



Elżbieta Przesmycka*, Małgorzata Sosnowska**

Housing estates and culture of architecture

Introduction



Fig. 1. LSM Housing Cooperative in Lublin. Elaborated by author

The first housing estates in Lublin after the Second World War were created as part of ZOR (Working Estates Factories – Tatory, Bronowice) and as the first postwar Housing Cooperatives.

The greatest cooperative was the Lublin Housing Cooperative (LSM) which was created in 1957¹. In the years 1954–1968 the city was greatly industrialized which caused an influx of migration from the surrounding areas.

* Wrocław University of Technology, Faculty of Architecture.

** University of Life Sciences in Lublin.

¹ LSM included the following estates: Mickiewicz (1958), Słowacki (1964), Piastowskie (1966), Krasiński (1970), Sienkiewicz (1973), Konopnicka (1974), and Prus (1975).

During ten years the population of the city doubled. On 25 April 1957 the first meeting of the founding members of the cooperative took place. The city authorities designated

the area of about 42 hectares situated in the district 'Rury' within circa 5 kilometers from the city centre for the construction of a new Cooperative housing estate [15, 16].

Adam Mickiewicz Estate



Fig. 2. The Mickiewicz Estate in the 1980s [5]

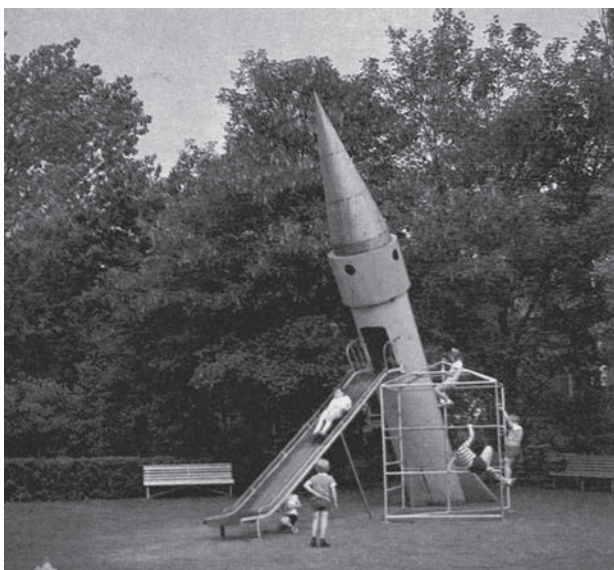


Fig. 4. Playground on the Mickiewicz Estate in the 1980s and today. Photo by E. Przesmycka, 2010³

The first housing estate to be built within the framework of the Lublin Housing Cooperative was Adam Mickiewicz Estate². At the same time, social and technical infrastructure was created, including shopping and service centres, outpatient clinics, schools, kindergartens, social clubs and libraries [3, 4, 11].

The transportation system of the estate was arranged in a way that separated pedestrian traffic and vehicular traf-



Fig. 3. Fountain on the Mickiewicz Estate in the 1980s (a). The same fountain in 2008, photo by M. Sosnowska, 2008 (b)



fic. Simultaneously, the intra-estate areas were developed by creating recreation places for residents accompanied by planting high green fields, plants and characteristic for this estate numerous rock gardens. Urban planning of the estate was not distinguished in any particular way, however, the green areas covered more than 20 hectares [5, 9].

² The design author was Feliks Haczewski. Construction works were started in June 1958 and the first flats were given to the residents in December 1959.

³ Figures 1–4 from the 1980s were taken from the Cooperative folder: Gnot L., *Nowy Lublin, Osiedla Lubelskiej Spółdzielni Mieszkaniowej*, Wojewódzki Ośrodek Informacji Turystycznej w Lublinie, Lublin 1987.



