimierz Lisiecki, called “Grandpa” by his mentees. The first people under the care of the child support facility were small Warsaw newspaper boys, vagabonds and orphans. In 1952, the building was taken over by the Polish Red Cross, and the Society of Friends of Street Children was liquidated [9].

⁸ The buildings of the former steelworks were taken over by the Russian Imperial army in 1889 and artillery workshops were located there, which were transformed into arms workshops in 1918.

⁹ In the 1860s, Elżbieta Sikorska purchased the property from Ksawery Konopacki, which included the current addresses: Głosowa 7, 9, 11. There is no agreement as to the date of construction of the building. Some studies give the year 1869, others 1879. It is certain that the building existed in this place in the 1890s, because it is marked on the plans prepared by Lindley’s studio.

In December 1987, the building was entered into the Registry of Cultural Property. It currently houses the headquarters of the Kazimierz Lisiecki Educational Centers Group, a division of the Family Support Centre – *Family Warsaw*.

During this period, the first modernization works on the Nowa Praga’s. Both roads were graded and partially hardened with gravel. The paved paths stood out from the rest of the streets in Nowa Praga, which were alternately sandy or muddy [4, p. 16]. As reported by “Kurier Warszawski” in 1880, it was Nowopragaska Street, not Środkowa Street (i.e., the original main street of Nowa Praga), that was modernized first [14].

Beginning of the 20th century

Despite the huge number of construction investments undertaken during the operation of the steel plant, a large part of the plots along Stalowa Street remained undeveloped. In addition, the pool of undeveloped properties includes areas parcelled out along the new section of the street extended towards the esplanade line (Nowostalowa Street). The beginning of the 20th century was full of further construction investments, which led to the gradual development of vacant plots (Fig. 4a). Mainly three- and four-story brick tenement houses with richly decorated facades were built (most of which were deprived of any

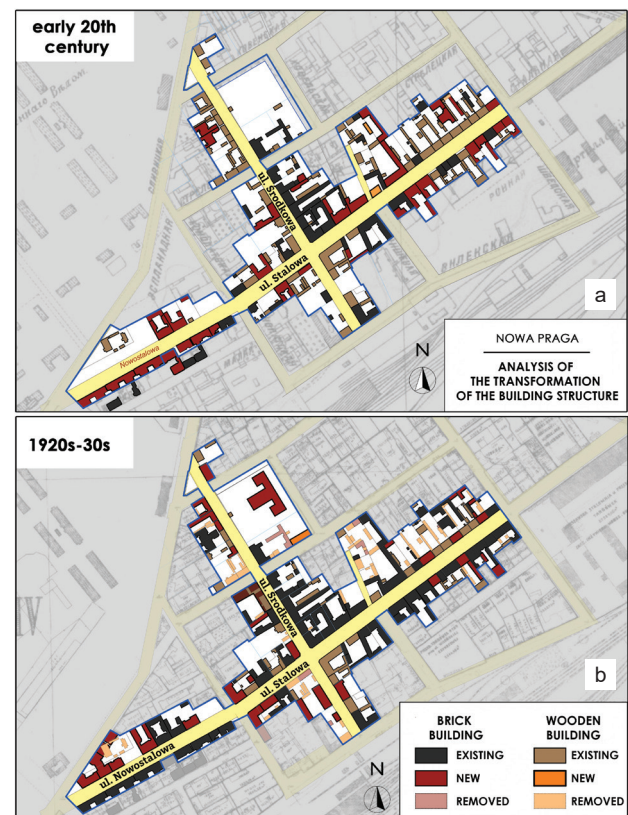


Fig. 4. Reconstruction of the building system: a) at the beginning of the 20th century, b) in the interwar period (elaborated by I. Krawiec based on [13])

Il. 4. Rekonstrukcje układu zabudowy: a) na początku XX w., b) w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym (oprac I. Krawiec na podstawie [13])



Fig. 5. Tenement houses at Stalowa Street and Środkowa Street stripped of architectural decoration after World War II (photo by I. Krawiec)

Il. 5. Kamienice przy ul. Stalowej i Środkowej ogołoczone z dekoracji architektonicznej po II wojnie światowej (fot. I. Krawiec)

details in the first years after World War II). These houses have survived to this day in a modified form (currently Stalowa 2, 4, 11, 18, 35, 36, 37, 41, 46, 50, 68). At that time, most of the streets in Nowa Praga were paved¹⁰, and a horse tram route was run through Stalowa Street [6], [7].

