**Urban Summer School: Open Form – Lublin 2018**

When: 26 August 2018 - 08 September 2018  
Where: Lublin, Warsaw, Szumin

**Keywords:**

mass-housing **// housing estates // modernism // critical urban planning** // dormitory suburbs // accessible, affordable housing //

**sharing economy** // cooperative activity // civic involvement // participation // social experiment / radical humanism // utopia // socialism // dystopia

Central and Eastern Europe // Cold War // housing crisis // **transformation** // emancipation versus oppression // **collective memory** // narrative conflict // controversial heritage //

**action research // anthropology of everyday life** // reclaiming the city // environment quality // spaces for people // gentrification // art in public space // right to the city

**Intro**

Completed works by one of the most discussed architectural tandems in post-war Poland, Oskar (1922-2005) and Zofia (1924-2013) Hansen, will become a testing ground for the duration of the Urban Summer School, that is, for two weeks. This international and interdisciplinary project is yet another instalment of the “Visions and Experiences” summer school, initiated by the Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe in Lviv, and devoted to urban issues. We welcome undergraduate and postgraduate students, researchers and young professionals operating in the field of architecture, urban planning, art and design, as well as representatives of other areas of humanities (history, sociology, fine arts, anthropology, and more). We extend invitation to all those interested in the present functioning, and the future of modernist housing estates.

**On the Theory of the Open Form**

Open Form is a concept that Zofia and Oskar Hansen have placed at the heart of their architectural, artistic and didactic work. According to this theory, architecture is the framework for life, and it works only when people actually use it. Architectural substance is the background for social relations, rather that the designer’s goal and an end in itself. The Hansens’ built projects were ahead of their time, in terms of thinking about participatory design, accessible housing, and public spaces. Their architecture was intended to provide a framework for everyday rituals and practices of its inhabitants. The synergy of circumstances, such as the accomplishments of architects centred round CIAM and Team X, the development of prefabrication technologies, and the pressure from the authorities of the People’s Republic of Poland, who were set upon rapid expansion of residential districts, became catalysts, enabling these architects—humanists to realise their vision. Mindful of the lack of individualized approach to public housing in the People’s Republic on Poland, they sought a form that would allow residents to become part of the process of creating the space around them.

The expression of the Open Form is found in three different projects that will be visited by participants of this year’s summer school: osiedle Słowackiego (housing estate) in Lublin, osiedle Przyczółek Grochowski (housing estate) in Warsaw, and the architects’ home in Szumin. For ten days, these three locations will become a laboratory of experience and reflection.

**Housing heritage of modernity**

Osiedle Słowackiego, belonging to the cooperative of Lubelska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa, has long been an object of international interest, by virtue of its urban planning and architecture designed in the “human scale”. Determined to meet everyday needs of the community, the Hansens placed the inhabitant at the centre of their architecture, and they paid attention to proper infrastructure and greenery. Today’s users of these apartments, however, often feel that they are living in a neglected and degraded place. They point to the discrepancies between the concept and the implementation, as well as problems related to the aging of the development. A similar situation is found in the case of the second housing estate designed by the Hansens – the Przyczółek Grochowski in Warsaw. Impermanent materials, poor technical condition, and the failure of the social inclusion project conspired to build this negative image. Owing to the self-organization of residents, the condition of the estate is currently improving. Nonetheless, new challenges continue to arise, including the gated communities built in the immediate neighbourhood, which are changing the urban and social context of the housing estate.

**A window to political transformation in the region**

In the area managed by the housing cooperatives of Lubelska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa and Spółdzielnia Przyczółek Grochowski, like in many Central European countries during the political transformation, free-market reality changed the way housing estates function, in particularly affecting their social, as well as retail and service infrastructure. Everyday habits of the residents changed, and along with that, so did the way public spaces work. For the first time since the establishment of such large-scale housing estates, they saw a generational change among the residents. The new tenants have neither the sense of being rooted in this reality, nor the experience of sharing responsibility for shaping the space of their housing estate. At the same time, housing estates erected during the People’s Republic of Poland remain an attractive alternative to the latest accommodations on offer from real estate developers. Their important advantages include affordability, ergonomic floor plans, and an abundance of greenery and open areas.

