

# The Tatory district as the first modern multidwelling residential estate in Lublin. Urban development concepts and architectural solutions

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**Abstract:** The Tatory district is located in the central-east part of Lublin. It includes the first Lublin's multi-dwelling residential estate neighbouring buzzing streets and large industrial facilities, built according to modern architectural and urban concepts. The residential estate, erected starting in the 1950', served as a model for subsequent large residential estates of Lublin. The technical solutions introduced in the Tatory buildings translated into a new standard of living and functional solutions that were unique within the traditional city tissue, shaping it permanently. After almost 60 years, the estate is facing a number of problems due to political, planning and architectural decisions. This article aims at describing and evaluating these past solutions.

**Keywords:** housing estate, urban planning, multi-dwelling, workers' housing estate, residential building, Polish People's Republic.

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## Introduction

Years: 1960–1990 constitute the period of Lublin's most intense development, both demographically and surface-wise. The number of inhabitants almost doubled (from circa 180,000 to 345,000)<sup>1</sup> during that period. Many inhabitants of the neighbouring rural areas moved to the city in hope of being hired in the, numerous at that time, industrial facilities. The city was being re-built also due to the 30% of Lublin's buildings having been demolished during the war<sup>2</sup>. By the same token, new residential buildings had to be constructed. The Lublin's so-called *City Development Plan* [*Program Planu Zagospodarowania Miasta*<sup>3</sup> in Polish] of 1948 was in force until 1954. That notwithstanding, the plan was tentative and works on a new General Plan [*Plan Ogólny* in Polish], compliant with the six-year plan [*plan sześcioletni 1950–1955*] for the period of 1950 to 1955<sup>4</sup>, begun. The region was being intensely industrialised, therefore the plan included e.g. a new city centre within the developing industrial districts (Tatory, Bronowice, later: Kalinowszczyzna). By the same token, fewer residential estates were erected in other districts. In 1954, the plan was presented to the Presidium of the Government for

1 After: *Demographic data* [*Dane demograficzne*], Lublin City Office Public Information Bulletin [BIP Urząd Miasta Lublin]. Date of access: 01.04.2019

2 Przesmycka E., Sosnowska M., *The condition of public zones in residential estates of 1950' based on Lublin* [*Stan zachowania przestrzeni publicznych osiedli mieszkaniowych z lat 50. XX w. na przykładzie Lublina*], [in:] *Teka Komisji Architektury Urbanistyki i Studiów Krajobrazowych*, OLPAN, 2010.

3 After: Lublin Urban Planning Office of 1955–2005 [*Lubelska Pracownia Urbanistyczna 1955–2005*], Lublin City Office [Urząd Miasta Lublina], Department of Strategic Planning and Development [Wydział Strategii i Rozwoju], Lublin 2005.

4 Polish Sejm Act of 21 July 1950 (Journal of Laws from 1950, No. 37, item 344)

amendments. In December 1955, arch. Romuald Dylewski became the president of the Lublin's Urban Planning Office. It was decided that the office would prepare a new, coherent, 5-year plan of the city development based on the Presidium's guidelines.

In 1959, 3 years after the planned works started, the Economic Committee of the Council of Ministers' Presidium accepted the General Plan of Lublin's development proposed by the Urban Planning Office of the Municipal National Council led by arch. Romuald Dylewski. The plan's main concept boiled down to the decentralisation of Lublin and to the creation of large residential districts with their own shops and administration. This was done to put some demands of the rapidly developing city away from the old town which was deemed unable to meet them<sup>5</sup>, according to the analyses. As it was proposed in the *General Plan of Lublin's Development [Ogólny Plan Zagospodarowania Miasta Lublina]*<sup>6</sup>, prepared in 1959 by the Urban Planning Office of the Municipal National Council led by arch. Romuald Dylewski, the city was to develop according to the western urban planning best practices, throughout the construction of independent residential and commercial districts with their own commercial and administrative centres. Consequently, districts such as: Tatary, Kalinowszczyzna, Rury (Lublin Housing Cooperative, LSM in Polish), Czechów, Czuby Północne and Wrotków have been erected.