The interwar period

Although World War I did not directly affect the development of the district, it significantly slowed down construction processes in Nowa Praga. Even before World War II, large-scale demolition of wooden buildings began with the intention of replacing them with brick buildings (the demolition of annexes and front buildings). During this time, among others: demolition of wooden buildings on the corner of Średnia and Strzelecka streets. In most cases, the cleared plots were built up only after World War II. The houses built at that time include tenement houses built at the intersection of Średnia and Kowieńska Streets, characterized by a modern, modernist form. At that time, buildings were built at Środkowa 3, 3a, 6, 7, 27, 30. Most of the empty plots on Stalowa Street (mainly the northern side of the section between Konopacka and Inżynierska Streets) were built up¹¹ (Fig. 4b).

In the 1920s, on a large plot of land located at the back of the Konopacki palace, previously occupied by the wood yards of the *Endelman and Papierny* company, a school building was built, which construction was completed in

¹⁰ In 1903, sidewalks made of concrete slabs were made along Stalowa Street.

¹¹ At that time, among others, Zwierzchowski's tenement house at number 47, designed by R. Ostoja-Chodkowski, the building at Stalowa 38, designed by J. Kranc, and the tenement house complex of E. Hornstein at Stalowa 3/5.

1935. In 1934, three primary schools, previously located in small rooms that were not conducive to teaching, were moved to an unfinished building on Kowelska Street [15]. In the interwar period, Nowa Praga gradually changed its character. From a typical suburb built with low wooden houses, loosely spaced, it was changing into a densely built-up district with a metropolitan character – not significantly different from the development of left-bank Warsaw.

The period of World War II

According to data prepared by the “Biuro Odbudowy Stolicy”, as a result of the war activities conducted in 1939–1945, as many as 84% of Warsaw's buildings were destroyed. Although a large part of Praga's buildings were wooden and therefore flammable, in Praga this percentage was only 25%. In the analysed area, only a few objects were destroyed or damaged (e.g., roof burning). These were mainly outbuildings and farm buildings.

1945–1990s

The historic buildings of Środkowa and Stalowa Streets survived World War II without significant damage, and their major transformations took place only after 1945. Some of the tenement houses were taken over by the State Treasury and, as a result of administrative decisions, deprived of their architectural decorations. Some of the disfigured tenement houses were plastered smoothly and painted (including Stalowa 24 and 28/30). Some of the buildings with fragmented architectural details were left in this form without any protection against further destruction (Stalowa 34, 54, 56) (Fig. 5).

The 2nd half of the 20th century was primarily a period of disappearance from the landscape of the district of

wooden buildings built in the 2nd half of the 19th century (Fig. 6a). Some of it was deliberately demolished with the intention of building new brick houses in its place, but most of it fell apart on its own due to the lack of ongoing maintenance and routine renovation works (including Stalowa 23, 24, 43, 55, 57 and Średnia 19 and 21). In the 1960s, the streets of Nowa Praga were also modernized. The pavement was replaced or covered with asphalt, and the gas lighting was replaced with electric fluorescent lamps [2], [7], [9].

1990s and early 21st century

The end of the 20th century was the final end of the wooden Nowa Praga. The last wooden outbuildings (including Stalowa 44, 54, 55, 56, 57) have disappeared from the landscape. Some of the plots, deserted after the slow disintegration of the wooden houses, were developed with new multi-family buildings, matching the architectural character of the district in scale, but not in form. The most striking example of the investments carried out at that time is a multi-family block, which was built in the very heart of the district, at the intersection of Stalowa and Średnia streets (Stalowa 26). It was built on the site of a two-story wooden house demolished in the 2nd half of the 20th century. The wooden building had an accent in the form of a one-story increase and a cut corner typical of Nowa Praga buildings standing at the intersection of streets. Although the new building was adjusted in height to the neighbouring tenement houses, the corner was not emphasized in any way (Fig. 6b).

