Chapter 2
Deathworld of the City of Łódź: Insider Experience

Abstract: The chapter explains the lived experiences of the city of Łódź from an insider, Konecki, who has lived in Łódź for most of his life. Valerie Bentz, outsider, who was visiting professor and principal researcher on the project of collaboration among strangers describes her lived experiences in the City of Łódź in the next chapter. The paper is based on the concepts of Lifeworld (Schütz 1962) and Deathworld (Bentz et al. 2018) as the sensitizing concepts (Blumer 1969) that led the analysis. The problems of pollution, the dirt, the danger of living in the city but also the positive sides of living in the city (the tradition, beautiful secession architecture, the development of the city) and the issue of awareness of Lifeworld and ontological anxiety will be considered from a phenomenological perspective. The strategies of dealing with the anxiety will be described from the first-person perspective, as using the natural attitude epoché, “others do the same,” “nothing happened so far,” “do not worry,” “I soon leave this place,” “let’s practice yoga,” “the air in the city is good for nature’s allergic sufferers,” etc. The problem of a death zone close to the city will be also presented (in photos) and reflectively considered in the paper. A reflection on the relationship of the everyday Lifeworld and Deathworld from the point of view of the concept of finite province of meaning will also be addressed.

Keywords: Deathworld, Lifeworld, lived experiences, phenomenology, Alfred Schütz, contemplation

There was someone every day here.
There is the city,
I see the blooming trees
and magpies are still around
No calls, no calls
No coughing
The dust covers longing
– Poem for Valerie from Łódź, by Krzysztof T. Konecki

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Introduction

Husserl (1954/1970, p.103) posited the “Lifeworld as the fundamental ground for all human action.” Bentz and Shapiro defined the Lifeworld as:

The lived experiences of human beings and other living creatures as formed into more or less coherent grounds for their existence. This consists of the whole system of interactions with others and objects in an environment that is fused with meaning and language and that sustains the life of all creatures from birth through death. It is the fundamental ground of all experience for human beings. (1998, p. 172)

Schütz delineated the elements of Lifeworlds, which mostly are taken for granted as humans pursue their tasks. Today we are faced with environmental and social crises related to the ability of humans to destroy Lifeworlds and exist in and expand Deathworlds to the point where life on planet earth is endangered (Bentz et al. 2018).

I will focus particularly on Schütz’ (1975, p. 116) concepts of relevances and taken for granted, natural attitude and epoché as we explore the Lifeworld and Deathworld of the city of Łódź, Poland. Other Schützian concepts include homunculi or puppets and typifications.

From Krzysztof Konecki: The City of Łódź, Insider Perspective

The problem of Deathworlds in our everyday life is connected with not noticing the obvious and taken for granted (Bentz et al. 2018; Zerubavel 2018). We try to isolate ourselves from Deathworlds. It is the natural attitude epoché, that we use to avoid keeping in mind the fundamental anxiety, that is, being aware of death.

There is a semiotic asymmetry between the conceptual pair of “life” and “death” in everyday life discourse (Zerubavel 2018, pp. 10–11). The term “death” is less marked and rarely conspicuous, in contrast to the use of the term “life.”¹ The marked and unmarked regions of our phenomenal world indicate the relevance not only of the words but also of our selective attention to perceive the world. The pollution of the air is taken for granted; it does not often appear in our

¹ A Google search on August 20, 2019 for the English terms death and life yield 3,020,000,000 and 11,690,000,000 results, respectively; in the Polish language the results are 84,100,000 and 291,000,000.
attentional landscape. It is sometimes marked in the media, but in my natural perspective, I must overcome it, forget it and proceed in the world of work (the “paramount reality” [Schütz 1975, p. 253]). I must still breathe; I cannot stop it. So, the natural attitude allows me to survive emotionally. I should ignore the obvious things to deal with life. I must ignore the Deathworld to immerse in the Lifeworld. The Lifeworld is a background of my perception that I do not question. The anxiety appears when something wrong happens, when I am pressed to be awakened from “the peaceful dream of everyday life,” for example, when I am sick or have had an accident.