Fig. 5. Remains of the rock gardens on the Mickiewicz Estate, photo by E. Przesmycka 2010, M. Sosnowska, 2007

Juliusz Słowacki Estate



Fig. 6. Słowacki Estate in the 1980s⁴ [8]

It was built as the second estate within the framework of the Lublin Housing Cooperative. The authors of the design were Zofia and Oskar Hansen [1]. The estate was built in the years 1964–1970 according to the concept of ‘Open Form’, which was elaborated by Oskar Hansen⁵ [2].

In the transportation system of the Juliusz Słowacki estate, some innovative solutions were employed with regard to the segregation of pedestrian traffic and vehicular traffic. Vehicular traffic was excluded from the interior areas of the estate, while garages and car parks were located on the outskirts of the estate. The estate access roads were designed from the northern side of the whole com-



Fig. 7. Band type buildings of Słowacki Estate, photo by M. Sosnowska, 2007 (a). The state from 2007, photo by E. Przesmycka, 2010 (b)

⁴ Source: *Lublin trzech pokoleń*, Lublin 1987.

⁵ The idea of ‘Open Form’ was formulated and proclaimed by Hansen in 1959 during the congress of CIAM in Otterlo, where it was met with great interest of architects. The idea assumed a possibility of residential and urban environment formation by every single resident, space forming through various human activities and resignation from the artist’s superiority in the design process. In 1966 Hansen elaborated the theory of Linear Continuous System (LSC). It transposed the Open Form into the urban scale. The LSC ideas assumed a band division of space into zones with various functions and resignation from the traditional division into the centre and suburbs. This idea was employed when designing the Juliusz Słowacki Estate where residential parts were divided by service zones and green zones. The project assumed that each place of the residential zone had a different relation with green and service zones, but the relation was the same as regards distance and access.

plex. The basis of the estate composition constituted three long, segmented, five-storey residential buildings (Fig. 7). Perpendicular to them, there are three shorter five-storey buildings. The entire complex opens up to the south where there are recreation areas of the estate. These buildings are completed by eleven-story buildings. The social and technical infrastructure was created at the same time as the residential buildings. With reference to the idea of the Linear Continuous System, the estate system is divided into bands: serviced zone – flats, northern servicing zone – vehicular traffic, southern servicing zone – recreation,

relaxation. In the northern zone, the Hansens designed most of such laborious functions as garages, car parks, rubbish places, transformer stations, utility areas, shops, etc. In the southern zone situated in the interior part of the estate there were playgrounds and recreation places,

social club, kindergarten and estate park. While implementing the idea of 'Open Form', the designers assumed the possibility of various processes of merging residential interiors and at the same time individual creation of space by the residents.

Piastowskie Estate



Fig. 8. Piastowskie Estate, central square in the 1980s⁷ (a) and today with the preserved sandstone sculptures, photo by E. Przesmycka, 2010 (b, c)

Design works on the Piastowskie Estate started in 1966 and the building process commenced one year later. In this estate, some ready-made architectonic projects of residential buildings were used⁶. Similarly to the previous estates, a very important role was played by green areas and the rich program of associated infrastructure.

⁶ The arrangement of the buildings and land development project were made by a Lublin architect Antoni Herman.

A characteristic feature of the central part of the estate is the sculptures made in sandstone⁸ [7]. The sculptures are covered with the reliefs made on the basis of children's drawings.

⁷ Source: L. Gnot, *Nowy Lublin, Osiedla Lubelskiej Spółdzielni Mieszkaniowej*, Wojewódzki Ośrodek Informacji Turystycznej w Lublinie, Lublin 1987.

⁸ The sculptures were made during the Lublin Artistic Meetings which were organized in the years 1976–1978; the authors were: Barbara Zbrożyna, Jadwiga Janus and Michał Leszczyński.

Characteristics of the LSM estate spaces

The LSM, similarly to the majority of the housing estates which were built in Poland in the postwar period, was characterized by large inter-estate areas and minimalist solutions of the buildings' structures and the great empty facades were conducive towards the free process of engaging into various artistic activities. The Lublin Housing Cooperative was one of the few institutions existing then in Poland which paid particular attention to the estate formation process.