21st century

The investment stagnation at the end of the millennium extended into the first years of the next century. The situation changed in the 2nd and 3rd decades of the 21st century, when the great potential of the areas located on the left bank of the Vistula was noticed. Previously, for many years this district had a reputation for being worse and poorer, which was partly due to the post-war resettlement of lower social classes from representative districts to Praga. This way of thinking about Praga is gradually changing, and the district itself is regaining its former glory.

The approach to the architectural monuments of Nowa Praga has also improved. In recent years, many renovations of historic buildings have been carried out, mainly tenement houses, but also public buildings. It regained its former glory, among others the previously mentioned Konopacki Palace, which was in a disastrous condition and was saved from demolition only by its entry into the Registry of Cultural Property in 2005 and thorough revitalization in 2017–2021. Currently, the former residence of the district's founder houses the TuPraga Cultural Centre.

It is also worth mentioning the revitalization carried out in recent years of the last relic of the 19th-century wooden architecture in Nowa Praga – the seat of the Complex of Educational Centers. Kazimierz Lisiecki “Grandfather”. A total of 16 general renovations have been carried out in recent years, and two more are planned for the coming

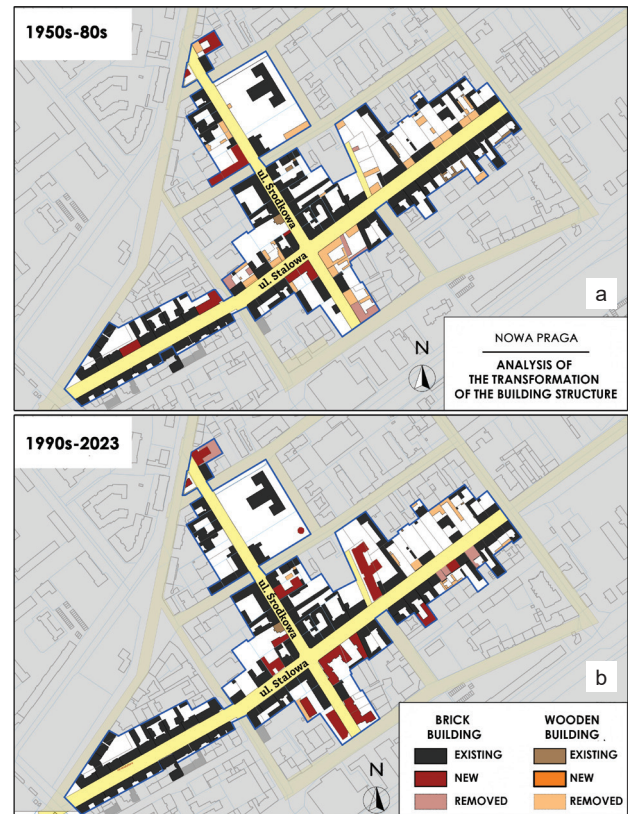


Fig. 6. Reconstruction of the building system:
a) in the 2nd half of the 20th century,
b) at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries
(oprac. I. Krawiec na podstawie [16])

II. 6. Rekonstrukcje układu zabudowy:
a) w 2. połowie XX w., b) na przełomie XX i XXI w.
(elaborated by I. Krawiec based on [16])

years (Średnia 12 and Stalowa 25). In recent years, new multi-family houses have also been built on plots at Stalowa 27, 39 and Północna 20. A multi-family building at Stalowa 42 is also under construction (Fig. 7). Moreover,