Deathworlds have institutional backgrounds. There are some organizations and institutions that support killing. I mention only a few types of such organizations, the hunting associations, and breeders’ associations and meat cattle producers. Killing is accepted by the statutes of the organizations and the members of the organizations. The killing of animals by hunting associations is not mentioned on their websites (Polish Hunting Association 2012a); rather, it is shooting not killing (odstrzał zwierząt in Polish). The animals are shot off, not killed. There are also criteria for shooting off that are settled by the hunting council, so that everything is legal and according to social norms (Polish Hunting Association 2012b). The killing becomes legal.

Killing is accepted by the statutes of the organizations and the members of the organizations. The killing of animals. The anthropocentric perspective dominates and makes the distinctions between typifications of human living beings and non-human living beings. Some human beings can be killed under some conditions. Non-humans can be killed; there is no sin, no punishment if you kill the animals for eating in so-called “humane conditions.” These conditions make this kind of Deathworld legitimate and the mood of killing can be spread and gain acceptance in society. The legislation and formal regulations approve it and legitimize it, so there is nothing wrong with the killing of some animals. The animals can be killed during hunting and also in slaughterhouses. This creates the mood of killing and the generalized permission to kill.

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2 In a Google search on August 20, 2019, we found the frequency of appearance of the term of clean air – 1,190,000,000; polluted air – 24,500,000.
3 See: Polish Breeders Association and Meat Cattle Producers (2018). On the web page of the association there is no information about killing and death of the animals. The information is about working life of the producers. There is not one word about how it is possible to produce meat. What happened before the meat arrived on the table? Technicalities and legislation cover the trajectory of the animal’s pathway to become the meat for consumption.
Location of the Deathworld: Cycling to Work

Below is a note from cycling to work by professor of sociology Krzysztof T. Konecki (the author of the chapter), dated April 19, 2019. I use Schütz’ concept of types or “puppets” (Schütz 1962, p. 41) as a way to locate the way, as a cyclist, that I may be looked upon by automobile drivers as a Culprit, and how drivers may be looked upon as Grim Reapers by cyclists. When I am on the street, I am no longer a professor, only a cyclist and the potential Culprit. I have to go across the Deathworld of the City of Łódź in order to meet professor Valerie Bentz at the University:

When I go outside in the morning, I feel the smell of gasoline and smoke. Sometimes I feel it as a reek of something really strong. I notice it for a while, I feel it, and I have no reflection on it. I am leaving this warning. And I cycle to work. No problem. Nothing happened. Everything is normal, as usual, as every day, I feel it so the odor does not surprise me. I accept it. I take a bicycle and go to work. Every minute I feel the smell of the smoke from gasoline. I feel the dust from renovated roads and buildings. A lot of old cars with smog escaping from tailpipes chase me, to give the polluted air into my lungs. But it is normal, others also inhale the same air, so why I should bother? I take it for granted. Reflection on it does not bother me so much. I want to cycle, I want to work, I want to earn money.

I do not protest, I do not write letters to the mayor of the city. I bracket what I feel. It is normal, it is not important. Almost nobody notices it. I should get to work now, fast. I train my muscles. My bicycle allows me to avoid traffic jams. Great! I am a smart guy.

I cycle and I see how people drive. Their driving is rather dangerous for me, they do not notice the cyclist, even on the bicycle path. I am invisible to them, they do not look at me at the crossroads, they look at the other cars, the cyclist is invisible. I feel in danger all the time when I approach the crossroad, on the bicycle path. I am a potential Culprit (puppet). I feel it, anything can happen during my travel to work. I feel some excitement because of the danger. And I construct the justification: by cycling, I do not produce smog; I am more healthy and stronger, I am in close contact with the world.

