

Spatial structure of
Przychówek Grochowski
Housing Estate

Priestorová štruktúra
sídlička Przychówek
Grochowski

Source Zdroj: Hansen, Oskar: Osiedle Przychówek Grochowski w Warszawie. Architektura, 1971, No. 10.

ARCHITECTURE AS A PEDAGOGICAL OBJECT: What to preserve of the Przyczółek Grochowski housing estate by Oskar & Zofia Hansen in Warsaw?

ARCHITEKTURA AKO PEDAGOGICKÝ OBJEKT: Čo zachovať zo sídliska Przyczółek Grochowski vo Varšave, ktoré projektovali Oskar Hansen a Zofia Hansenová?

Príspevok znova obracia pozornosť na sídlisko Przyczółek Grochowski vo Varšave, ktorého projekt vypracoval v roku 1963 Oskar Hansen, poľský člen skupiny Team 10, a jeho manželka Zofia Garlińska-Hansenová. Ambíciou architektov bolo vytvoriť rovnostársky priestor pre 6 600 obyvateľov na 1,5 km dlhom sídlisku, ktoré bolo postavené v období 1969 – 1973. Autori príspevku venujú pozornosť vyjednávaniu medzi architektmi, autoritami a stavebným priemyslom, ktoré viedlo k stavbe objektu vo forme, výrazne odlišnej od pôvodného projektu a želaní väčšiny obyvateľov sídliska. Namiesto interpretácie sídliska Przyczółek ako zlyhania utopickej vízie – či už v rámci modernizmu, alebo socializmu – autori ho vidia ako prechodný, experimentálny a pedagogický objekt, ako učebnú pomôcku pre všetkých aktérov socialistického štátu, ktorí boli zapojení do procesu jeho projektovania, programovania, výstavby, administrácie a používania. Táto perspektíva vedie k úvahám o možnostiach zachovania sídliska Przyczółek v súčasnosti ako príkladu architektonickej praxe v socialistickom štáte, ale aj ako prínosu k debate v rámci skupiny Team 10.

Sídlisko bolo pokusom realizovať Hansenovu víziu lineárneho kontinuálneho systému (Linear Continuous System alebo LCS) – projekt zastrešujúceho kompletnú urbanizáciu Poľskej Ľudovej Republiky. Hansen pracoval na LCS od polovice šesťdesiatych rokov 20. storočia. Predložil návrh systému osídlenia, ktorý by odolával očakávaným demografickým „záplavám“ a bol by vhodný pre socialistickú spoločnosť. V kontraste ku kapitalistickým mestám a ich koncentrickej forme bol LCS zamýšľaný ako beztriedny rovnostársky ne-hierarchický priestor, organizovaný vo forme funkčných pásov – štyri veľké pásy osídlenia tiahnuce sa cez celú krajinu – a niekoľko paralelných priemyselných pásov. Hansen sa vrátil k svojej všeobecnej myšlienke otvorenej formy (Open Form), ktorá predstavovala redefiníciu vzťahu medzi architektom a užívateľom či umelcom a pozorovateľom, a plánoval obytné priestory v LCS ako flexibilné a podporujúce individuálnu tvorbu; ak by to bolo možné, mali ich tvarovať samotní obyvatelia.

Hansenovým kritériom úspechu tejto vízie bola intenzita každodenných zážitkov obyvateľov počas bežných aktivít vo všetkých rovinách spojených s projektom – od najintímnejšej polohy rodiny až na úroveň celej krajiny. Socialistický štát bol nevyhnutný pre implementáciu projektu, ktorá vyžadovala ústredné plánovanie, socialistické vlastníctvo pôdy, sociálne zjednotenie finančných prostriedkov a štátny stavebný priemysel. Okrem toho bol projekt „štátnym priestorom“ na ideologickej úrovni: keďže spájal Tatry a Baltické more, bol v súlade s oficiálnym diskurzom socialistickej vlády ohľadne „návratu“ Horného Sliezska a Západného Pomoranska k „materskej krajine“.

Projekt sídliska Przyczółek Grochowski bol výsledkom vyjednávania medzi dlhodobými očakávaniami v rámci LCS a reálnymi možnosťami v danej situácii. Kvôli blízkosti letiska a záväzku splniť požadované normy hustoty obyvateľstva nadobudlo sídlisko formu 22 bytových blokov klesajúcej výšky, ktoré sa dopĺňali galériami, a tvorili dlhý oblúkovitý celok. Všeobecné predpoklady tohto dizajnu korešpondovali niekoľkým základným ideám Teamu 10: oživenie bezprostredného vzájomného vzťahu medzi jednotlivcom a komunitou na rôznych úrovniach (od galérií a spojených do dvojíc bytov, podporujúcich vytvorenie susedských komunít, po obývané priestory otvorené individuálnej tvorivosti a zmenám) a rozdelenie servisných a zásobovacích priestorov vyjadrené v oddelení obytných priestorov od komunikačných systémov a sociálnych a obchodných zariadení. Dizajn sídliska Przyczółek sa však výrazne líšil od modelov LCS vytvorených v tom čase Hansenom v rámci tímu. Tieto odlišnosti spočívali v odchode od lineárnej formy k oblúku, v prekrývaní sa niektorých častí obytných blokov, a takisto v použití systému prefabrikácie, ktorý bol príliš rigidný na to, aby umožnil flexibilitu bytov. Rozhodnutia Hansena a jeho tímu o zmene dizajnu svedčili o tom, že projekt bol chápaný ako prechodný – skôr ako krok smerom k LCS než ako zlyhanie pokusu realizovať tento systém. V procese investícií sa však tento dizajn stal kompromisom, ktorý bol ďalej deformovaný zmenami materiálov a určitými

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stavebnými riešeniami, pričom niektoré jeho položky sa nerealizovali.

Kompromisy prijaté v procese dizajnu a nespokojnosť s výsledkami, ktorú zdieľali aj architekti, aj obyvatelia, prispeli k tomu, že zachovanie sídliska Przyczówek a uznanie ho ako kultúrneho dedičstva – čo sa občas spomínalo v novinách – sa stali mimoriadne problematickými. Autori článku sa venujú tejto otázke, pričom začínajú interpretáciou sídliska Przyczówek ako experimentálneho objektu a pedagogického nástroja, a to vo vzťahu k Hansenovej teórii otvorenej formy. V kontexte sociálnych, politických, ekonomických a kultúrnych podmienok na prelome šesťdesiatych a sedemdesiatych rokov 20. storočia v Poľsku môže sa sídlisko Przyczówek chápať ako učebná pomôcka pre všetkých aktérov zapojených do procesu jeho projektovania, programovania, stavby, administrácie a použitia. Pre stavebný priemysel bola výstavba okolia cvičnou skúsenosťou pri aplikovaní flexibilnejšieho systému prefabrikácie; pre autority v architektúre, ktoré čelili novému typu komplexného dizajnu, bola učebnou lekciou; pre bytové družstvá bola skúšobným územím, kde sa mohli vnímať ako komunita; pre budúcich obyvateľov bola možnosťou vyskúšať „vedecký“ spôsob života; a bola skutočnou demonštráciou pragmatizmu architektov a ich schopnosti urobiť

kompromis pri zachovaní dlhodobých cieľov. Článok teda navrhuje prehodnotiť tradičné kritériá na zachovanie historických objektov, také ako inovácia, precedens, formálna kvalita, ako nepostačujúce na opodstatnenie toho, že sídlisko Przyczówek môže mať status architektonického dedičstva, a navrhuje jeho zachovanie ako pedagogického objektu.