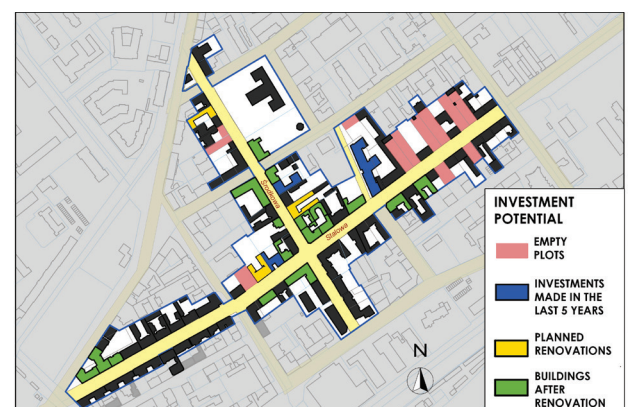


Fig. 7. Plan of the analysed area with the designation of the renovated objects, the latest construction projects and empty plots
(elaborated by I. Krawiec)

II. 7. Plan analizowanego obszaru z oznaczeniem obiektów wyremontowanych, najnowszych inwestycji budowlanych oraz pustych działek (oprac. I. Krawiec)

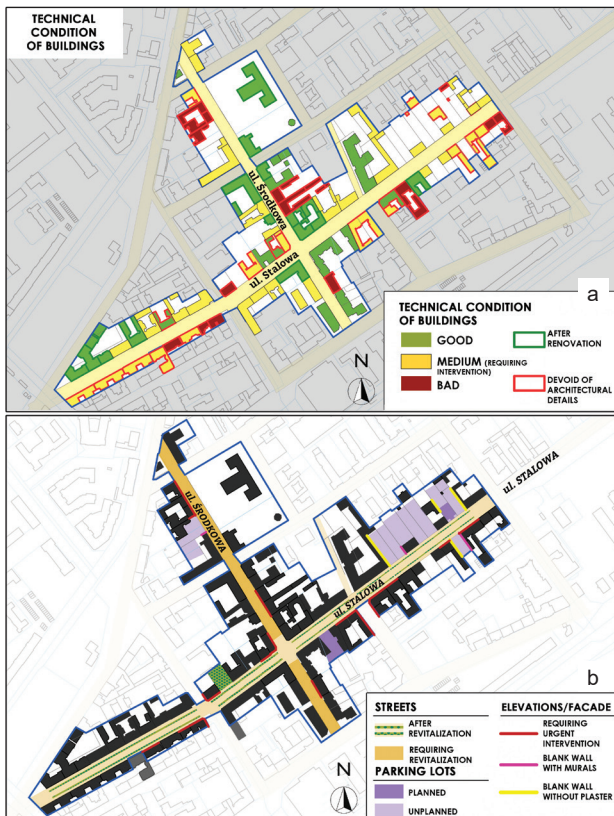


Fig. 8. Plans of the survey area including:
a) analysis of the technical condition of buildings,
b) crisis areas requiring intervention
(elaborated by I. Krawiec)

Il. 8. Plany badanego obszaru obejmujace:
a) analize stanu technicznego budynkow,
b) przestrzen kryzysowe wymagajace interwencji
(oprac. I. Krawiec)

in 2021–2022, the street was thoroughly modernized Stalowa Street. The surface of the sidewalks and the roadway was tidied up, the issue of parking along the street was regulated, lighting was standardized, small architecture in the form of benches, garbage bins and low fences was introduced, and new plantings were made along the road.

Analysis of the current state of development – architecture and urban planning

For the purposes of the analysis, a general assessment of the technical condition of objects in the area covered by the study was also performed (Fig. 8a). Even though a significant part of the tenement houses has undergone thorough renovation, the overall condition of the area's buildings was assessed as average. A large part of the buildings deprived of architectural decoration after the World War II have not been restored to this day, although fragments of cornices, window and door openings or bonding have been preserved on the basis of which they could be reconstructed (e.g., Stalowa 34). Some of them, due to their very poor technical condition, require immediate conservation intervention, as there is a risk of sudden collapse of part or the entire facility (Średnia 18) (Fig. 5).

Although the original buildings of Nowa Praga were almost completely replaced over the course of almost two centuries, the urban layout of the streets marked out by the surveyor L. Sikorski and continued during the parceling out of the Kurakowszczyzna region was not significantly deformed. It was only developed by extending the Czyszowa Street up to the height of Strzelecka Street. To this day, the former border between Konopacyzna and Kurakowszczyzna, running diagonally, is also visible, preserved in the demarcation line between the properties of Stalowa 26 and 28 and 35 and 37 (Fig. 2).

