Tychy - dreams and reality
a short story of the second Polish socialists’ city

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1. IDEAS OF CIAM AND A MODEL OF A SOCIALIST CITY

The conference of CIAM IV concluded by The Athens Charter took place in 1933 under the title “The Functional City”. As a result of analyses of thirty three European city plans conclusions concerning main problems related to housing, dwelling, transportation and an industry were drawn. The CIAM Congress resulted in following requirements which were to guide urban planners:

1. IDEAS OF CIAM AND A MODEL OF A SOCIALIST CITY

(1) Residential areas must be located in most favourable parts of the city in terms of climate and geography; housing along arterial roads must be banned; high-rise buildings were seen as possibility to free space for sport fields and playgrounds.

(2) The requirement for recreation comprised the laying out of open, green spaces which were well distributed over the city (neighborhood parks, public gardens, natural areas such as woods around the city).

(3) For work the congress required the shortest possible distance between residential areas and workplaces, adding that industry should be isolated with an aid of green belt. In the residential areas there would be room only for small services which would serve the district itself. Industry and commerce must have good transportation links.

(4) As regarding transportation itself, the requirements called for separate roads for different kinds of traffic, crossing at different levels and the differentiation of streets according to their function: residential streets, district roads and main roads.

(5) Moreover apart of these four categories congress stated that historical parts of the city must be preserved where they were of historical importance. The historical city should provide good living conditions for inhabitants and should be protected from traffic.¹

The statements of CIAM IV didn’t quite produce a lot of result at that time, until many years later the reconstruction of Europe after the Second World War was going on. The statements of CIAM IV stressed the desirability of “separate areas” for the functions, but they also stipulate that these should be properly linked together environmentally. The conclusions of the conference contain numerous obvious truths and broad generalizations. It was stated that the functional city must bring individual and social life into harmony on a spiritual and material basis. All the measures and planning that lie behind the functional city must be based on the human scale and human needs. The latter sound rather paradoxical, taking into account the influence it had in reality on urban planning. Nevertheless the CIAM IV congress’s task was not creating a “Functional City” itself. It focused on analyses of existing situation and drawing up conclusions. A realization of the actual Functional City was the task for the next stage. However an idea of humane and harmonious Functional City that idealised (and put forward) the society, could not be achieved in capitalist economy environment. The CIAM’s model required a state’s land ownership. Weak
points of later plans by CIAM trying to fulfill ideas of The Athens Charter laid in the fact that they simply did not know what to do with public spaces. After 1945 street and squares had to become “meeting centers” or places for “Habitat”. Public zone was made into sort of public private terrain: a place which belongs to everyone and no - one.¹
However Western ideas about a city met with favorable conditions in postwar Eastern European reality where a socialist ideology about a new society emerged. Socialism advocated state and collective ownership and administration of the means of production. They were combined with an idea of egalitarian society characterized by equal opportunities for all individuals and a fair distribution of wealth. Inspired by Soviet model of economic development Eastern European countries advocated a creation of centrally planned economies directed by a state.²

A socialist economy model also came into being in Poland together with an establishment of People’s Republic of Poland under an influence of Soviet Union. The leaders of the communist Polish United Worker’s Party, with majority in Polish government, were controlled by Russians. As a consequence of Soviets’ domination centralized planning was introduced in the Six - Year Plan, which begun in 1950. That plan was based on accelerated development of heavy industry and forced collectivization of agriculture. Advertized by socialist’s propaganda the Six-Year Plan was to bring a better new communist reality to Poland destroyed after the Second World War.³

2. IDEOLOGY AND POLICY

Tychy is located on the south of Poland, in the area of Upper Silesian Industrial Area (GOP). A decision about building from scratch a new city for hundred thousand inhabitants, was a part of a deglomeration project of Upper Silesian region. The idea of deglomeration emerged under the impact of world’s urbanization and rapid growth of European population after the Second World War.

This project was based on an urbanization and a reorganization of existing industrial areas in Poland.³ One of authors of the deglomeration concept, Romuald Pieńkowski, described GOP area as devastated and characterized by spatial chaos. That situation was explained as a result of capitalist policy. According to Pieńkowski, the capitalist system was responsible for creation bourgeoisie and working class districts as well as a lack of protective zones between heavy industry and residential areas. Capitalism was accused of complicated communication connections and too dense network of cities on a small area.⁴

According to the deglomeration plan the Upper Silesian region was to be divided into two zones, A and B. Zone A was the central, most urbanized/industrialised part of the region. Zone B formed a ring of ten kilometers encircling zone A. Zone B was treated as an area mainly designated for housing estates and lighter industry. The plan was to
decrease density of settlement in the most industrialised core of the GOP and was based on Howard’s garden-city model. It implemented building new settlements (towns) around the core area, connected by a transport (railway) system. Several locations were specified for new towns, one of them a village on the south of Katowice - Tychy.