Projekt sídliska Przyczówek má korene v Hansenovej teórii otvorenej formy, pre ktorú sú charakteristické zdôrazňovanie procesu skôr než výsledku a dôležitosť komunity. Ako také poskytuje inšpiráciu pre nové spôsoby v praxi zachovania historických objektov. Namiesto rekonštrukcie objektu v tej podobe, ako bol postavený (alebo dokonca ako ho projektoval Hansen) s cieľom vytvoriť jedno z mnohých „múzeí socializmu“ by zachovanie tohto objektu malo zohľadniť všetky zmeny, ktoré vznikli v priebehu vývoja okolia, predovšetkým všetky čiastkové privatizácie obytných priestorov. Ak sa sídlisko Przyczówek pojme ako nový začiatok architektonického projektu skôr než reštaurovaný hypotetický pôvodný dizajn, môže sa stať inšpiráciou pri navrhovaní architektonických nástrojov, pričom spochybní „kreatívnu“ deštrukciu socialistického urbanizmu a prispeje k šíreniu hodnoty používania v rámci mesta: bude to opäť experimentálny projekt.

In 1990 a newsreel which documented the emergence of new types of services arising after the fall of socialism in Poland showed a private company working on a security scheme for the Przyczówek Grochowski Housing Estate in Warsaw. Bending over the plan of meandering buildings, the guards tried to establish effective procedures for protecting the inhabitants from increasing petty criminality. A difficult goal indeed, complained the narrator, since the buildings “were first harmed by the architects”^{1/}.

Yet also the designers themselves – Oskar Hansen, architect, artist and theorist affiliated with the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and an active member of Team 10, and his wife Zofia Garlińska-Hansen – did not hide their own disappointment with this project. Oskar stressed how much the buildings, comprising flats for 6 600 inhabitants, designed in 1963 and

constructed between 1969 and 1973, differed from the original plans. More recently, Zofia pointed out at mistakes of design rather than of execution, and confessed: “I think that in a practical sense, Przyczówek Grochowski is not a success, because people are not happy there.”^{2/} Happiness of the inhabitants is not a modest criterion, and one that could make the architects an easy target for a critique of modernist “utopias”. When applied to Przyczówek, this commonplace is fused with a more specifically postsocialist debunking of large housing estates as symptoms of the fiasco of real existing socialism. While, as we will show in what follows, Przyczówek was by no means an example of “real existing modernism”^{3/} and its position within Polish post-war urbanism and architecture is exceptional, this critique did not facilitate the acceptance of this complex as valuable architectural heritage, in spite of some recent suggestions in



Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy of Igor Hansen.

Przychówek Grochowski
Housing Estate in
Warsaw, model
Sídliisko Przychówek
Grochowski vo
Varšave, model

the daily press. In the current political and economic climate in Europe, the housing projects of Hansen's colleagues from the Team 10 network are often deemed too expensive for restoration, in particular since the broad public is not always convicted about their aesthetic value: some visual education is still needed to recognize the delicate details of the staircases in the Robin Hood Gardens in London by Alison and Peter Smithson, or the radiating surfaces of the Bobigny Housing by Georges Candilis, Alexis Josic, and Shadrach Woods. The case of Przychówek is particularly controversial, because the challenge of preserving a housing estate with a complex ownership structure is exacerbated by the appearance of the buildings, which does not easily lend itself to aesthetic consumption.

The starting point for conceiving Przychówek as heritage requires questioning the first impression

of this estate and to recognize it as a promise. Or, rather, as multiple promises: that of the socialist state – to coordinate the production of space beyond the contradictions of capitalism and to provide egalitarian housing for all; that of the architect – to give the inhabitants the possibility of appropriation of their spaces and individual expression within the society; that of the building industry operating with prefabricated systems – to realize this project economically and allowing for flexibility and differentiation; but also that of the housing corporation of the possibility of a community. Yet what is to be preserved from a promise never kept? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to see Przychówek as a part within a larger process, one intended to lead towards Hansen's life project: the Linear Continuous System along the principles of Open Form. In this perspective, Przychówek needs to be considered a transitory



Source Zdroj: www.nudnepocztowki.blog.pl

Towards the Linear Continuous System

Przychówek Grochowski was commissioned by the Workers' Housing Cooperative "Osiedle Młodych" (Housing Estate of Youth). Founded in 1957, the cooperative first bore the name "Osiedle Bezdomnych Kochanków" (Housing Estate of Homeless Young Couples) – a familiar trope during post-Stalinist thaw in the Eastern Block ^{/4/}: who would not support young love, not to mention the prospect of producing new citizens? After changing the name to a more serious one, "Osiedle Młodych" became the biggest housing cooperative in People's Republic of Poland. With the first apartment building completed in January 1959, the housing cooperative expanded with several other constructions in the district of Praga. As a consequence, in 1977 it owned already 232 completed buildings, 16 330 flats, 692 128 m² of floor space and 21 650 members of the cooperative, among which there were 6 564 who were still waiting for their flats to be built ^{/5/}.

In 1963 "Osiedle Młodych" obtained a 12,5 hectare building plot for the construction of a new housing estate on the right bank of the Vistula river. Close to a lake, the Vistula, and on the edge

Przychówek Grochowski
Housing Estate in
Warsaw, postcard, 1980

Sídlisko Przychówek
Grochowski vo Varšave,
pohľadnica, 1980

object, perhaps even one of Hansen's pedagogical tools: a learning device for all involved into the process of its design, programming, construction, administration, and use – even if the lessons were hard to learn.

Przychówek Grochowski
Housing Estate in
Warsaw, 1970s

Sídlisko Przychówek
Grochowski vo
Varšave, sedemdesiate
roky 20. storočia



of green areas, the site was located not far from the city center and at the planned Łazienkowska Throughfare. However, it also posed a challenge to the designers due to the proximity of the sports airport of the Warsaw Aero Club, founded in 1946 and active on the site until the early 1970s. This troublesome location required specific factors to be taken into consideration by the architects, first and foremost the height of the buildings, which had to be adjusted to the landing trajectories. At the same time, the architects had to fulfill strict Polish norms of population density (up to 400 people per hectare in residential districts and 400 – 470 in the city center) and the expectation on each new housing estate to provide flats for 10.000 inhabitants^{16/}. Faced with these difficulties, all three design teams which tried to come to grips with the requirements of the building plot gave up at the stage of preliminary designs^{17/}. Difficulties were, though, the natural element of Oskar Hansen who accepted the Cooperative's proposal to prepare the design, which was drawn by him and the project team consisting of Zofia Garlińska-Hansen, constructors Marek Konieczny and Józef Staniszewski^{18/}, and Bohdan Ufnalewski, among others.