The Tatory district was built first. As early as in the 1950' and 1960', the facilities designed by the Syrkuses were erected. They were constructed by the Workers' Housing Estates Institution (Zakład Osiedli Robotniczych, ZOR in Polish)<sup>7</sup>, just like in other Polish cities at that time. They were to serve as residential centres for workers of the rapidly developing industrial facilities.<sup>8</sup> When cooperatives started to build instead of ZOR and the *General Plan of Lublin's Development* went into force, the rules for the estates' planning changed as well: They changed from clear patterns of perpendicular and parallel buildings forming rectangular, pre-war-like urban interiors, into more natural structures recommended in the Athens Charter, during post-war CIAM<sup>9</sup> conferences and according to the western trends.

## Urban solutions

The Polish economy during the times of the Polish People's Party ruling, until 1970', was based on the 5-year plans. The plans mainly included increasing the number of constructions and industrializing the country similarly to what was done in the Soviet Union. According to rule 2 and 3 of the 5-year plan<sup>10</sup>, the economy was to develop based on heavy industry and for this reason the Lublin Truck Factory (Lubelska Fabryka Samochodów Ciężarowych in Polish) and ZOR Tatary were built.

In contrast to the city's natural and spontaneous tendencies to grow west, the urban planners focused on the east-side areas surrounding the old city centre. Yet, the lands were not properly prepared for the construction and this constituted an obstacle in building. Namely, the road infrastructure was largely destroyed by war actions, or it underwent natural degradation, while the municipal area network did not exist at that time. In addition, there were new industrial, truck production facilities emerging along the Mełgiewska street (FSC)<sup>11</sup> which also justified the construction of the Tatory estate. A number of specialists and workers came to Lublin together with the construction and development of the factory, thus being in need for accommodation. Tatary, constructed during the years: 1951–1970 were planned precisely as an industrial district with residential facilities, and subsequently built where the Tatory village once existed. The Tatory estate was Lublin's first modern district after the city regaining independence in 1944. It was to provide accommodation for 11,000 inhabitants. The estate's location being close to the industrial facilities proved to generate a number of functional problems in the subsequent years. The location was not particularly attractive due to the neighbouring large production facilities,

5 Leon Krier, a renowned architect and urban planner, also wrote extensively about similar solutions (e.g. in *Architecture of the Community*).

6 After: Gawarecki H., Gawdzik C., *Lublin. Landscape and Architecture [Lublin. Krajobraz i Architektura]*, Arkady, Warsaw 1964.

7 Launched in 1948.

8 In the case of the Lublin Truck Factory [Fabryka Samochodów Ciężarowych w Lublinie].

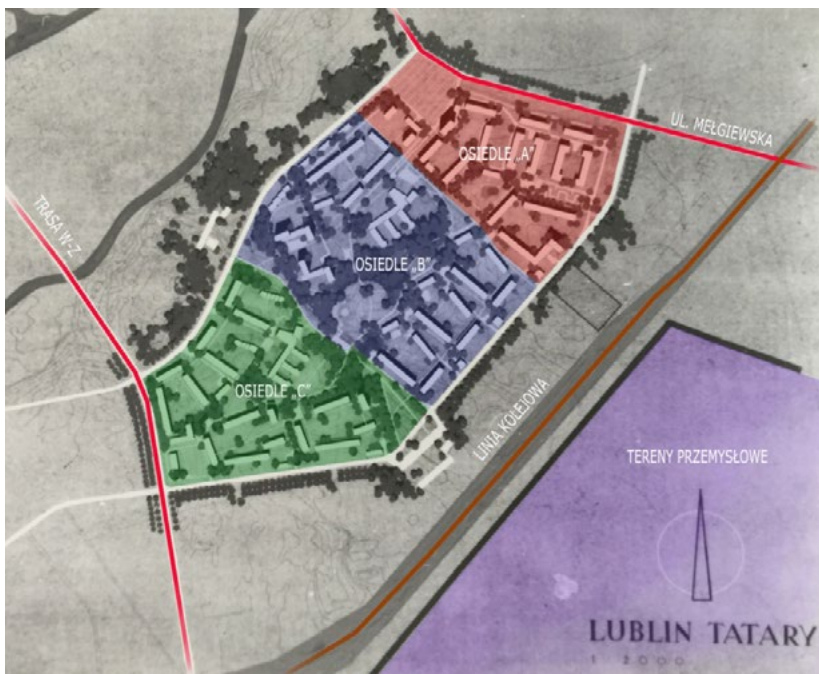
9 Mumford E., *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928–1960. The MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2000*

10 Jezierski A. A., *Polish economic history: 1815–1980 [Historia gospodarcza Polski 1815–1980]*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warsaw 1987