**Outline of the program, and the school’s principles:**

Participants in the Urban Summer School will be able to look at the architecture founded on humanistic concepts, which is currently used by the third generation of inhabitants. From a historical perspective, the position of the Open Form Theory and the Linear Continuous System will be outlined against the background of the ideas of ​​the Modern Movement related to the architecture of housing estates and open areas.

School participants will also look at the relationship between the interior of the home and its exterior – the housing estate, and the residential environment, more broadly defined. The structure of the school will be determined by the scales, which the designers themselves have used: the micro, meso and macroscale. They will be translated into the perspective of a flat, a housing estate, and a housing cooperative.

The participants will tackle the questions:

* How does the open structure of the housing estate function, half a century from its construction?
* What elements have been added, and how did the users themselves modify the Hansens’ projects?
* How did the inhabitants use the opportunities for transforming space, resulting from the Open Form? Also, what aspects did not fit into the premises of the theory, and underwent reality check?
* How do the users themselves evaluate the solutions proposed by the architects, 50 years later?
* To what extent is it possible to design apartments accessible to the masses, in a way that addresses the individual needs of inhabitants?
* What is the future of the late-modernist housing estates in the countries of Central Europe?

**Working criteria for the Lublin Urban Summer School**

The methodology of work has been developed by the Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe in Lviv, and it is based on experiences from the previous editions of the summer school (www.lvivcenter.org/en/summerschools). Thematic summer schools are conducive to expanding the participants’ knowledge, providing them with an opportunity to learn about the latest perspectives and research topics in the history of Central and Eastern Europe, in particular relating to the region’s cities. The summer schools are designed to stimulate the formation of a milieu of young researchers who share common scientific interests.

INTERDISCIPLINARY CHARACTER

Understood as horizontal learning from each other, as formulating questions together, instead of merely proving the formulated theses.

ACTION RESEARCH

A method, which requires that the subjects become researchers. We welcome the involved residents, employees of social institutions, activists and others who have knowledge about the local community or the notions that accompany the creation and subsequent transformation of housing estates.

Thanks to these persons joining in, research becomes a common cause of various entities. The concept of the project was based on the assumption that the goal is change – rather than merely an objective diagnosis. The research has practical applications, mainly due to the fact that it is performed by practitioners cooperating with each other, and engaging the community at the stage of diagnosis.

IMPACT

We hope that the interest on the part of international authorities on the subject, and the effect of joint research carried out in interdisciplinary groups, will provide a significant and substantive contribution to the discussion about the prospects for maintaining a good quality of life in 20th-century housing estates.

AUTHENTICITY

We work in the actual space of housing estates, while respecting the privacy of their residents. In the course of our work, we build relationships with everyday users of the studied space, drawing from their knowledge and shared experience.

Working language is English.

**How to become a participant?**

The rules of the recruitment process to join the project are set out in the Recruitment Regulations.

Applications for participation in the Urban Summer School are accepted in the form of email submissions to: **urbansummerschool@niaiu.pl**

To apply, please submit the following documents (collated in one four-page PDF file):

1. **Application form** (Annex 1 to the Recruitment Regulations).

2. **CV** of the candidate (one A4 page).

3. Motivation letter, explaining your experiences and motivations to take part in the **NIAIU Open Form Summer School – Lublin 2018** (one A4 page of maximum 1800 characters).

4. **Essay “Open Form: Flexibility of Space, Actions of People”** (one A4 page of maximum 1800 characters).

Participants will be selected by a recruitment committee, composed of representatives of the National Institute of Architecture and Urban Planning, the Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe in Lviv, and the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw.

**Deadline for sending applications:** 07 May 2018

**Announcement of the results:** 19 May 2018

We will invite 15 successful candidates to participate in the Urban Summer School.

More information at www.urbansummerschool.niaiu.pl

Link to the Summer School at the Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe: www.lvivcenter.org/en/summerschools/

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