The biggest urban problems affecting the studied area are empty plots that are the remains of demolished wooden houses. It mainly concerns the property at Stalowa Street on the section between Czyszowa Street and Szwedzka Street. Undeveloped since the 1970s and 1980s, they were gradually occupied by wild parking lots, unplanned greenery and numerous illegally built sheds and annexes. The lack blurs the perception of the street frontage, which, combined with the omnipresent parked cars, creates spatial chaos. The blind walls, which still have traces of the non-existent buildings, discourage passers-by and tourists. Only some of the gable walls of the tenement houses were beautified with murals (Średnia 17, Stalowa 38) or climbing greenery (Fig. 8b).

Undoubtedly, a necessary measure aimed at restoring spatial order would be to erect new buildings in place of non-existent timber, so as to restore the line of the frontage of the street. The scale and dimensions of the buildings should correspond and harmonize with the existing buildings (widths of fronts, number of floors, spacing of window axes). In addition, Środkowa Street should undergo revitalization, similarly to what was carried out on Stalowa Street in recent years, with emphasis placed on maintaining the urban character of the artery as the main street of New Praga.

Conclusions and summary

Based on the analyses carried out, it should be stated that within 162 years the architectural character of the district changed from suburban to metropolitan, and within only 100 years virtually all of the district's wooden buildings were replaced (Fig. 9). Its scale has changed – single-story and double-story houses have been replaced by multi-story tenement houses. Despite numerous modifications, the historical division of land and ownership from subsequent stages of the district's development is still clearly visible. The development in Nowa Praga is an interesting example of shaping the urban fabric of Warsaw. The preserved architectural structures that build the character of the district are interesting examples of the evolution of the development of tenement buildings throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Undoubtedly, valuable elements include the preserved complex of buildings built in the first years of the settlement's existence, representing the early phase of development in Praga. The largest group of buildings are tenement houses from the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and the beginning of the 20th century with original, richly



Fig. 9. Reconstruction of the building system:
a) in the 2nd half of the 20th century,
b) at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries
(elaborated by I. Krawiec based on [16], [17])

Il. 9. Rekonstrukcje układu zabudowy:
a) w 2. połowie XX w., b) na przełomie XX i XXI w.
(oprac. I. Krawiec na podstawie [16], [17])

decorated façades. They are adjacent to tenement houses from the interwar period, with simplified details and modern functional solutions (Fig. 10). A relatively small percentage of buildings were built after 1945.

Compared to the district, the area of the former Nowa Praga is distinguished by a relatively regular, orthogonal grid of streets, surrounded by harmonious tenement houses. Also noteworthy is the arched course of 11 Listopada Street, which is a carrier of information about the former military line of the esplanade of Fort Śliwicki. Even today, it constitutes a visible border between the areas of the district in question and the former areas purchased by the Warsaw Military District Board and the built-up military infrastructure facilities.

Acknowledgement

Research financed by the RND internal grant of the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology to support scientific research in the discipline of Architecture and Urban Planning in 2023.

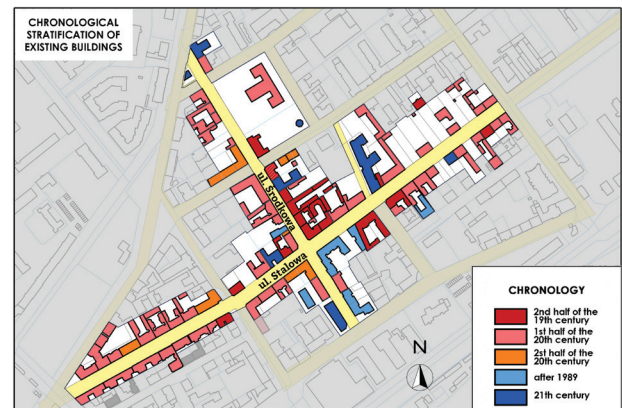


Fig. 10. Chronological stratification of existing buildings in the studied area
(elaborated by I. Krawiec)

Il. 10. Rozwarstwienie chronologiczne istniejącej na badanym obszarze zabudowy
(oprac. I. Krawiec)

The reconstruction plans and analyses prepared as part of the research illustrate not only the subsequent phases of the district's reconstruction but also show the intensity of the pace at which right-bank Warsaw was developing at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, which, had it not been for the turmoil associated with World War II and post-war changes, political and political system, could quickly match the grandeur and splendour of left-bank Warsaw.