In the 1970s in the LSM estate spaces there appeared many elements of small architecture, including numerous sculptures. Along the lanes and on the squares modern sculptures were placed, some of which exist until today; they are often forgotten, damaged and not restored (Fig. 9).

On many squares fountains were built along, with special playgrounds for children and benches to sit on, all surrounded by well planned green areas. All this helped the residents live in friendly surroundings which were characterised by a relatively high level of 'culture of architecture', despite the times of the industrial uniformed building technologies and many drawbacks in the existing town planning solutions. One of the examples of activities undertaken in order to improve the socialist estates image was the organization of artists' meetings at which the issues of graphic setting of urban spaces were discussed.

In the years 1976–1978 within the framework of the Lublin Housing Cooperative (LSM) [7], Lublin Artistic Meetings were organized. A number of graphic artists as



Fig. 9. Remnants of numerous sculptures exhibited on the LSM estates⁹ [7]

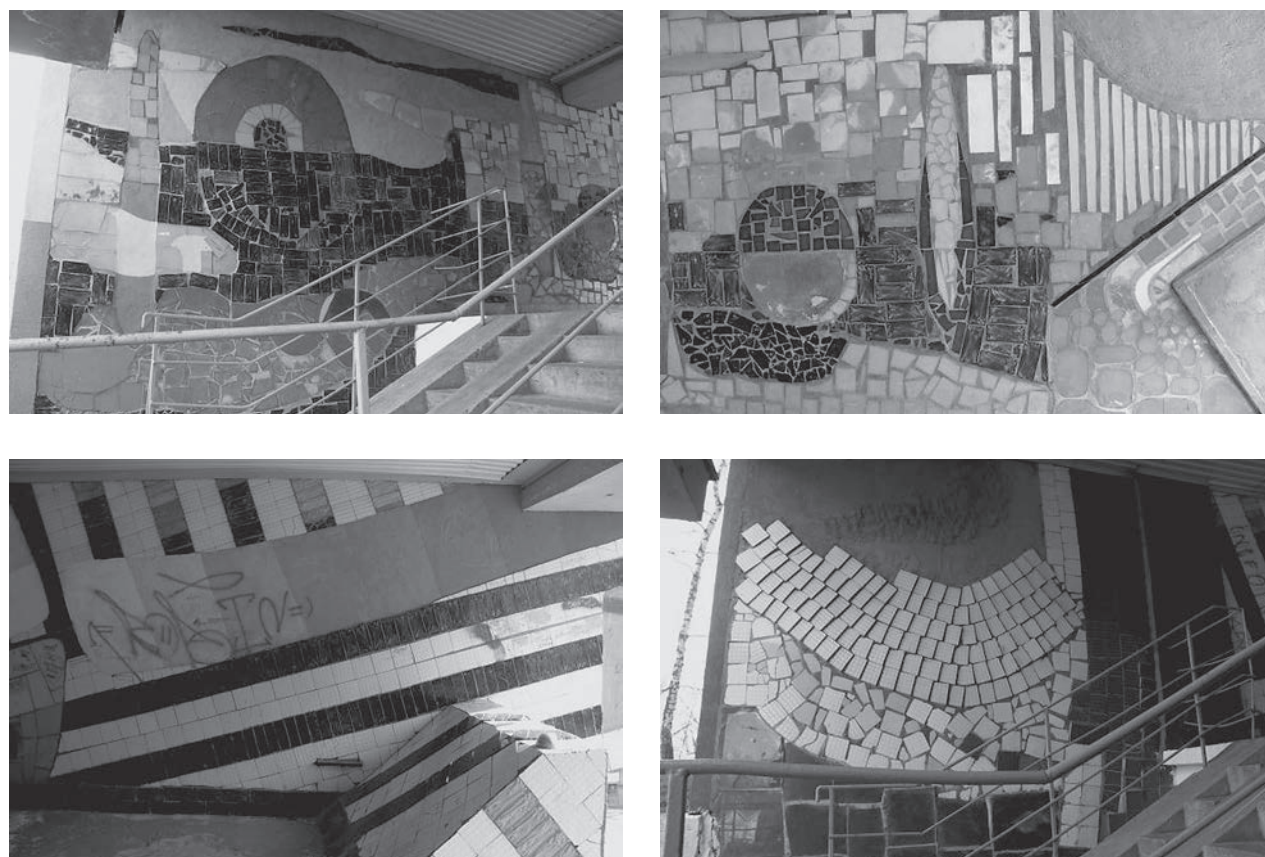


Fig. 10. Mosaics made during the Meetings of Artists in 1976 in the passage of residential buildings in the Słowacki Housing Estate LSM in Lublin. Photo by M. Sosnowska, 2008

⁹The sculptures were made during the Lublin Artistic Meetings, among other by B. Zbrożyna, J. Janus oraz M. Leszczyński, I.J. Kamiński, *O sztuce w Lublinie*, [in:] T. Radzik, A.A. Witusik, *Lublin w dziejach i kulturze Polski*, Lublin 2000.



Fig. 11. The painting composition (it does not exist now) on the gable of the building on the Krasiński Estate.
Source: Gnot L., *Nowy Lublin, Osiedla LSM*, Wojewódzki Ośrodek Informacji Turystycznej w Lublinie, Lublin 1977

well as architects from all over Poland and students of fine arts academies took part in this meeting. The goal of these meetings was the integration of graphic arts within the urban environment. As a result, a number of sculptural works were realized as well as paintings and mosaics on gables and in entrance areas of buildings. Before they were completed, these works were discussed with the residents of the LSM estates and then presented at numerous exhibitions and meetings in the artistic circles. These works added splendour to various places within the estates for almost fifty years. Now, most of these paintings and mosaics are destroyed due to insulation works carried out on the residential building and restoration of the public utility buildings. The only ones which are preserved until today are the mosaics in the passages between buildings on the Juliusz Słowacki Estate (Fig. 10).