However, the drivers are potential Grim Reapers (homunculi). They can kill me at any moment if I am not careful enough. They have the power behind the steering wheel. I feel defenseless. I feel like a potential Culprit. However, when I change from riding my bicycle to my car, and I drive, I become the potential Grim Reaper. I only change the mask, but I am still in the same Deathworld nested so deeply in everyday Lifeworld that I do not see it. I am the potential Culprit and the Reaper at the same time. Double identity. Life and Death, Death and Life. I see a lot of potential Grim Reapers around. When I stop and contemplate for a while, everywhere I see the angels of death chasing Culprits. But after a while I forget it, I set aside the Grim Reaper type, I do not want to look behind and see him with a scythe. To forget means to live but not necessarily survive.

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Another day, I am cycling with my son to wonderful places around Łódź. We are looking for the beautiful natural landscapes, lakes, and forests. We look for something original and traditional, like buildings. We find them and admire the beauty of nature and an old water mill. However, we also find the trash, and suddenly I feel the pain in my chest, I cannot understand how it happened that there is so much rubbish thrown out into the
water. I am sad and I do not want to break the wonderful feeling of seeing the glamor of nature, especially because I am with my son and I want to share the same common perspective with him. When I take a picture of beautiful objects, I usually adopt something like the natural epoché; I try to avoid the ugliness of human waste and take wonderful photographs of esthetic and attractive views. My camera avoids unlovely objects. Natural choice. It is unconscious. I understand it now when I write. Do I cheat myself or defend my Lifeworld taking in pictures in such a way?

I take more photos of picturesque views, not the horrible objects like trash or destroyed objects. (K. Konecki, self-observation, April 19, 2019)

The Visual Representation and Interpretation of Lifeworld and Deathworld

The photographer sees the world as his system of relevancies (Schütz 1962) which allows him to see some objects and ignore others (Konecki 2019). When the photographer is on a relaxing trip on a bicycle, as I was, she or he is especially sensitive when some objects do not fit with his expectation to see beautiful sceneries and views. The Deathworld could emerge in perception: beauty with near romantic awe, and ugliness with almost physical pain on the other side. When I expect to see only beauty the sudden view of dangerous and ugly objects redirects my attention. What was not noticed is noticed, what was unmarked becomes marked.

Beauty and Lifeworld views and objects are adjacent to the Deathworld views and objects. From one side of the road are houses and everything is clean; on the other side of the road there is the rubbish. I have to make a big effort to see and take the picture of the second ones. The ugliness and dirt work against my desire to see the optimistic features of the Lifeworld where people take care of nature and their Lifeworld landscapes. The Deathworld is located in the Lifeworld but rarely noticed.

The pictures shown in Figures 1–10 are from bicycle trips by Krzysztof T. Konecki with his son around the city of Łódź. They are visual stories of my perception, surprises, and experiences. The visual sensory system was supported by olfactory sensing. Sometimes I had sensed the beautiful smell of the poppies and cornflowers but sometimes the smell of gasoline and grease emerging from rivers and ponds. The contemplation of nature is supported by photographing it. It is a moment when we can stop our mind working and contemplate the here and now (Konecki 2018).
We can see both sides of the anthropized nature. The Lifeworld and Death-world are so close and they are two sides of the same coin. The street divides them visually. The human mind recognizes the distinction. Humans and nature, we and they, beauty and ugliness. But beauty belongs usually to my view, ugliness belongs to others. The distinctions create the conditions for the Death-world to start to dominate our existence but usually without seeing it.

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Below are pictures from another bicycle excursion around the city of Łódź. The place is where the chemical and metal waste is stored and where reclamation was supposed to be done and the terrain to be cleaned up. But it has not happened so far. On the terrain that belonged to the chemical factory Boruta, 200,000 barrels with toxic materials are stored. They are deposited under the ground and the metal barrels are corroded. The toxins leak out and pollute the ground and the air. The temperature around the barrels under the ground exceeds 100 C. and

**Figure 1:** Lifeworld view, in front of water mill (almost perfect beauty). Photo by the author, Krzysztof.T. Konecki, April 19, 2019.
toxic gases escape from below the surface.\textsuperscript{4} There are about 200 dangerous substances in the ground. For example, there is benzene that is cancerous and mutagenic. Around the toxic places are located companies where people work (one is the big power plant) and even houses where the people live.

