



## POLSKÉ MĚSTSKÉ PLÁNOVÁNÍ 2. POLOVINY 20. STOLETÍ OD TOTÁLNÍHO K LIBERÁLNÍMU PLÁNOVÁNÍ

### POLISH URBAN PLANNING OF THE 2ND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY FROM TOTAL TO LIBERAL PLANNING

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#### **Abstrakt**

Městské plánování 2. poloviny 20. století v socialistických zemích, jako je Polsko, Česká Republika, Slovensko, Maďarsko, prošlo dynamickou cestou za méně než 50 let. Lze říct, že v zemích uplatňujících plány nahradil totální plánování krajní liberalismus. To je však zjednodušená charakteristika. Ve skutečnosti způsob prostorového plánování ovlivňovala řada různých faktorů. Autor uvádí pouze ty, které dle jeho úsudku měly největší dopad na prostorové uspořádání a kvalitu výstavby v Polsku v letech 1945–2000.

#### **Abstract**

It appears that the urban planning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in socialist countries – such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary, has gone a long and dynamic way as for less than 50 years. It could be said that, in land use plans, it has gone from total planning to ultra liberal planning. It is a formulation that characterizes and defines this period in a very simplified way. In fact, numerous factors affected the form of spatial planning, and the author intends to present mostly the ones which, in his opinion, exerted the greatest impact upon spatial management and space quality in Poland in the years 1945 – 2000.

#### **1 THE 50's**

After the Second World War, Poland enjoyed a period of relative, although limited, freedom in realization of small-scale building projects, i.e. single-family houses or small-scale objects for services, which started directly after the war and lasted until the mid-70s. In this period, public use facilities of

all kinds and new housing estates were built in the style of socialist or modernist architecture.

The new regime, which was introduced in Poland after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, in its initial period allowed the possibility of a fairly free application of modern urban planning principles developed on the basis of the postulates formulated in the pre-war Charter of Athens. Striving to modernize the country's economy and realize the postulate of providing equal accommodation standards for all citizens, with special emphasis put on the so-called working class, were the main focus points of the spatial management policy. As a result, almost 90% of the housing development erected in the 50s were intended for the non-agricultural population. Due to economic factors (the necessity of developing utility infrastructure on quite large areas and the intensity of land use) as well as aesthetic considerations, the Polish cityscape of that time was dominated by the form of a housing estate composed of 4-storey residential buildings based on the principles of the settlement (neighbourhood) unit. The newly-erected housing estates were also used as an element of the socialist propaganda preaching the ideas of prosperity and equality. The flagship housing estates of the 50s in Poland were Nowe Tychy with the population of 100,000 – designed by the Wejcherts (1951) and Nowa Huta with the population of 200,000 (Ptaszycki and this team, 1949).

It should be remembered that these processes were taking place in the situation of quite strong social and cultural transformations in the period of the post-war population boom resulting from the naturally increased birth rate. The aforementioned processes were accompanied by transfiguration of the economy structure, and in consequence the structure

of occupation prevailing in the population. It was the time of extremely dynamic migrations resulting from the shift of Poland's borders, on the one hand, and from the movement of rural population into cities, from the other. Cultural changes were also related directly to the change of the population's living standards, partly determined by the socialist success propaganda.



Fig. 1.: Socrealist structures, Bielany, Żeromskiego Street. (Photograph of 2009: <http://warszawa78.blox.pl/html/1310721,21.html?351527>)

## 2 THE 60's

The dynamic development of cities and individual settlement units in the 60s brought about the necessity to accelerate the rate of building new housing estates. In architecture, the socrealist doctrine was abandoned, and functionalism together with modernism were embraced instead. A new political leader – Władysław Gomułka – came to power in Po-



Fig. 2.: Socrealist structures, Warsaw – Konstytucji /the Constitution/ Square. (Photograph from: <http://warszawa78.blox.pl/html/1310721,21.html?351527>)



Fig. 3.: "The great slab" - the first realizations following the principles of modernism., The Swedish Block designed by Marta and Janusz Ingarden. The years of construction: 1957–1959. Location: Szklane Domy /Glass Houses/ Estate 1, Kraków (Photograph from: <http://fotopolska.eu/7728,foto.html>)