Social infrastructure of the LSM



Fig. 12. Shopping centres designed by Oskar Hansen on the Słowacki Housing Estate, LSM Cooperative in Lublin

The estate spaces were complemented by numerous shopping and service centres, social clubs, kindergartens, nurseries, passages and market squares. Amphitheatres, sleighing hills as well as other forms of small architecture were constructed on some estates. While carrying out such realizations, architects had a chance to demonstrate their professional skills as they were not forced to design buildings with the use of the large concrete slab technologies. These small complexes and separate buildings often situated in the central parts of the estates presented a high level of architectural culture.

The realized structures were covered up with natural stones, i.e. common granite, fashionable porphyry or sandstone facing. Shopping arcades were often covered up with clinker or brick slabs or they had walls made of glass bricks. A good example here is the shopping centre designed by Oskar Hansen situated on Zana Street or buildings of kindergartens and schools on the Piastowski Estate.

The period of political transformations brought about some significant changes in the urban and archi-

tectonic expression of the majority of the estates. Paradoxically, it is only on the most neglected estates that we are still able to identify the art of architecture of those past years. Due to the commonly executed thermal insulation of buildings, many of their specific features were lost, for example kindergartens or nurseries. At the same time, changes of ownership or alteration in the purpose of the particular buildings led to many conversions. Social clubs and trading centres changed owners which in many cases resulted in changes of their original purpose¹⁰ [12].

¹⁰ A famous case was when a private entrepreneur illegally added a storey to one of the shopping centre buildings designed by O. Hansen; this action did not take into account the ownership rights and the whole scale of the market complex. This situation caused a discussion among Lublin artists on the need to protect the valuable architecture of the 20th century which is not listed in the official monument register. A similar discussion on the protection of the contemporary urban systems took place when the Blessed Piotr Jerzy Frassati church was to be built in the centre of this estate.