Przyczółek Grochowski
Housing Estate in
Warsaw, 1970s

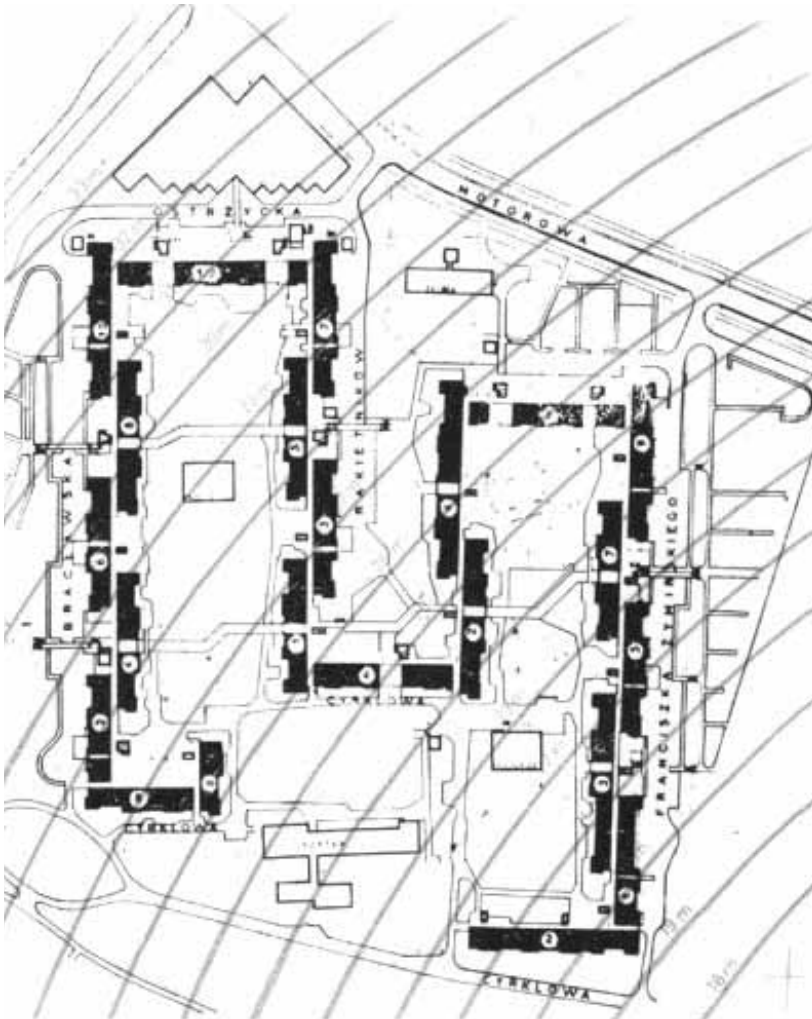
Sídlisko Przyczółek
Grochowski vo
Varšave, sedemdesiate
roky 20. storočia

Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy of Igor Hansen.



Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy of Igor Hansen.

For Hansen, Przyczółek was an opportunity to develop his ideas about the Linear Continuous System (LCS) within his general theory of Open Form: an envisaged paradigm shift in the design of the built environment on every scale which would *“help us to define ourselves and find ourselves in the space and time in which we live”*^{19/}. Together with his wife Zofia, Oskar worked on the LCS since the early 1960s, presenting his preliminary ideas for application of the Open Form theory to architecture during the first Team 10 meeting in Bagnols-sur-Côche in 1960 and providing the first concretizations of the idea (detailed studies and models) in 1966^{10/}. The LCS was conceived as a model for the urbanization of socialist Poland: a *“drainage ditch” for the traditional, concentric cities and the “unhealthy*



Source Zdroj: Hansen, Oskar: Osiedle Przychówek Grochowski w Warszawie. Architektura, 1971, No. 10.

last realized in the form of the Juliusz Słowacki Housing Estate (1963 – 1966) and the never-realized design for Ursynów-Lasy Kabackie in the Warsaw agglomeration (termed the ‘Masovia belt’, 1968) which was drawn in parallel to the work on Przychówek^{12/}.

The “classless, egalitarian, non-hierarchical” character of the LCS, argued Hansen, was the appropriate settlement system for a socialist society. The main premise of the project was that of the socialist state which, as Hansen explained, made it possible “to solve the problem of the greatest number” based on social egalitarianism, and which offered “means until now unattainable: land not hindered by private interest, socially unified funds, unified, state-owned industry”^{13/}. In contrast to the concentric capitalist city, and drawing conclusions from the experiments in linear cities since the 19th century, the LCS offered to inhabitants of cities and villages a form of settlement which would combine the facilities offered by urban life and the contact with nature offered by the countryside.

This egalitarian premise was translated into the urban principle of optimized circulation. Each settlement strip bundled together three parallel zones: a housing and service zone with light industry, which was the primary serviced zone in this system; a background for that zone was the agricultural zone, combined with historical settlement systems and mining industry; and the zone of heavy industry, located adjacent to the agricultural zone. These three strips were linked by means of transverse communication. In Hansen’s scheme, each transversal section was characterized by a balance between production and consumption, an equilibrium of employment, and, essentially, an ecological equilibrium. However, since the transversal sections differed in material and intellectual resources, levels of existing infrastructure and settlement systems, historical and ecological potentials, and distribution of the labor power, the surpluses and the shortages were to be balanced by means of transport operating in the longitudinal section.

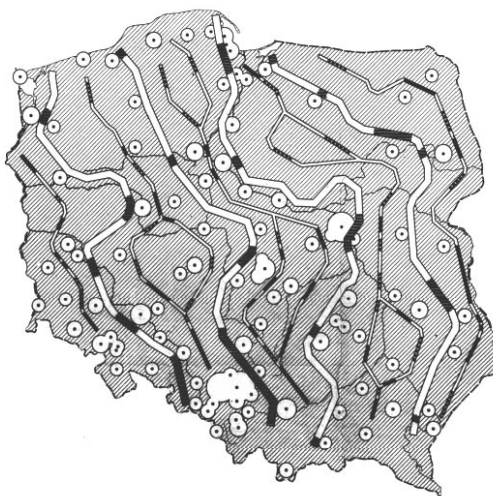
This integration of the cross- and longitudinal sections was to be achieved by means of central planning on the level of the state: a “biotechnological process” which secured local

Scheme of dependence of height of the building on the landing area of the nearby airport

Schéma závislosti výšky budovy od pristávacej plochy susedného letiska

demographic “flood waters”^{11/}. At its most general level, the project proposed four large settlement strips stretching throughout the whole country, and several parallel industrial strips. The LCS consisted of numerous research projects and designs of various levels of elaboration, from sketches to execution drawings for the city of Lublin, the