11 After: Kierk A., ed., *The history of Lubelszczyzna [Dzieje Lubelszczyzny]*, Vol. II, Warsaw 1979.

a busy railway track with a North station and several wide, multi-lane roads surrounding the estate (i.e. the Tysiąclecia/Witosa Av. and Mełgiewska Street). As prof. Elżbieta Przesmycka writes: *The estate's location was initially not intended for residential housing in the original city plans, due to the close proximity of industrial facilities and long distance towards the city centre and commercial areas.*<sup>12</sup> There was no good housing estate-city centre communication; in addition, the city green and recreational zones were separated from the estate as well.<sup>13</sup> The estate was surrounded by busy roads, while it also constituted a closed cluster functionally dependent on the neighbouring factory. As early as in 1976, Henryk Gawrecki and Czesław Gawdzik pointed out to the aforementioned problem<sup>14</sup>, at the same time concluding that the location is justifiable due to the lack of similar areas in the city.

The residential district includes three zones: A, B and C, corresponding to three stages of the estate's construction and its development close to the FSC and towards South. The oldest part was designed by prominent architects: Helena and Szymon Syrkus, according to the idea of a *social estate*<sup>15</sup>. The subsequent parts were designed by Jerzy Androsiuk, Stanisław Fijałkowski, Jerzy Makowiecki and Rita Nowakowska.



**Fig. 1.** The three stages (zones) of the Tatarski district construction, based on the drawing by: J. Androsiuk, St. Fijałkowski, J. Makowiecki and R. Nowakowska. Source: Courtesy of Rita Nowakowska.

The first two buildings were erected in 1955, and two other ones in 1960. 4 buildings were subsequently built in 1961 (already in a different style). The authors followed the rules of pre-war modernism: They designed a distinct facade of three buildings located on a hill from the Mełgiewska Street side. Subsequent buildings were situated perpendicularly and parallelly to one another. By the same token, a clear architectural structure with high greenery-filled architectural interiors situated in-between the blocks of flats, was designed. Yet, the urban plan initiated by the Syrkuses was discontinued by the subsequent designers. The team composed of Jerzy Androsiuk, Stanisław Fijałkowski, Jerzy Makowiecki and Rita Nowakowska<sup>16</sup> followed different guidelines for housing estate's design, taken from western Europe. The designers' main ideas were deemed quite accurate,

12 Przesmycka E., Sosnowska M., *The condition of public zones in residential estates of 1950' based on Lublin [Stan zachowania przestrzeni publicznych osiedli mieszkaniowych z lat 50. XX w. na przykładzie Lublina]*, [in:] *Teka Komisji Architektury Urbanistyki i Studiów Krajobrazowych*, OLPAN, 2010.

13 At two-lane, east-west motorway separates the northern and central parts of the estate from green areas by the Bystrzyca river.

14 Gawrecki H., Gawdzik C., *Along the streets of Lublin [Ulicami Lublina]*, Wydawnictwo lubelskie, Lublin 1976.

15 More about the *social housing estate* based on the WSM estate at Koło: Syrkus H., *Towards the idea of a social housing estate [Ku idei osiedla społecznego]: 1925–1975*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warsaw 1976.

16 The mentioned designers were in fact students and assistants of Helena and Szymon Syrkus.

mainly due to the preceding, meticulous analyses. The team took general and public transport development into account, and made the distance to be covered by foot optimum<sup>17</sup>. The matrix of local roads and parking spots was also designed innovatively, taking the development of car transportation into account (see Fig. 2). Driveways leading to small parking lots were designed along particular buildings, thus both ensuring access to the buildings and directing traffic towards the collective roads surrounding the estate, i.e. preserving the estate's recreational and leisure character. Interestingly enough, a given building was never placed in-between two driveways, therefore one elevation always faced greenery and ensured peace and quiet to the inhabitants. Large garage complexes located outside and east of the estate were also planned, though never actually constructed. The housing estate's interior was of particular importance to the designers, as they were aware of the estate's challenging location, close to busy roads and heavy industry facilities, away from the city's green areas. The plan's main rule was the one of *even value distribution*.<sup>18</sup> In other words, the idea was to ensure equal access to services, education and cultural facilities (cinemas, theatres, community centres). To make up for the lack of natural greenery and the difficult access from Tatory to the city centre, there was a relatively large green zone with a centrally placed amphitheatre designed inside the housing estate. In addition, a number of cultural, day care and educational facilities was provided. The infrastructure included, for instance, a cinema, cafe, open-access pool, numerous shops, two schools, five kindergartens and one nursery. In subsequent years, the inhabitants of Tatory built an open pool themselves. The commercial facilities were located in the southern (and some also in the eastern) part of the estate, where a long string of shops was placed. Such a solution was dictated by the directionality of pedestrian mobility, from east-located-factories and south-located-parking-lots or the bus stop at the Hutnicza Street (similarly to the currently non-existent main bus station) towards their homes. Put succinctly, shops were planned along the work-home axis.