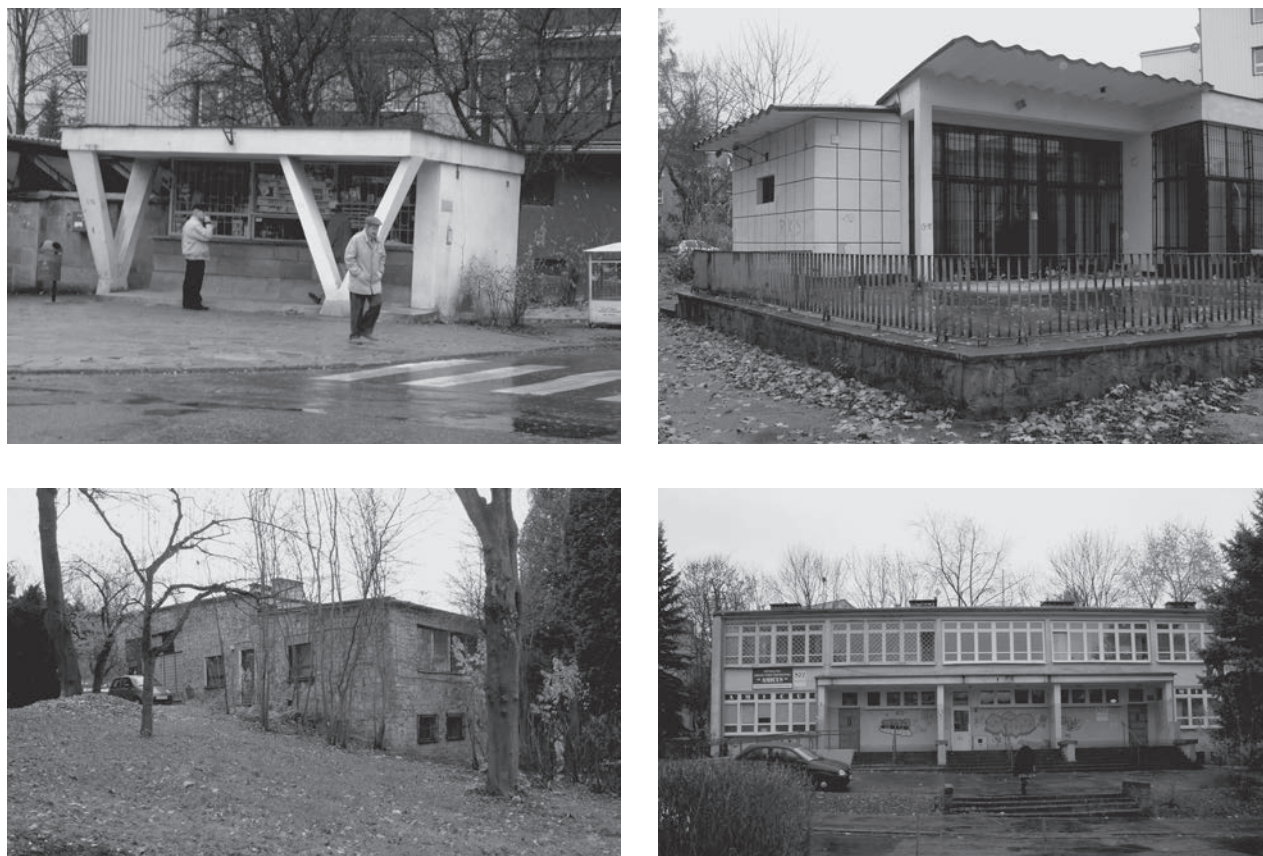


Fig. 13. LSM estate shopping centres. Photo by E. Przesmycka, 2010

Current activities of the Cooperative and culture of architecture

The actions which have been carried out in the recent years aimed at improving the esthetics of the housing estates in Lublin, similarly to the majority of other Polish cities, are mostly limited to thermal insulation of the buildings and colour renovation of the façades. Thermal insulation of the buildings is met with great approval of the estate residents as it contributes to the reduction of utilization costs of the flats. The quality of the proposed solutions in terms of colours which are introduced while insulating the buildings seems to be less important for the residents. Usually, the choice is made by the administration workers and the residents have nothing to say. There is no social discussion on the esthetics of the proposed designs. The