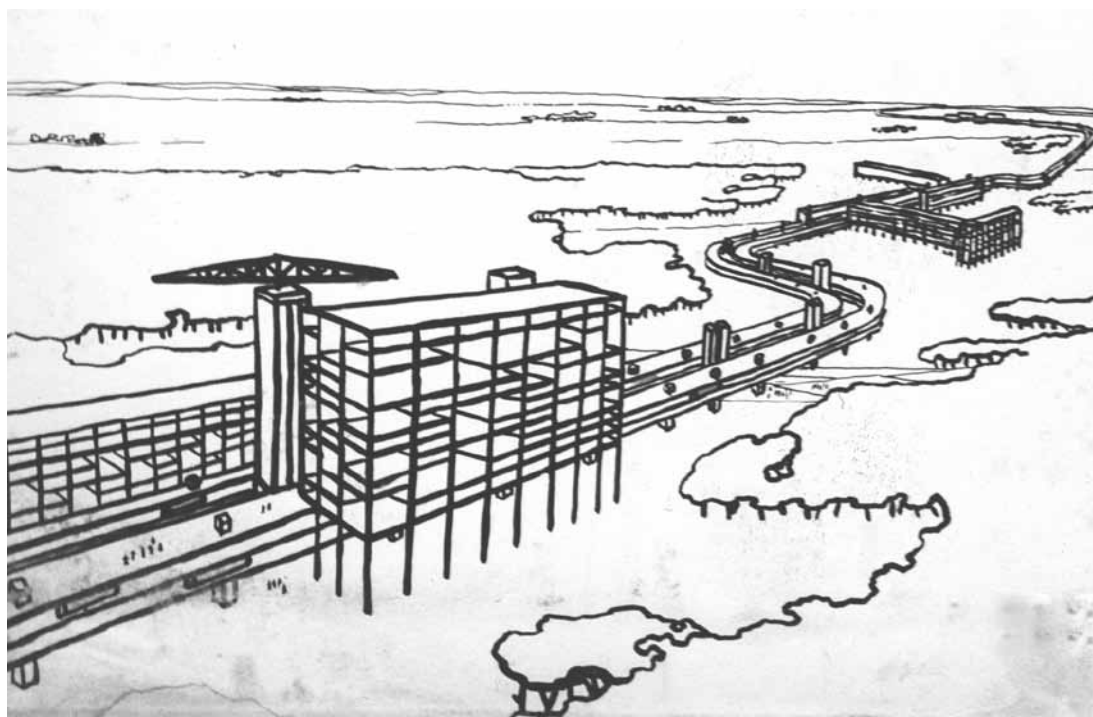
equilibriums in each point of the strip by the management of the means of production and responding to the fluctuation of the work force; in other words, central planning was conceived as an open-ended, feed-back based system which adjusted long-term strategies in real time to take into account the given situation. In spite of the technocratic language inspired by cybernetics as a means to rationalize planning, Hansen's criterion of the success of this vision was the intensity of the everyday of the inhabitants, on their way to and from work experiencing the condensed sequence of the urban condition. In contrast to an alienated dweller in a fragmented, capitalist city, the inhabitant of the LCS experiences all scales of the project, from the most intimate scale of the family to that of the country, stretching from the Tatra mountains to the Baltic sea. This aspect shows yet another aspect of the LCS as a state project: when made public in 1970, i.e. the year



Linear Continuous System. Poland's spatial development concept, 1972

Lineárny kontinuálny systém. Koncepcia priestorového vývoja Poľska, 1972

Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy of Igor Hansen.

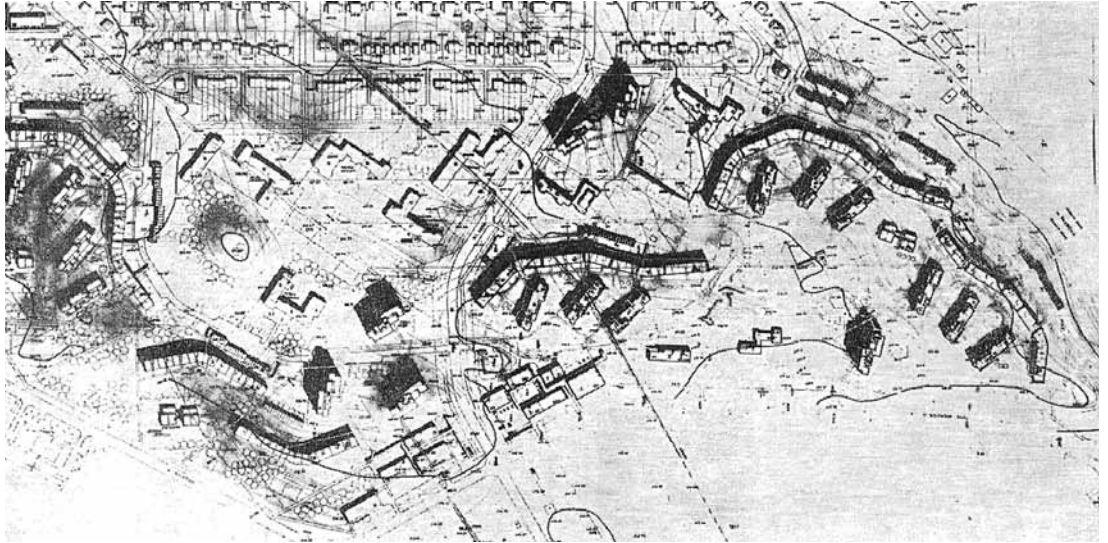


Linear Continuous System, a sketch

Lineárny kontinuálny systém, náčrt

Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy of Igor Hansen.

Juliusz Słowacki Housing Estate in Lublin, 1963 – 1966, development plan
Siedlisko Juliusz Słowacki w Lublinie, 1963 – 1966, rozwojowy plan

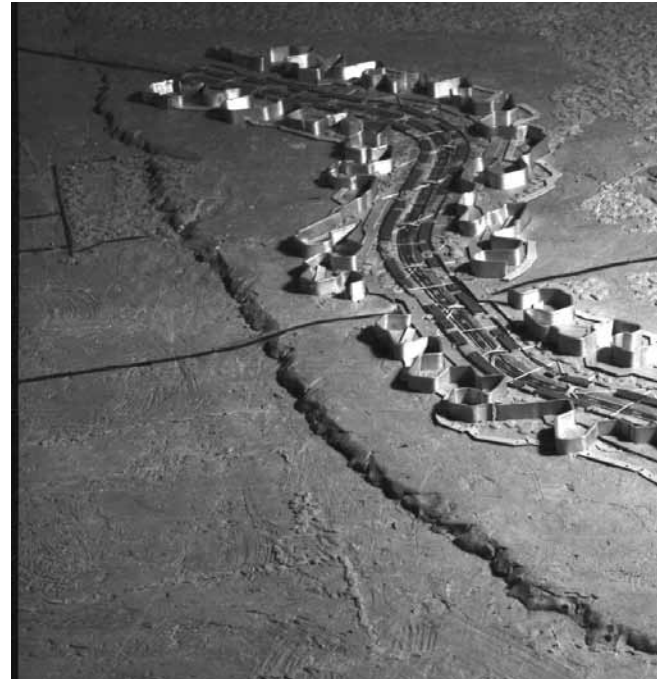


Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy of Igor Hansen.



Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy of Igor Hansen.

Juliusz Słowacki Housing Estate in Lublin, 1963 – 1966
Siedlisko Juliusz Słowacki w Lublinie, 1963 – 1966



when West Germany recognized Poland's western border, the project subscribed to the official discourse of socialist Poland about the "return" of Upper Silesia and Western Pomerania to the "mother country".