In May 2018, there was a big fire on the waste heap.\textsuperscript{5} That produced a huge amount of smoke going around the cities of Zgierz and Łódź. It was difficult to

\textsuperscript{4} See: “Zgierz – Polish Chernobyl. Residents live near an ecological bomb” (POLSAT News 2019). The journalists and ecologists are marking the problem and show in the media what is covered and not noticed by the citizens, although a lot of them have seen the place.

\textsuperscript{5} See: “Zgierz. Landfill fire” (TVN24 2018).
see the sky because the smoke was so intense. Authorities assured the public that no harm was done.

The place is surrounded by a beautiful forest and ponds. Everything looks normal, but there is a Deathworld that is not officially acknowledged by the local governments in Zgierz and Łódź and even the local citizens. Only the ecologists and some journalists want to uncover the death zone and mark it to make it more apparent to the public. For some, this is seen as whistleblowing but more generally it should be treated as silence breaking for the community of Zgierz and Łódź. The elephant in the room could be actively noticed; what was in the background turning into a “figure” of explicit attention (Zerubavel 2015, pp. 64–65; 2018).

What is the social structure of relevance (Schütz 1962) of the problem for many social actors here? We can see that it could be the interests of the companies that want to keep the terrain for their operations and continue business there. The local government can avoid the topic for public relations reasons, ignoring the problem. And citizens in the natural attitude do not focus on the

*Figure 3:* Lifeworld. The view from one side of the road. *Isn’t it romantic? A beautiful and relaxing view, that is what I expected from my trips.*

Photo by the author, Krzysztof T. Konecki, April 19, 2019.
Deathworld aspects of the Lifeworld, due to ontological anxiety. Many of the citizens live in houses close to the Deathworld. The knowledge and feelings could be unpleasant, that they live on an ecological bomb that could explode, but when it is leaking slowly, the danger is not so vivid, so it could be avoided and the Deathworld could be safely kept in silence. The emotional dynamics of avoiding looking at the difficult truth (the figure of death) seem to be included in individual decision to keep silent, which becomes the collective conspiracy.

The visualization of the ignored phenomena is important in urging us to turn our eyes on unnoticed phenomena. The Deathworld is around us and in our Lifeworld. The death zones as this one in Zgierz (10 miles from the University in Łódź and Revolution 1905 street referred to in the next section) is ignored socially, although it was announced as a problem in media. It was discussed and commented on by government officials and politicians. So, it was noticed and marked. But after that, nothing happened. The poison and destruction moved to the background once again. This could be perceived as a sad and depressing phenomenon of not noticing the obvious. What should be done to make the
ignored or irrelevant phenomena noticed and relevant at the same time? How may we make the transformation of the perception more permanent? At the time of writing, a Google search of Boruta chemicals said nothing about the fire or the dangerous toxins.

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There are paradoxes of living in a polluted city. When I was a teenager I lived in the countryside and I was sick from asthma. I was allergic to hay, dust, pollens from grass and trees. I was allergic to almost everything that I encountered in the village. I was sick all the time with strong asthma attacks.

As a child, I worked on a farm and at the field helping my parents and often barely breathing. However, I moved to the city when I was nineteen years old and suddenly my attacks vanished. The smell was pleasant for me. I liked the smell of gasoline and the smoke from the coal. I felt the smoke, gasoline and grease in the air, and it was a smell of salvation for me. Finally, I had no asthma, I could breathe.
However, I am breathing toxins through my lungs slowly. And it is poisonous air that makes us wonder “When” as in the poem by Ewa Lipska (2019, p. 38):

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When death
begins to breathe
fear arises
of the dead.
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However, it has not happened in my case. The air that kills also could be considered clean and safe from rural pollens for the sufferers of nature allergies, but for how long?