**Fig. 2.** Tatory road scheme. Source: Based on the material obtained from Rita Nowakowska.

The estate's design illustrates changing urban planning trends, starting with traditional, through social modernism, to post-war and western-Europe ones. A number of Lublin's estates built during the ruling of the Polish People's Party was designed based on the urban planning solutions applied in the case of Tatory.

17 Vide: *Neighbouring unit* by Clarence and Arthur Perry.

18 After: Gawarecki H., Gawdzik C., *Lublin. Landscape and Architecture [Lublin. Krajobraz i Architektura]*, Arkady, Warsaw 1964, p. 80.

## Architecture

The buildings designed by the Syrkuses and located in part “A” of the estate differ in their style from subsequent constructions. The facilities erected from 1955 to 1960 are made of traditional solid bricks and include spacious apartments. They are also richer in details and of better quality than the subsequent facilities. The initial buildings have 4 levels and habitable attics covered with hip roofs with numerous dormers. Doors and windows form symmetric elevation patterns, with the lateral “wings” of the buildings slightly protruding beyond the elevation line. The Tatory architectural character changed together with the introduction of the *standards for residential buildings*<sup>19</sup>, i.e. standards requiring such functional and technical solutions that would bring savings in construction material, frequently at the cost of functional quality. According to the 1959 standard, as little as 11 m<sup>2</sup> per inhabitant was sufficient (see Table 1). The required surface area per inhabitant was the lowest possible, in contrast to other European standards.

**Table 1.** Apartment size according to 1959 standard for residential buildings Source: W. Korzeniewski, *Urban and residential standard [Normatyw urbanistyczny i mieszkaniowy] – 1974, Warsaw 1980*

Apartment type	1959 apartment surface (m <sup>2</sup> )	Permitted upgrade due to technical constraints (m <sup>2</sup> )	Maximum Surface area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Number of inhabitants
M-1	17–20	-	28	1
M-2	24–30	1	36	2
M-3	33–38	4	52	3
M-4	42–48	2	63	4
M-5	51–57	3	73	5
M-6	59–65	—	85	6 or 7

As the designer, Rita Nowakowska<sup>20</sup>, states, the only freedom at that time, was the one in urban planning. The architectural design of residential buildings was utterly subject to strict standards. To save more and accelerate the construction process, large-scale pre-fabricated slabs were introduced into construction, which was initiated in the course of Tatory building. While planning the buildings, the architect was forced to find compromise between the standard-limited room size and technical possibilities stemming from the slab’s parameters. The addition of a single slab module frequently resulted in exceeding the permitted surface area. Consequently, the area was reduced below standards, with the use of fewer modules. As a result, the quality of residential buildings dropped. Apartments gained poorly lit or not lit at all kitchens, and interconnecting rooms.

The buildings’ appearance was also closely dependent on the standards and the technical properties of the modules. The Tatory housing estate is thus rich in simple, ornament- and detail- free buildings (see Fig. 3). 11-storey buildings dominate the analysed region, together with low-rise, oblong (even 175 metres long) 5-storey blocks of flats. Windows were moved laterally to break the regular, rhythmic, even monotonous elevation pattern in high-rise buildings (see Fig. 3). Shops were introduced into the ground levels of buildings, while southern high-rise buildings were connected to commercial facilities, which constituted a solution innovative at that time and used until this day. The architectural design of residential and public buildings is typical of the Polish People’s Party period and was frequently repeated in other Lublin’s estates.

19 Polish Council of Ministers Resolution No. 364 of 20 August 1959 accepting the standard for residential building [Uchwała nr 364 Rady Ministrów z 20 sierpnia 1959 r. w sprawie zatwierdzenia normatywów projektowania dla budownictwa mieszkaniowego], “Monitor Polski” 1959, no. 81, item 422. After: W. Korzeniewski, *Urban and residential standard [Normatyw urbanistyczny i mieszkaniowy] – 1974, Warsaw 1980*.