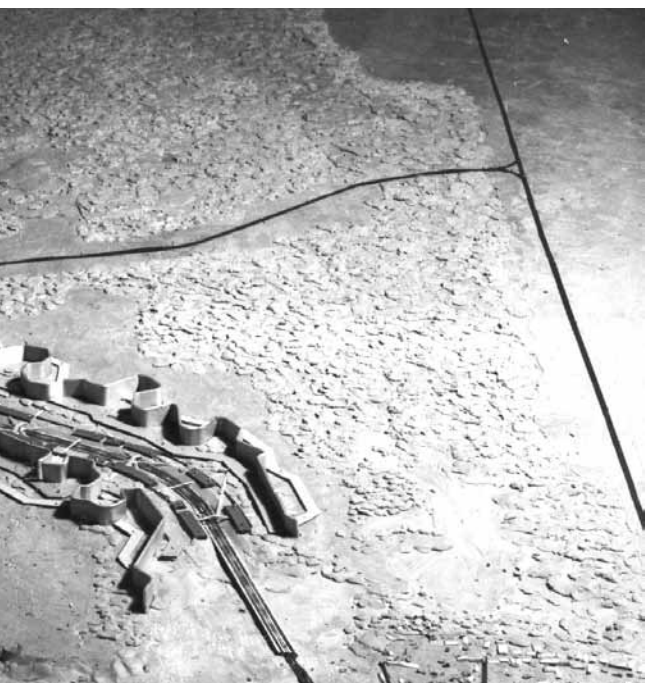
Przyczówek as a Pedagogical Object

The general principle of LCS – the linear organization of the program into (mono)functional strips which are transversally crossed in the everyday practices of the inhabitants – is conveyed by a sketch of Przyczówek, condensing the project into lines of segregated circulation (roads, pathways, galleries) and the blocks of flats. The housing estate consists of 22 separate blocks of flats, alternating at both sides of the galleries which join them into a 1,5 kilometer unity. Due to the shape of the plot, the buildings form a meander with spacious courtyards and a service area in between, where the architects foresaw a primary school, two kindergartens, nursery, trade and service center,

office of administration ^{/14/}, as well as a sports and cultural center. These social facilities were realized according to standardized plans, and the cultural center was designed by Jacek Gwieciński from Warsaw Office of General Building Designs in 1973, but never built ^{/15/}. The principle of local equilibrium, which was central for the LCS, was applied in Przyczówek, and in an interview Hansen stressed that the planning aims at "harmonious interdependence between the serving and served spaces" which meant that the social and commercial facilities were constructed simultaneously with the apartments and the communication system ^{/16/}.

Another critical idea of the LCS – that of a standardized, prefabricated construction technology which facilitated a smooth workflow for the crane and provided a basic frame open for modification – was the starting point for most design decisions about Przyczówek. The architects applied a newly introduced precast building system called "Żerań-brick", which assumed the usage of prefabricated units, smaller and less expensive than the previously used system (such as the "H frame") and, by consequence, more flexible and economical in usage ^{/17/}. One result was a series of struggles between the architect and the factory, which insisted on the application of standardized units ^{/18/}, and, inevitably, led to a large level of repetition on the facades. Yet the application of the "Żerań-brick" allowed, first of all, the cascading form of the buildings – from 4 floors in the lowest side to 8 floors in the highest one – adjusted to the proximity of the airport and the population density requirements of the buildings. Second, it facilitated a distribution of load-bearing walls which opened the possibility of future mergers of adjoining apartments by the removal of light partitions. A similar principle of standard facilities evenly covering the whole estate guided the distribution of the elevators across the estate: a decision which violated the building law that stipulated the installation of an elevator as possible only in a building which had at least five floors.

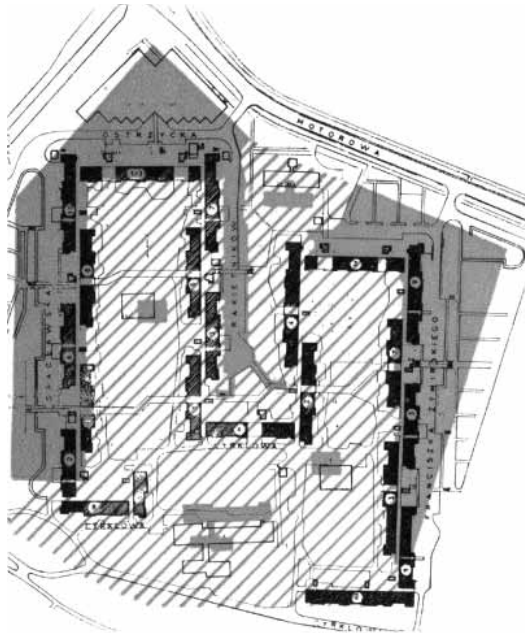
In his programmatic pronouncements about the LCS, Hansen stressed the close interrelationship between the individual and the community at its various scales: an essential topic developed within the Team 10 and marked by such concepts as the "hierarchy of human association" by Alison



Source Zdroj: Hansen, Oskar: Osiedle im. Juliusza Słowackiego w Lublinie. Architektura, 1965, No. 10.

Masovia Belt, 1968, model
Masovia Belt, 1968, model

Scheme of serving and served zones in Przczółek Grochowski Housing Estate
 Schéma servisných a zásobovacích zón na sídlisku Przczółek Grochowski

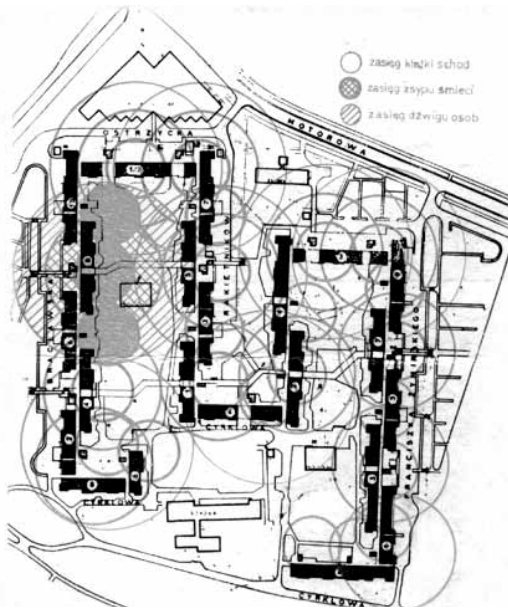


and Peter Smithson^{/19/}. The galleries in Przczółek were, in Hansen's idea, the loci for communal interchange, and their form emphasized the division between served and serving spaces: housing units on the one hand and, on the other, staircases, elevators, chutes, and parking lots. It was meant to improve also the security of inhabitants, above all of the children who could reach their school or local stores without crossing the heavily trafficked roads.

Equally important was the layout of the residential space, which was envisaged to encourage the formation of the neighbors' community. Hansen decided to pair the flats and made them accessible through a shared entrance. The so-called "cold-catchers" (2,5 – 3 m²) provided thermal and acoustic isolation, but also imposed a close relationship with the closest neighbor. The flats, by contrast, were imagined to allow for individual appropriation of space. Their design, ranging from one-room to four-room apartments (57 m²), demonstrated Hansen's ability to come up with successful floorplans (securing cross-ventilation and daylight from both sides in most cases) in spite of the constrained building norms. In addition, the visual information system and the diversity of colors used in the elevations were intended to individualize space.