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**Figure 6**: Chemical waste landfill.  
Photo by the author, Krzysztof T. Konecki, June 6, 2019.
To defray our anxiety, we bracket out the Deathworld that is nested in the Lifeworld. If I am a living being I want to live, although the Deathworld is ingrained in the everyday life, I want to live with the people alive around me and they are my others that I take into consideration when I make projects and act (Mead 1934). When I am active, and I am in action. My mind is located in interaction with others, so minding is social (Mead 1934). But the Deathworld is present and I sometimes feel it in my lungs, back, legs or when I am touched by passing cars while cycling or when the drivers shout at me and curse me, and finally when they hit the cyclist. However, the Lifeworld gives me hope and without any rational reason the certainty that I will never die. This is an effect of the natural epoché, that we make during our everyday life. Sometimes the fundamental anxiety comes back, however, I have a ready tool to defend myself against it: the natural attitude epoché. However, to hide a part of myself does not mean to survive. The Deathworld resides around us and in us. Yet, the

Figure 7: The trash heap around the devastated buildings of the past chemical company Boruta. Photo by the author, Krzysztof T. Konecki, June 6, 2019.
attention a la vie is not directed on death but on life. And it could be misleading. Human potestativity (agency) is located in the Lifeworld; we have there projects and plans, intentions and future, and we can choose a line of action among many possibilities (Bența 2014, p. 93). There is temporality in our perception of the world, and we locate our projects on a timeline. However, there is no time, no projects, no future in the Deathworld. It is an anti-world which we have no direct access to (Schütz 1962, pp. 207–259), where we have no direct access to, but we can create phantasms about it (there is eternity or nothingness) and homunculi (Reapers, ghosts, angels, souls and gods). However, the Lifeworld is only our world, it is so tangible we feel safe. The ontological security is needed, but not necessarily included, in the Lifeworld of contemporary western, industrialized cities.

We can be aware of global warming and destruction of nature (it is in our stock of knowledge) but we do not take it seriously in our life (Norgaard 2006, p. 373). There are uncomfortable feelings with the knowledge about nature’s destruction that participants want to liquidate by emotion management (Hochschild 1983). There could be even the collective practices of distancing to the problems,
the social organization of denial (Young/Coutinho 2013; Zerubavel 1997, 2002; Zerubavel as cited in Norgaard 2006, p. 374). Even if we see in Poland the changes in climate and high pollution in the winter in cities because of coal use (the Polish economy is based on coal) generally we do not want to act against it. We have some protests but they are not massive.6 The state media belittle the dangers of the use of coal for health and for climate warming. The media and politicians name coal the national treasure (Zerubavel 2015, p. 6).7 Our attention is filtered so we can focus on treasure and ignore pollution. We filter the information; our attention is selective, and it helps us to survive emotionally by ignoring some stimuli and attending only to those that are relevant to keep a good mood (Zerubavel 2015, pp. 6, 50).

6 See the title of the paper: “No coal burning in Warsaw? There is a petition to the city authorities” (Chelmiński 2019).
7 See title of the papers: “This is our national treasure; coal! Poland is building large energy blocks!” (Republika 2017), “ZPGWK conference: coal with our national wealth” (netTG.pl 2011), and “Prime Minister: Coal is our national treasure” (GOSC.PL 2013).
Fundamental anxiety is so strong that it is somehow suppressed, refused. We do not want to think about our premature death because of the pollution and do not want to think about the future generations not having clean air, water and food to live healthily or to live at all. We shift our attention from negative predictions to pleasant things here and now. The attention becomes selective and the construction of irrelevance starts (Zerubavel 2015). My mind is social, it is located in interactions, so if there are blind spots in society, they are also in my mind (Mead 1934). I am taking the roles of others in also not noticing. “It is by means of reflexiveness, the turning-back of the

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This is well shown in the Icelandic-Ukrainian movie “Woman at War” (Erlingsson 2018), when control of the information and emotions in media was aimed at nationalistic and consumption goals. The attention is redirected to threats to the peaceful and still affluent society when one woman protested violently against the destructive system of collusive cooperation of state and corporations that destroy nature (summary available at https://www.womanatwar. film, visited on August 22, 2019).