20 During an interview with the author of this paper, on 06.09.2016.



**Fig. 3.** Stanisław Fijałkowski's sketches of Tatory, and post-construction photos. Source: E. Przesmycka<sup>21</sup>, J. Androsiuk<sup>22</sup>, M. Dmitruk

## Tatory now – conclusions

The Tatory housing estate is currently dysfunctional, mainly due to the political decisions taken in the 1950' and 1960', translating into the estate's design. First and foremost, the estate was planned in the close proximity of the industrial facilities. By the same token, the residential area was deprived of natural recreational zones, surrounded by busy roads and lacking the possibility of comfortably commuting to the city centre. It was solely dependent on the good functioning of neighbouring industrial facilities. When FSC, Daewoo, the iron foundry and other facilities went bankrupt, many inhabitants became unemployed, and rail transport to Tatory was discontinued being unprofitable. The cargo and bus stations were also closed, aggravating the isolation of Tatory inhabitants and making it problematic for them to find jobs in other parts of the city. The common unemployment triggered alcohol-, vandalism and crime-induced problems. Consequently, the younger generations fled in the 1990', leaving the Tatory aging society behind.

Another problem lied in the lack of revival and re-investing processes being undertaken, while the estate's management board was possibly unable to deal with the changing, post-1989-political-transformation economic situation. The last non-maintenance building investments within the estate were made in the 1990'. In turn, numerous elements of street furniture, and public facilities such as the pool and amphitheatre, degraded when not maintained properly, and are currently out of use. The local community's helplessness and growing alcohol addiction became serious problems whose size is illustrated by the inhabitants having protested (during last public consultations on district revival) against installing benches between the blocks of flats in order not to trigger alcohol abuse in the area.

As Stanisław Michałowski writes, the Tatory *rehabilitation* is currently *an emergency*<sup>23</sup>.

21 Przesmycka E., Sosnowska M., *The condition of public zones in residential estates of 1950' based on Lublin [Stan zachowania przestrzeni publicznych osiedli mieszkaniowych z lat 50. XX w. na przykładzie Lublina]*, [in:] *Teka Komisji Architektury Urbanistyki i Studiów Krajobrazowych, OLPAN, 2010.*

22 Androsiuk J., 1965. *Tatory and Kalinowszczyzna housing estates in Lublin [Osiedla Tatory i Kalinowszczyzna Lublinie]*, *Architektura* 10/215.

23 Michałowski S., *Tatory: The state of emergency [Tatory - Stan najwyższej konieczności]*, <http://idiks.org/tatory-stan-wyzszej-koniecznosci/>. Date of access: 06.04.2019

In turn, the driveways and parking lots once constituted an innovative and appropriate solution, while they are currently problematic. The designers did not account for such a dynamic development of car transportation and the need for so many spots. By the same token, parking lots were designed in a rather irregular and frequently random way, leaving the selection of a parking way up to the car owners. Importantly, there were no standards referring to parking lots at the time of Tatory construction. As a result, cars are parked in a chaotic way, while greenery is devastated, and pedestrian routes – blocked.<sup>24</sup>

The low quality of apartments is also challenging. The small rooms cannot be arranged in an ergonomic way. Kitchens are dark or poorly lit. These factors discourage potential young buyers despite the Tatory prices being the lowest in Lublin. Interconnecting rooms make it difficult to rent a flat to students valuing independent spaces. Finally, the lack of maintenance works being conducted also causes potential clients to resign from buying.

It seems unfair to blame the designers of Tatory for their current bad condition. The urban concepts they put into life translated into good quality of living and would most frequently meet the needs of today's inhabitants, in fact often exceeding their expectations. The buildings are currently non-functional due to the new, strict standards having been introduced together with the building technique of low flexibility, regarding both the internal layout and external appearance.

Erroneous political decisions, too much faith put into the resilience of socialist economy, as well as the inability to adapt to new economic reality contributed to the gradual degradation of the Tatory residential estate. Interestingly enough, Tatory are not the sole case of actions needed in the face of changes. Nowa Huta in Cracow or Praga in Warsaw faced similar problems, however well-coordinated and complex maintenance and revival facilitated the restoration of the districts' former condition and increasing the inhabitants' quality of life. Tatory has enormous potential, rooted in the district's rich greenery, a distinct district centre with open public space, good urban layout, architecture that can be aesthetically upgraded, as well as the management board and the inhabitants clearly willing to improve the quality of their living space.

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