However, the possibility of individual appropriation of the apartments was only a faint echo of other projects developed within the LCS, such as the restructuralization of the town of Lubin in the Western strip (1976). An industrial town in Lower Silesia, known for its cooper mine, Lubin was suffering from environmental damage. Seeking the remedy to its disastrous condition, Hansen supported the "humanization" study which included the construction of a row of elevated ascending terraces built on pylons extending from pillars left over from the disused mining pits. The terraces, built by the state on the basis of the old mining infrastructure, would be passed on to the inhabitants: each family would be free to commission there their house or to build it by individual means. In this project, the central government was responsible for the construction of infrastructure and of the housing 'racks' on the national scale; various cooperatives decided about the quantity and housing types, while each family was responsible

Scheme of access to elevators, staircases, and garbage chutes in Przczółek Grochowski Housing Estate
 Schéma prístupu k výťahom, schodiskám a smetiskám na sídlisku Przczółek Grochowski



Source Zdroj: Hansen, Oskar: Osiedle Przczółek Grochowski w Warszawie. Architektura, 1971, No. 10.

13 ALEKSANDRA KEDZIOREK ŁUKASZ STANEK Architecture as a pedagogical object Architektúra ako pedagogický objekt



Gallery's perspective, 1970s.
Perspektíva galérií, sedemdesiate roky 20. storočia.

Neighborhood life on the galleries of Przczółek Grochowski Housing Estate, 1970s.

Život susedov na galériách na sídlisku Przczółek Grochowski, sedemdesiate roky 20. storočia.

Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy of Igor Hansen.

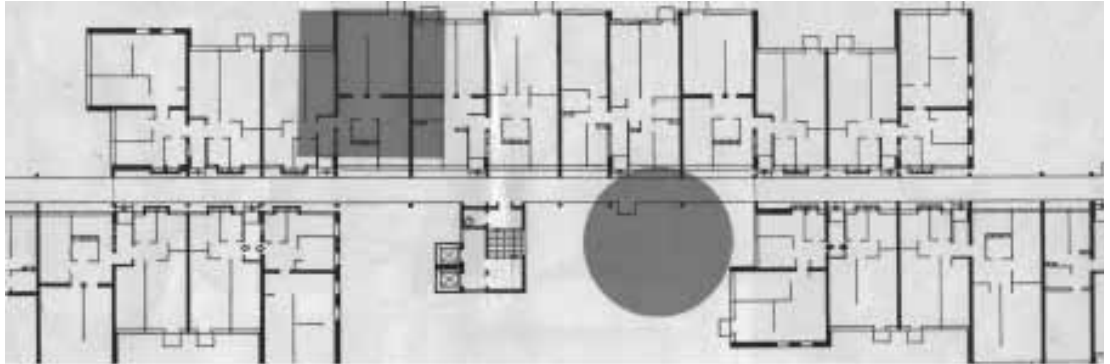
for the construction of the individual housing unit.

The confrontation with several unrealized projects within the LCS system, such as Lubin, suggests that Przczółek was the result of negotiating the long-term ambitions of the LCS with the immediate circumstances of the situation. From the breaking of the linear form into a meander and the introduction of the overlap of some parts of the housing blocks – which left some of the apartments under-lighted, as Zofia Hansen admitted; through working with a system of prefabrication which, while more flexible than most others available at that time, was too rigid to allow for a flexibility of the apartments; to the individualization of space executed by means of the system of visual identification designed by the architects, rather than a construction of the individual units by the inhabitants themselves – all these decisions taken during the design process suggest that the project was conceived as a transitory object, a step towards the LCS rather than a failed attempt to



Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy of Igor Hansen.

Disposition of flats
Dispozícia bytov



Source Zdroj: Hansen, Oskar: Osiedle Przychówek Grochowski w Warszawie. Architektura, 1971, No. 10.



Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy Igor Hansen.

realize the system. Not unlike Charles Fourier's phalanstères, which were conceived as intermediary stages, proliferating and multiplying, offering experiments to lure prospective philanthropists /20/; or of Henri Lefebvre's "experimental utopias" /21/, Hansen's Przychówek was an exercise in radical reformism, testing the capacity of the socialist state to improve its performance.

In that sense, the experience of Przychówek was designed to be pedagogical one: a program which might explain the energy invested by Hansen into a seemingly endless chain of negotiations, deals, and confrontations, with small victories achieved at the price of substantial compromises. This understanding of architecture as a pedagogical object – similar to models he constructed for his students at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in order to test fundamental perceptual laws of composition – runs through the majority of his works, from the housing estate in Lublin, where the composition of the façade became an exercise in rhythm analysis, to his private house in Szumin, a sequence of ideal-typical situations which Hansen discussed with students and visitors. Yet other experiences at the Academy, such as the open-air visual games organized in Elbląg and Skoki /22/, go beyond geometrical relations and open the exercise towards complex situations unfolding as a feed-back loop of signal and response between participants interacting with each other by appropriating objects in landscape. In this broad sense of institutional



Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy Igor Hansen.

Western Belt, a multifunctional housing structure proposed for post-industrial area of Lubin, 1976, a model

Západný pás, multifunkčná bytová štruktúra navrhnutá pre postindustriálnu oblasť Lubína, 1976, model

pedagogy, Przczółek might be understood as a learning experience of the building industry in applying a more flexible prefabrication system; an education for the architectural authorities faced with a new type of design complexity; a testing ground for the corporation to understand itself as a community; the possibility for prospective inhabitants to exercise a “scientific” way of living^[23] and, indeed, a demonstration of the architects’ pragmatism and ability to compromise while keeping long-term goals in view.

What Is to Be Preserved from an Unfulfilled Promise?

However, if Przczółek was a pedagogical project, the lesson might have been too difficult to be absorbed. This difficulty was reflected in numerous delays in the construction process, which started in March 1968. When in September 1970 the first inhabitants moved into their flats, only 3 of 22 blocks were finished; they were not completed until 1973^[24]. The inhabitants recollect a number of shortcomings: “The contractor KBM-



Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy Igor Hansen.

The exercise
 “Exemplification of a Large
 Number of Elements”,
 Planes and Solid Figures
 Studio at the Academy
 of Fine Arts in Warsaw

Cvičenie „Exemplifikácia
 veľkého počtu elementov”,
 Štúdio plánov a pevných
 figúr na Akadémii
 výtvarníctva vo Varšave

Wschód showed an extraordinary recklessness and clumsiness, even for that time. Proof can be seen until today in the apartments, courtyards and galleries. “From the building material dispersed on the premises and around, a good foreman would be able to build a whole new housing block” – said an inhabitant^[25].

In the course of this process, the design, itself a compromise, was changed to the extent that Hansen wrote that “our clear ideas have been often deformed in the course of the investment process.”^[26] For example, the deputy architect of the city of Warsaw decided to level the galleries to the height of the apartments, which resulted in a lack of privacy and impaired maintenance. The changes in the choice of materials – asphalt instead of sound-absorbing cork and latex floors – altered the intended auditory perception of the galleries’ space, eliciting feelings of insecurity. Moreover, the railings were realized not in oak but in steel which, rusty ever since, contributed to one of the nicknames of the neighborhood: Sing-Sing^[27].

