

When the new is an 'enemy' of the older

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Not always replacements, repairs or modernisations have a good effect. Or generally they have, but a trifle destroys a lot. Sometimes this 'a lot' (relative, of course) is so visible, that it obscures the positives.

Trams are frequently show-pieces of cities. When making effective pictures of important, in terms of transport, streets of the metropolis, photographers frequently wait for a nice tram. Obviously in Amsterdam it will be rather a bicycle, a barge or a boat. But in Prague, Milan, Geneva – and definitely in Lisbon – a tram. The older the better.

Old trams build the image of cities. Or these state-of-the-art ones. Like in Marseilles, where moving on the track between plane trees in representative avenues an extravagant Bombardier tram, sometimes even seven segments long, is such an element of the city landscape, which you cannot forget easily.

However, old trams frequently are stronger present in the subconscious. To the extent, that in totally startling rural-holiday places, historically or topographically not related to trams, it is possible to encounter a graphics with a dark contour of an anonymous city and an old tram dispelling the darkness.

I have no idea, while the Bytom '38' is not known, although it deserves attention. Perhaps not as much, as the Tramvia Blau in Barcelona, but anyhow. Perhaps Polish 'N-s' better match the archetype of an old tram, than the Barcelona wagons. The line going along Piekarska street has even the length comparable with the Spanish one (approx. 1.3 km).

That route is an attraction. Despite the fact that apart historical, beautifully renovated tramcars, the surroundings are rather modern. Reasonable tracks

embedded in ordinary decent asphalt. Without additional outlandish effects or 'improvements'. As today in Bytom. For some people we have it even 'better', because the asphalt is very shabby. And beautiful things are also around. Like Mater Dolorosa.

For tourists, because not for residents – who use line '38', such shabbiness means authenticity. And the charm originating from it. Such authenticity,

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as valued by enthusiasts – resulting from the infrastructure age, its long-term wear and usability.

I do not feel myself an urban transport lover in a full meaning of the word, but

I remember how surprised I was reading passionate reports describing e.g. the former 'atmospheric' viaduct under which former '29' was moving in Chebzie. Then I saw it - in fact, a nice place. At least it was such before the reconstruction, now it is not so fascinating any more.

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The situation with trams is similar. Many people in the region remember – and have fond memories of - articulated 102Na trams, associating them for example with line No 11. Their sounds and vibrations during travelling (I do not refer to swaying, because this depended mainly on the track)... And I was recently surprised, when I learned that Tramwaje Śląskie have such a tram. And it is not a 13N made in Chorzów, formerly used in Warsaw, frequently seen in Katowice, but a 102Na from Będzin.

I am very glad that Tramwaje Śląskie have such historical rolling stock. Like about that, that they are in the condition as close as possible to the original. And that in the future the N-s are to stay – apart from new rolling stock important for residents – on line '38'. I am only afraid, on which this genuine '38' will travel.

The repair of another Bytom street – Katowicka – which is to start soon will be a test for me. Very necessary, with expansion to two tracks, of a damaged and loaded section. The city wants to repair Katowicka street to make it 'nice' – with granite setts and additional greenery in plant pots. I would rather like Piekarska street repaired 'only' with reasonable tracks and good asphalt. ■

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