As part of the work described above, only a part of the Nowa Praga complex was analysed. It seems reasonable to continue the research and supplement it with the remaining quarters and the areas of the former steelworks.

Nowa Praga, which has been building its identity for over 160 years, although it survived both world wars unscathed, was significantly disfigured and neglected in the 2nd half of the 20th century. It is only in recent years that the potential of Nowa Praga's monuments has begun to be recognized and treated as a valuable element of the city's cultural heritage, worth protecting and preserving for future generations. The tenement houses, which have existed for over 100 years, are a living document and carrier of the atmosphere of old, pre-war Warsaw, and the preserved street layout contains information about the past of this part of the city.

Translated by
Iwona Krawiec

References

- [1] Kasprzycki J., *Korzenie miasta. Warszawskie pożegnania*, t. 3, Praga, Wydawnictwo VEDA, Warszawa 1998.
- [2] *Decyzja MWKZ nr 40/2021 z dn. 24.03.21 dotycząca wpisania do Rejestru Zabytków historycznego układu urbanistycznego ul. Stalowej*, <https://bip.mwz.pl/uploads/images/obwieszczenia/2021.03.30/Stalowa%20decyzja%20PDF.pdf> [accessed: 10.02.2023].
- [3] *Decyzja MWKZ nr 69/2020 z dn. 26.08.20 dotycząca wpisania do Rejestru Zabytków historycznego układu urbanistycznego ul. Śródkowej*, https://bip.mwz.pl/uploads/images/obwieszczenia/2020.08.28/5140.1.15.2020_Warszawa_Srodkowa_zal_urbanistyczne_dec.69.pdf [accessed: 10.02.2023].
- [4] *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, t. 9, nakł. F. Sulimierskiego i W. Walewskiego, Warszawa 1888, 16–17.
- [5] Wójtowicz W.J., *Dzieje Pragi warszawskiej od czasów najdawniejszych do obecnych*, Wydawnictwo Głos Pragi, Warszawa 1934.
- [6] *Dzieje Pragi*, J. Kazimierski, R. Kołodziejczyk, Ż. Kormanowa, H. Rostkowska (red.), PWN, Warszawa 1970.
- [7] Pilich M., *Ulice Nowej Pragi*, Fundacja Wspierania Kultury VEDA, Warszawa 2003.
- [8] *Atlas historyczny Warszawy*, t. 1, A. Jankiewicz, P.E. Wespiański, M. Witecki (red.), Miasto Stołeczne Warszawa, Archiwum Państwowe m.st. Warszawy, Wojewoda Mazowiecki, Warszawa 1999.
- [9] Pilich M., *Tajemnice Nowej Pragi. Stalowa 39*, Go-Local, Warszawa 2018.
- [10] *Nowa Praga pod Warszawą*, "Tygodnik Ilustrowany" 1867, nr 383, 26.01.1867, 40–41.
- [11] Miniewicz J., *Znaczenie militarne Pragi*, [in:] A. Sołtan (red.), *Warszawskiej Pragi dzieje dawne i nowsze*, Wydawnictwo Jeden Świat, Warszawa 2006, 203–227.
- [12] *Plan miasta Warszawy i okolic z 1867*, <http://mbc.cyfrowemazow-sze.pl/dlibra/docmetadata?id=2357&from=publication> [accessed: 12.05.2023].
- [13] *Plany Warszawy Lindleya 1883–1915*, https://mapa.um.warszawa.pl/mapaApp1/mapa?service=mapa_historyczna&L=pl&X=7502805.127594725&Y=5788955.369500488&S=2&O=0&T=0&komunikat=off [accessed: 12.05.2023].
- [14] *Nowa Praga. Targówek i Szmulowizna*, "Kurier Warszawski" 1880, nr 210, 10.09.1880, 1–2.
- [15] Gałecki Z., *Informator – przewodnik po Warszawie z najnowszym opisem ulic Wielkiej Warszawy*, Wydawnictwo Koła Kulturalno-Oświatowego Policji Państwowej, Warszawa 1933.
- [16] *Plan inwentaryzacji zniszczeń Warszawy Biura Odbudowy Stolicy z lat 1945–1946*, https://mapa.um.warszawa.pl/mapaApp1/mapa?service=mapa_historyczna&L=pl&X=7502805.127594725&Y=5788955.369500488&S=2&O=0&T=0&komunikat=off [accessed: 12.05.2023].
- [17] Archival aerial and satellite photos from 1945–2022, http://mapa.um.warszawa.pl/mapaApp1/mapa?service=mapa_historyczna [accessed: 12.05.2023].