Equally unrealized remained the visual information system, which made Hansen’s critique of repetitious architecture applicable to his own project^[28].

However, the press reports after the opening of the estate questioned also several of the fundamental design decisions, and so do the inhabitants when interviewed today. In particular, the galleries came under the fire of critique: the strong draught became a hindrance for walking – in particular since the distances to staircases, elevators, and chutes tend to be long, and Hansen’s idea of carts available for the inhabitants on each gallery had never been realized^[29]. The size of the galleries makes them difficult to maintain (“this would be only possible with industrial vacuum cleansers” – mocked one inhabitant^[30]). Particular disappointment concerned the communal life in the neighborhood. The difference in the social trajectories of the inhabitants who moved in after the completion of the blocks – young couples, white collars employees, but also the population resettled from Targówek, at that time a notorious, overpopulated shantytown – did not contribute to social cohesion. Some put the blame on the architects: rather than becoming a part of the communal space, the galleries and the corridors between the units, which were supposed to facilitate social contacts, are considered as belonging to nobody, an inhabitant argues today^[31]. But neither were they connected to the larger urban territory: the inhabitants had to wait several years for public transport links in spite of the proximity of Łazienkowska Throughfare: “Przyczółek is a closed enclave in the middle of nowhere”, wrote journalist Grzegorz Pisarewicz in 1970^[32], and many find this applicable still today.

These problems were exacerbated in the post-socialist condition, with the partial privatization of the housing stock which caused the fragmentation of the ownership of the apartments, thus making collaboration among the inhabitants even more difficult^[33]. The result of these processes was the division of the galleries by gratings and the introduction of wire fences and hedgerows in the “private” gardens, which prevented the free circulation in the estate – one of its fundamental premises, as Hansen lamented^[34]. In the course of the last two decades, Przyczółek received a notoriety which led to its career in the media, featured on YouTube as the natural habitat of self-proclaimed

bad boys and in a TV series as a synonym for low-budget housing^{/35/}. Much of these prejudices resurfaced in 2001, when an article published in the daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* contained a suggestion to grant Przyczółek the status of national monument as a prominent example of postwar modernist architecture^{/36/}. Yet the arguments quoted in favor of this “one and a half kilometers of heritage” were strikingly vague – the building’s “innovative” character and its “excellent spatial solutions” achieved in spite of the “rigid building norms of the period” – and contrasted with the specific and comprehensive critique of the inhabitants.

Though not much more than a sample of a larger debate, the article in *Gazeta Wyborcza* nevertheless demonstrates that the traditional criteria for historical preservation, such as innovation, precedence, formal quality, are not sufficient to substantiate Przyczółek’s candidacy for the status of an architectural heritage site^{/37/}. To restore the neighborhood as it was built – or even as it was

conceived by Hansen – risks putting Przyczółek dangerously close to the “museums of socialism” proliferating in Poland since the 1990s: ghostly simulacra preserving a socialist enclave for tourist consumption in order to reassure the public of the successful modernization of the country, which makes a preservation of such relicts urgent and indispensable^{/38/}. Rather, and particularly so given the project’s conceptual nature inscribed into Hansen’s theory of Open Form and LCS, the preservation of the building needs to be conceived as ensuring its continuation along its theoretical principles and social ambitions.

If Przyczółek was, indeed, a pedagogical object, its development needs to account for its failures – and to re-launch it as an architectural project. This is what Hansen himself suggested in a 2005 interview: “to draw up a study of Przyczółek’s ‘humanization’” and to restore “its original guiding principle”^{/39/} rather than its original form. Such an attempt would require the reconceptualization of its formal, material and technical challenges, but



Juliusz Słowacki
Housing Estate in
Lublin, 1963 – 1966

Sídlisko Juliusz Słowacki
v Lublinie, 1963 – 1966

Source Zdroj: Oskar Hansen Archive, courtesy Igor Hansen.



Still from: KwieKulik
(Zofia Kulik, Przemysław
Kwiek), *Game on
Morel's Hill, 1971*,
digitalized slideshow

Záber z digitalizovaného
prehľadu, KwieKulik
(Przemysław Kwiek,
Zofia Kulik), *Game on
Morel's Hill, 1971*



also those of maintenance and financing – none of which is possible without the direct engagement of the inhabitants. Given the project's exceptional character, the financial support of the state (based on the regulations concerning cultural heritage) would require a contract between the authorities and the inhabitants, accepting both entitlements and obligations – rather than a bureaucratic decision imposed on the inhabitants. As was the case with the recent discussions around the neighborhood Les Courtillicres in Pantin (1957 – 1964)^{40/}, where questions of social justice and the “right to the city” were directly linked with those about the cultural value of the architecture, Przyczółek should inspire us to conceive the practice of preservation in a new way. While the emerging recognition of the cultural value of post-war housing brings about the danger of gentrification of the newly revalorized neighborhoods and the threat of displacement of weaker populations even further



from the city center, the renovation of Przczółek needs to embrace the fragmented property structure as an asset and an invitation to the collective work on the neighborhood. As an architectural project focused on questions of material heritage – rather than social rehabilitation, as was the case with yet another Team 10 project, the Petit Seminaire in Marseille by Candilis, Josic, and Woods (1959)^{/41/} – the project points at cultural policies in architecture and regulations of heritage protection as a new possibility of state intervention into the processes of production of space. In this way, rather than contributing to the commonplace complaint that heritage regulations constrain urban development and restrict the practice of architecture and urban planning, Przczółek could become a place of conceiving tools of design which would oppose the “creative” destruction of socialist urbanism and contribute to the distribution of use value in the city: an experimental project, like Hansen’s.