Fig. 3.: "The great slab" - the first realizations following the principles of modernism., One of the first blocks made of Great Slab in Poland. Kraków-Nowa Huta, Hutnicze /Steelworks/ Estate, Mierzwy Street. Realized in 1947.

land at that time, and introduced a few important corrections, also referring to spatial planning and spatial management. In the interest of the correct structure of the neighbourhood unit as well as to determine the principles of the construction thereof, the Act of 31<sup>st</sup> January 1961 on Spatial Planning was adopted. The act introduced Regional Plans, Local Plans and Detailed Plans for individual settlement units. Regional Plans in particular were closely connected with Perspective Plans of the National Economy Development, called 5-year plans. The act also reflected to a greater extent the new administrative division of the country, which was introduced in the period between 1950 and 1957. Structures of any kind were only to be erected on the areas which were intended for this purpose. Since there was a sufficient number of prepared land use plans, there were no major obstacles for building new housing estates. Nationalization of property and the process of expropriations meant that the government enjoyed a considerable liberty to realize its spacial policy in the country. On the other hand, plots for building private houses were almost inaccessible as land use plans provided for basically 3 types of land use: areas intended for multi-family development, agricultural areas and industrial or service-intended areas. The government's goal was gradual nationalization of arable land and depopulation of villages, which was to lead to the SAE model (State Agricultural Enterprises) copied from the Soviet kolkhozes. The cities, on the other hand, were to be dominated by heavy industry – in line with the industrial model of economy, unhindered by any acts on the environment protection. Sacral buildings were a problem – although in land use plans they were often omitted, yet during the construction of new housing estates they somehow were realized too, sometimes as an outright illegal building work.

Undoubtedly, the aforementioned Building Code and the Act on Spatial Planning – issued in 1961 – tightened the procedures of granting building permits for small-scale structures. Yet, absence of precise regulations pertaining to structure forms allowed a considerable liberty in this respect. It has to be noticed, too, that despite the existing legal regulations governing spatial planning issues, in many cases the destination and spatial policy for areas were determined by authoritarian decisions of the party first secretaries in individual cities.

### 3 THE 70'S

The primary unit of the administrative structure in the years 1954–1972 was the gromada (community or group), which on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1973 was replaced by the previously used and then abandoned gmina (commune). Another serious legal regulation followed the aforementioned change – in 1974 the new Building Code was issued (passed) and so was the amendment to the Minister's Ordinance on distances and detailed conditions for location of building projects in relation to public roads, railway lines and airports. The changes that took place in the 70s and 80s were the consequence of another political change on the post of the First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party Central Committee – in the period between 1970 and 1980 the position was held by Edward Gierek. The aforementioned processes were accompanied by another demographic boom resulting from a high birth rate (the second post-war generation). In an attempt to solve the accumulating problems generated by the growing needs of the society, the government introduced solutions of systematic character based on new prognoses for the country's economic and social development (1971–1980). The impulse for a new, more dynamic growth of the economy was to be strengthened by the new loans granted to Poland at that time by banks and financial institutions from Western Europe.

The single-family development was also “revived”, for the first time since the 2nd world war, considerable areas were marked out for this type of development. Emergence of Social Committees for Building Single-Family Houses was made possible. An example of a realization of this type may be the “Barbórki” housing estate in Radzionków. The land owned by the commune was transferred to users in the form of the perpetual usufruct right for 99 years, and the erection of the buildings was left to the people, who did it as owner-builder projects.

At the same time detailed norms were issued pertaining to the basic parameters of urban design (1974). The norms introduced the terms: Structural Housing Unit and Structural Housing Unit Complex, the latter of which was an element constituting a district. The norms strove to intensify and standardize both urban and suburban development. The use programme for the aforementioned units: SHU and SHUC was defined in a systematic way as well.

In general, the Structural Settlement Unit was to be composed of various settlement forms and basic services, spatially the unit was to be contained within the 500-metre isochrone of walking access to the furthest services and transportation service.