projects of colour renovation do not refer in any way to the original colours or to the employed finishing materials. In many of the buildings the original façades were covered with mineral plaster work, sometimes with various texture. After the thermal insulation with foamed polystyrene or mineral wool, the building lost their modernistic form and the deeply placed window openings complement this image of the modern residential architecture. On the Juliusz Słowacki Estate of the Lublin Housing Cooperative, where the process of thermal insulation of the buildings has not been carried out on a comprehensive scale yet, we can still see the original façades which were designed by Oskar Hansen (Fig. 10) [8, 10].

Actions initiated by the residents

The residents of the housing estates also feel the need for artistic expression and they wish to mark their presence in the estate space. The residents' activities may be spontaneous or they can be initiated by the local cultural centres, culture animators or people with a passion. In July 2009 the young activists of the Culture Animation Incubator at the Lublin Cultural Centre organized a festival named 'Osiedłówka' on the Tatory Estate. As part of this festival, a workshop was organised on street art combined

with graffiti lessons. During the workshop, the residents themselves could make graffiti and murals. These activities were met with great approval of the young residents of the estate. In 2010 some anonymous artists made graffiti works on the back walls of the public utility buildings (Fig. 14). Although graffiti art is commonly regarded as vandalism, these anonymous works were warmly received by the local youth as well as by the elderly residents of the estate.



Fig 14. The back elevation of the service centre on the 'Tatary' Housing Estate. Graffiti made by the young residents of the estate

Conclusions

The so called housing estate culture of architecture comprises many elements.

Apart from the quality of the buildings which undergo aging processes on the one hand, while on the other hand they are modernized and revitalized with various esthetic effects, we also have to take into account the elements of estate territory development. Shortly after the estates were built, various actions were taken in order to form esthetics of the housing estates and their architecture. Presented

in our article, the small architecture structures or estate shopping centres which have been preserved until today, were supposed to make the industrial housing estate forms and typical residential buildings look more beautiful and they also complemented the employed urban planning solutions. Some of the preserved elements of the façade decorations or entries to the buildings are often the only remnants of the 1950s and 1960s architecture. Therefore, it seems necessary to protect them [13, 14].

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Osiedla mieszkaniowe a kultura architektury

W artykule poruszono problematykę kultury architektury wybranych osiedli mieszkaniowych Lublina. Opisywane osiedla powstały w okresie od końca lat 50. do początku lat 80. ubiegłego stulecia. Już na etapie projektów lub krótko po ich powstaniu w osiedlach prowadzono działania mające na celu poprawę estetyki przestrzeni osiedlowych oraz samej architektury, angażując do tego celu specjalistów: artystów plastyków, urbanistów, architektów i ogrodników. Zaproponowane przez nich rozwiązania upiększały formę architektoniczną uprzemysłowionej, typowej

zabudowy mieszkaniowej i dopełniały małą architekturą rozwiązania urbanistyczne. Obecnie zachowały się jeszcze elementy wystroju elewacji, wejść do budynków i pozostałości małej architektury. Konieczna jest ochrona tych nielicznych już zabytków kultury osiedlowej. Niestety, prowadzone powszechnie działania termorenowacyjne budynków i rewitalizacyjne przestrzeni osiedlowych nie biorą pod uwagę możliwości ich zachowania.

Key words: Lublin, culture of housing estates

Słowa kluczowe: Lublin, kultura osiedli mieszkaniowych