“The selective nature of our attention is evident not only in the organization of our sensory experience but also in the remarkably similar organization of the way we think about as well as remember things. It is likewise evident in the cognitive organization of our moral concerns, as any given set of moral considerations effectively ‘goes out of focus’ whenever a competing one ‘comes into focus.’ Given the striking similarity between the ways in which we focus our attention perceptually and conceptually, we thus often fail to notice things that are ‘right in front of us’ not only literally but also figuratively” (Zerubavel 2015, p. 5–6).
experience of the individual upon himself that the whole social process is thus brought into the experience of the individuals involved in it” (Mead 1934, p. 134). There are the norms of attention in society, supported by the state media that distribute the stock of three social narratives: Concentration on economic growth, increased affluence for society, and diversion of responsibility to others (Brussels means European Union, or Germany and Russia, etc.) (Norgaard 2006). The effectiveness of these attentional strategies depends on our intentional ignorance. Here are the challenge and the answer to the question: “How to make the transformation of the perception more permanent?” We should take responsibility for not seeing the Deathworld agency around. This is the moral responsibility that should be taken in each moment when we think and act in interaction with others and with nature. When the individual gives an indication to himself (Blumer 1969, p. 80) there is a short moment before the indication, a moment at which we can stop and adopt the other attitude process. This breaks the process when we do not want to see things because others do not want to see. We can notice the process, see the meanings of the objects that we accept because others accept them. And at this moment, we can free ourselves from the collective blindness and take personal responsibility for seeing the socially unseen phenomena.

We have also the attentional communities that have their attentional traditions (Norgaard 2006, p. 8). The farmers observe and put attention to nature as the object for exploitation and making profits. They also have the attentional habit to observe the weather and its consequences to the harvest result. Although they probably see the relationship between their work for profits with the use of chemicals as fertilizers and observable destruction of nature, and the changing of the climate that is happening in their place of work (e.g. lack of water), they do nothing. In this case, they should act against the destruction and stop distancing from the observable destruction of nature and climate warming. The perception becomes the ethical choice.

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Valerie Malhotra Bentz

Chapter 3
Deathworld of the City of Łódź: Outsider Lived Experiences

Abstract: Using the concepts of Lifeworld, the “Stranger” (Schütz 1976, pp. 91–105) and Deathworld (Bentz et al. 2018), I explore experiences of the city of Łódź, Poland, where I served as Visiting Professor and principal researcher on the project of collaboration among strangers. I experienced a sense of profound desolation, despite the conscientiousness of host colleagues. I expand the Schützian habitual type of Normal Foreign Visiting Professor to the characterological: Elderly Foreign Woman Professor Recovering from Pneumonia with Driving Trauma and PTSD. This highlights the differences in experiences of Lifeworlds and Deathworlds between strangers and residents, as well as unique aspects of my own vantage point.

Keywords: Deathworld, Lifeworld, lived experience, Stranger, phenomenology, A. Schütz

Outsider/Stranger’s Perspective – From One Deathworld to Another

At the invitation of Professor Krzysztof Konecki, I received a teaching and research fellowship with the School of Economics and Sociology Faculty at the University of Łódź, Poland, I arrived in March 2019, to teach a doctoral seminar on transformative phenomenology and an undergraduate course with Erasmus Institute students on embodied communication in organizations. Both courses involved readings on phenomenology and writing protocols about an experience of significance to the students. They shared their writing in an online Basecamp with other students and had the opportunity to discuss them in class and online. As well, they were working in parallel with students at the Fielding Graduate University and University of the Virgin Islands (Chapter 1). The design was to include a week-long intensive with the students from the Virgin Islands and Fielding coming to Łódź, Poland, to build collaboration face-to-face. We reluctantly cancelled this part of the design. The Dominant World View (Table 3, Chapter 1) based on competitive individualism was too strongly engrained in the university culture in Łódź to embrace this aspect of the project. Nevertheless, meaningful