The period of the 70s was characterized by a large amount of residential development built in the great slab technology modelled on the West-European realization. According to the experts of that time, this technology was the least labour-consuming and it relied most heavily on prefabricated elements, which was in consequence to lead to the realization of structures in the fastest and most economical way. Introduction of this industrialized technology was also the consequence of a greater openness towards the “western” world, which was the characteristic feature of the policy implemented by Edward Gierek. Social policy in Poland was to guarantee each family an independent flat, so that in consequence “the socialist society’s needs would be fully satisfied.” Residential development of that time was to a great extent typified and mostly modernist in style.<sup>1</sup> This led in consequence to considerable unification and monotony of urban complexes.

#### 4 THE 80'S

In the 80's the Polish economy collapsed, so the only possible solution in that situation was to implement far-reaching economic reforms. On the other hand, shortages of flats and no perspectives of satisfying people's basic needs fuelled the escalation of social protests. Increased social awareness as to the absence of freedom or democracy as well as the ever more clearly visible disproportion between the economies of socialist and capitalist countries led in consequence to the change of regime in Poland.

#### 5 THE 90'S

The most discernible quality change in the field of spatial planning took place in the years 1994 – 1995 due to the announcement of the Ordinance of the Minister of Spatial Management and Construction of the 14<sup>th</sup> December 1994

1) Modernism, functionalism, socrealism and the international style were synonyms used to describe the development built starting from 1970s basically in the modernist style, sometimes very simplistic or outright brutalistic, and in the latter case it was termed socmodernism or functionalism. The term *brutalism* comes from French *béton brut*, i.e. raw concrete.

on the technical conditions that had to be met by buildings and their locations, which ordinance was a consequence of the amendments introduced to the Building Code and of the new Act on Spatial Management.

The systematic changes that took place in Poland after 1989 induced the abolishment of the old system of spatial planning based on the principles of “the planned economy.” The change of the name of the act itself – from the Act on Spatial Planning to the Act on Spatial Management suggested that from now on it was going to be the market mechanisms that would decide the real direction of growth.

The Act on Spatial Management of 1994 disposed of the hierarchical (central) system of spatial planning. Communes were not obliged to prepare land use plans for their areas, and the planning itself was reduced to regulation rather than real planning.

From the point of view of the system, it could be said that what happened in consequence was disintegration not only of the structures of the state but also of the space. The collapse of the multi-family construction system brought about an intensification of free – unhindered by anything – single-family development. This entailed a rapid sprawl of cities and their suburban areas accompanied by a simultaneous deterioration of the multi-family housing stock quality in cities and a permanent shortage of flats.

One of many adverse consequences of the transition from the command and control system to the market system was the cancellation of constructing multi-family development complexes and the extremely diverse forms of the new development, which was built with the sense of liberty that respects nobody and nothing.

As far as big projects are concerned, until the moment of the regime change in Poland, which took place only after 1989, realization of big private projects was impossible. Nevertheless, too rapid departure from planning resulted in considerable spatial chaos, which was the consequence of a fairly fast pace of the economic development and the investment pressure occurring in many areas.

#### 6 CONCLUSIONS

The last 50 years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century exerted an enormous impact on the form and design of contemporary Polish cities,

especially due to the emergence of new districts or city parts built on the principles of modernism. Contemporary Polish cities in their majority are composed of the 19<sup>th</sup> century fabric surrounded by modernist housing estates.

As far as spatial planning is concerned, it is still dominated by the liberal approach to planning decisions, which continue to remain more in the regulatory sphere than in the sphere of actual spatial planning. After collapse of the socialist planning, no legal or economic-organizational model has been developed that would guarantee the creation of new housing estates fully equipped with services and public spaces. For almost 20 years, Polish urban planners have been struggling to work out a way to exact in a systematic way the realization of new development and planning solutions that should comply with the principles of spatial order. Unfortunately, until today they have not been able to work out a model of spatial planning and spatial management that would be something between the total solutions of the past era and the ultra liberal solutions of the early 21st century.

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