NOTES POZNÁMKY

- ¹ Nowe usługi (New Services), PKF 90/27, www.kronikarp.pl, accessed August 31, 2012.
- ² GARLIŃSKA-HANSEN, Zofia.: Interview by Joanna Mytkowska, 2005, unpublished.
- ³ See Postmodernism Is Almost All Right: Polish Architecture After Socialist Globalisation, by Łukasz Stanek, research and interviews by Piotr Bujas, Alicja Gzowska, Aleksandra Kędziorek, Łukasz Stanek. Bęc Zmiana Foundation, Warsaw 2012.
- ⁴ Comp. Dimitri Shostakovich's musical *Moscow: Cheryomushki* (1959); film version: *Cheryomushki*, dir. G. Rappaport, 1963.
- ⁵ Jubileusz 40-lecia Robotniczej Spółdzielni Mieszkaniowej Osiedle Młodych, a leaflet from the archive of Andrzej Golowin. See also IZBICKI, Roman: Dzieje bezdomnych kochanków: Warszawskie 'Osiedle Młodych'. *Życie Warszawy*, 1959, No. 311; KRZYŻAKOWA, Krystyna: Nie czekali na cud... *Stolica*, 1959, No. 6; ZALESKA, Halina: Sprawy mieszkańców Osiedla Młodych w Warszawie. (OBOP report, Warsaw 1962) www.obop.pl, accessed August 31, 2012.
- ⁶ See Zarządzenie nr 15 Przewodniczącego Komitetu Budownictwa, Urbanistyki i Architektury z dnia 21 lutego 1961 w sprawie głównych wskaźników do projektowania osiedli mieszkaniowych w latach 1961 – 1965. Ośrodek Informacji Technicznej i Ekonomicznej w Budownictwie, Warszawa 1961.
- ⁷ SZEJNOCH, Jerzy: Do Rady Osiedla «Przyczółek Grochowski». *List otwarty*. *Kultura*, 1975, No. 30 (632).
- ⁸ According to HANSEN, Oskar: Osiedle Przyczółek Grochowski w Warszawie. *Architektura*, 1971, No. 10, p. 366. Information about designers involved in the project differ, e.g. O. Sawicki mentions Jerzy Dowgiałło as a chief constructor. See SAWICKI, Olgierd: O integrację urbanistyki, architektury i konstrukcji. *Miasto*, 1965, No. 7, p. 17.
- ⁹ HANSEN, Oskar: Forma Otwarta. *Przegląd Kulturalny*, 1959, No. 5, p. 5, translated as "Open Form Manifesto," www.open-form.blogspot.com, accessed August 26, 2012.
- ¹⁰ HANSEN, Oskar: Forma Otwarta w architekturze. *Sztuka Wielkiej Liczby*. *Kamena* 1960, No. 23/34 (supplement to *Struktury*, 1960, No. 2); HANSEN, Oskar: *La Forme Ouverte – l'Art du Grande Nombre*. *Carré Bleu*, 1961, No. 1; HANSEN, Oskar: *The Open Form – the Art of the Great Number*. In: *CIAM 1959 in Otterlo*, ed. O. Newman, Stuttgart 1961; GOLA, Jola (ed.): *Towards Open Form*. Foksal Gallery Foundation – Revolver, Warsaw 2005, p. 200 and 212.
- ¹¹ HANSEN, Oskar: LSC: Linearny System Ciągły. *Architektura*, 1970, No. 4/5, p. 135. See also: *Linearny System Ciągły*, exhibition catalogue, ZPAP, Warsaw 1967.
- ¹² The later realisation of Ursynów residential district designed by Marek Budzyński, participant of Hansen's classes at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, and his team in 1972 – 1977 refers to a small extent to the idea of Masovia Belt. Kucza-Kuczyński, K.: Interview by F. Springer, 2012, unpublished.
- ¹³ HANSEN, Oskar: LSC... op. cit., p. 125.
- ¹⁴ Osiedle nad jeziorkiem. *Express Wieczorny*, 1969, No. 116, p. 5; PISAREWICZ G.: Eksperymentalny «Przyczółek». *Osiedle przy lotnisku*. *Trybuna Ludu*, 1970, No. 325, p. 5.
- ¹⁵ ŚMIAŁOWSKI, Waldemar: *Jedyny w Warszawie*. *Stolica*, 1973, No. 39.
- ¹⁶ Dwa kroki naprzód, krok w tył. Interview with Oskar Hansen by J. R. Gonczarski, *Sztandar Młodych*, 1972, No. 67.
- ¹⁷ The precast units were produced in the Faelbet Factory in Warsaw from aerated concrete. From the financial point of view, the decision to introduce "Żerań-brick" was profitable. In comparison to other housing estates constructed at the same time, Przyczółek Grochowski was significantly cheaper. 1 m³ of usable floor space cost 2 247 zł pre-tax (together with the boiler-house), while the same space without the boiler-house cost 2 810 zł pre-tax in Sady Żoliborskie Housing Estate or 2 752 zł pre-tax in Okęcie district. SAWICKI, Olgierd: op. cit., p. 17. See also: ARENDARSKI, Jerzy: *Trwałość*

i niezawodność budynków mieszkalnych wznoszonych metodami uprzemysłowionymi. Warszawa, Arkady 1978.

18 HANSEN, Oskar: Pragmatyzm utopii. Interview by C. Bielecki, *Architektura*, 1977, No. 3 – 4, p. 17.

19 See SMITHSON, Alison (ed.): *Team 10 Primer*. Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1968.

20 STANEK, Łukasz: *Collective Luxury: Architecture and Populism in Charles Fourier, "HUNCH"*, vol. 14: *Publicity*, Summer 2010, pp. 128 – 37. Translated into Polish as *Kolektywny luksus, "Autoportret"*, 2011, No. 2 (34).

21 STANEK, Łukasz: *Henri Lefebvre on Space. Architecture, Urban Research, and the Production of Theory*. University of Minnesota Press 2011.

22 See Kwiekulik: *Games on Morel's Hill*. Digitalized slideshow, 1971/2006; *Groping One's Way*, dir. Piotr Andrejew, 1975, www.artmuseum.pl/filmoteka, accessed August 31, 2012.

23 HANSEN, Oskar: *Jak mieszkać z sensem i naukowo*. *Kierunki*, 1973, No. 29.

24 *Koparki ruszą już w marcu*. *Nowe osiedle dla 7 tys. osób*. *Dom Sportu i Kultury dla mieszkańców Gocławka*. *Express Wieczorny*, 1968, No. 40, p. 1; *Municipal Archive of Warsaw, National Audit Office – Representative powers for the capital city of Warsaw*, signature 1268, *Subject of auditing: Functioning of the Housing Cooperatives*. *Workers' Housing Cooperative "Osiedle Młodych"*, 1970 – 1971.

25 SZEJNOCH, Jerzy: op. cit.

26 *Dwa kroki naprzód...* op. cit., p. 18.

27 SZEJNOCH, Jerzy: op. cit.

28 HANSEN, Oskar: *Jak mieszkać...*, op. cit.

29 ZAWISZA, Andrzej: op. cit.

39 SZEJNOCH, Jerzy: op. cit.

31 Interview with the authors, February 2012.

32 PISAREWICZ, Grzegorz: op. cit.

33 See *Stan gospodarczo-finansowy SM 'Przyczółek Grochowski' na 2006 rok*, Warszawa 2005, Andrzej Gólowin Archive.

34 HANSEN, Oskar: In conclusion. On the 'humanization,' or, basically, the restoration of *Przyczółek's* public space. In: GOLA, Jola (ed.): *Towards Open Form*. *Foksal Gallery Foundation – Revolver*, Warsaw 2005, p. 100.

35 See, for example, the following posts on www.youtube.com: *Fabula ft. HiFi Banda, PWRD, Błękit i beton* (2011), *Pih, Biegnij, nie oglądaj się* (2011); *Parias, Wzorowy* (2012; and *Bulionerzy* (TV series), dir. Andrzej Kostenko, Grzegorz Warchał, Krzysztof Łukaszewicz, prod. TVP, 2004 – 2007.

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39 HANSEN, Oskar: In conclusion. p. 100.

40 *Research Group for History of Contemporary Housing: Les Courtillicres: Ordinary Housing Project, Extraordinary History?* *Docomomo Journal* 39, September 2008, p. 12 – 17.

41 ANSELME, Michel: *Le petit Séminaire, chronique raisonnée d'une réhabilitation singulière*. In: *Droit de cité. A la rencontre des habitants des banlieues délaissées*. *l'Harmattan*, Paris 1987, p. 105 – 148.