Abstract

Analysis of spatial transformations and development of the main streets of the historic Nowa Praga district in Warsaw

The subject of the article is the spatial and architectural development of Nowa Praga [New Praga], located in the Praga-Północ [Praga-North] district of Warsaw, which dates back to the 1st half of the 19th century. On the then undeveloped land, a network of streets was laid out, among which the main ones were Śródkowa Street and then Nowopragaska (now Stalowa Street).

The aim of the research presented in the article was to trace the transformations that took place in the urban planning and architecture of Nowa Praga during the nearly 200 years of its existence, as well as to analyse the current state of development and urban layout and draw conclusions for the future. For the purposes of the research, extensive cartographic and iconographic material was collected and analysed, which served as the basis for developing subsequent phases of the development of the studied area. The result of the work are reconstruction drawings presenting subsequent stages of the spatial development of the studied area, as well as chronological stratification of the existing buildings, an analysis of their technical condition and a definition of the main problems affecting the studied spatial development.

Based on the analyses carried out, it should be stated that in just 100 years, the architectural character of the district has changed drastically, but despite numerous modifications, the historical division of land and ownership from subsequent stages of the district's development is still clearly visible.

Key words: 19th and 20th centuries, Nowa Praga, urban and architectural transformations, Stalowa Street, Śródkowa Street

Streszczenie

Analiza przekształceń przestrzennych i zabudowy głównych ulic historycznej warszawskiej Nowej Pragi

Tematem artykułu jest rozwój przestrzenny i architektoniczny Nowej Pragi, leżącej na terenie dzielnicy Praga-Północ w Warszawie. Jej początki sięgają 1. połowy XIX w. Na niezagospodarowanych wówczas gruntach wytyczona została sieć ulic, wśród których głównymi stały się ul. Śródkowa i ówczesna Nowopragaska (obecna ul. Stalowa). Celem badań przedstawionych w artykule było prześledzenie zmian, jakie zaszły w urbanistyce i architekturze Nowej Pragi na przestrzeni blisko 200 lat jej istnienia, a także analiza obecnego stanu zabudowy i układu urbanistycznego oraz wypracowanie wniosków na przyszłość.

Na potrzeby badań zgromadzony i przeanalizowany został obszerny materiał kartograficzny i ikonograficzny, który posłużył jako podstawa do opracowania kolejnych faz rozwoju badanego obszaru. Efektem prac są rysunki rekonstrukcyjne przedstawiające kolejne etapy rozwoju przestrzennego, a także rozwarstwienie chronologiczne istniejącej zabudowy, analizy jej stanu technicznego oraz definicja głównych problemów dotyczących badanej zabudowy przestrzennej.

Na podstawie przeprowadzonych analiz należy stwierdzić, że w przeciągu zaledwie 100 lat charakter architektoniczny dzielnicy zmienił się drastycznie, jednak mimo licznych modyfikacji ciągle czytelny jest historyczny podział parcelacyjny i własnościowy z kolejnych etapów rozwoju dzielnicy.

Słowa kluczowe: XIX i XX w., Nowa Praga, przekształcenia urbanistyczne i architektoniczne, ul. Stalowa, ul. Śródkowa