In the fifties the project of Tychy was presented in light of socialist economy. A decision about a building of a new city and its location was made by central authorities and was a result of top - down communist’s policy. The idea of deglomeration was presented to local government and to colonel Jerzy Ziętek, at the time a governor of Katowice. Thanks to the decreed of Council of Ministers from 8th November 1950 a village of Tychy acquired urban rights and its position strengthened. The decision about giving urban rights to the village of nine thousand inhabitants was a starting point for a future development of the new city. It was accepted on the session of the Political Office and the Presidium of Government in 1951 with a support of President Bolesław Bierut. According to the account of Kazimierz Wejchert, the main designer of Tychy, the scale of the newly created city seemed very big at that time. That was the reason why Tychy at the beginning of a realization was under a protection of central authorities. Building sites were visited several times by Polish Minister of Building and the chairman of Association of Workers Housing Estates (ZOR) as an investor.

During the first years of building the city financial support from the state authorities was sufficient. The central budget of the state was transferring money for the city. The goal of the project was to build the city of one hundred thousand inhabitants in thirty years. All formal difficulties were smoothed away by an investor whose special decrees were published in form of prompt decisions.

The resolution about building the city required from the communication resort the building of new electrical railway connection between centre of Tychy and Katowice. Thanks to this connection future inhabitants of the city could get easily to their working places in other cities of the agglomeration. The northern part of Tychy’s plan was realized in a complex way with complete infrastructure and facilities. The city received money for building services. However the financial situation of Tychy started changing in time. Since 1955 a decentralization of power had been taking place and central policy model started changing slowly towards a regional model.

The bill passed by Council of Ministers in 1958 changed rules of financing housing estates investments. Responsibility of authorities on different levels was not clear any more. That in consequence had an impact on the pace of city’s development. Because of financial problems and complicated model of taking decisions the completion of the southern part of the city was slowed down and a building of the railway connection postponed. After 1956 it started to be perceived as too expensive investment. Moreover the idea of deglomeration of the region changed
3. REALIZATION

The first socialist city realised in People’s Republic of Poland was Nowa Huta just outside Cracow. Nowa Huta was being built already for two years when the decision about building Tychy was taken. The project of the first Polish socialist city was criticized as lacking socialist city features and represented by too “strict” main arteries. Because of that critique, debates about the proper shape of a socialist city were going on.

Socialist city ideas were widely described in textbooks for architecture and urbanism students. On a meeting organised by Polish Institute of Urbanism and Architecture in 1951, the leading Polish architect, Wacław Ostrowski, gave a lecture on “Spatial creation of socialist city” (later published in 1952). According to Ostrowski a development of capitalist city was based on a maximal use of a plot. As a result of capitalists policy central districts in cities were reserved for the richest class. In capitalist system urban planners had to take into account private ownership of the land. An imperialistic system was using formal solutions which were incomprehensible for users. Ostrowski as a representative of socialist urban planning presented the new city model as the one which satisfy needs of all users. In a socialist state urban planning and architecture reflect social ideas. All people have the same rights. They are living in equal conditions in comfortable flats and have access to social facilities like culture centres, libraries, theaters, green areas and resorts.

The plan for Tychy was selected through the competition in which three invited teams of Polish leading architects participated. The leader of the first team was the professor Tadeusz Todorowski, a tutor at Silesian University of Technology in Gliwice. The author of the second project was an architect Tadeusz Ptaszynski, the designer of Nowa Huta. The third team was led by Kazimierz Wejchert and Hanna Adamczewska - Wejchert. They were urban designers and tutors at Architecture Faculty at Warsaw University of Technology and urban planners.

In a socialist city districts there are neither differences nor contrasts. Socialist model, thanks to clear, basic composition, greenery and elements based on rhythm and accentuation brings back the “human scale” to the city. The composition is dominated by a center, where political, administrative and cultural institutions are located and represented by monumental edifices. Important role in the city is given to central squares and main arteries reserved for manifestations and parades. The sequences of public squares and buildings in the centre are seen as a frame for social life.
designers. During work on the competition the Wejcherts team was divided into two groups - one was led by Kazimierz Wejchert and another one by engineer Zieliński who was the main urban designer of Association of Workers Housing Estates (ZOR). Following guidelines were given to participants of the competition: the course/trail of Tychy - Oświęcim railway connection; locations of transport nodes between Mikołów and Oświęcim, Katowice and Bielsko and the general localization designated for future most urbanized area. Designs should relate to the Paprocany Lake in South - West and keep intensive building heights (at least three stories). The location of first first phase of the development of the new city was specified in the zone between an existing train station and the existing village. There the first housing estate - A, was planned. Thanks to its peripheral location its design was developed simultaneously with the competition by the team of professor Tadeusz Todorowski. He was the leader of the office New City of Tychy created in Gliwice and at the beginning responsible for the overall project.

As a result of the competition in 1952 four projects were prepared and discussed. The evaluation of works was published in an article of Bolesław Malisz in the magazine “The City”. For a long period of time this article was the only source of information about the results of the competition accessible to the public. Moreover the publication was poorly illustrated only by schematic drawings of presented projects. Interestingly, none of the four concepts was awarded but the project of Kazimierz Wejchert’s team was chosen for realization. It was the clarity and simplicity of the plan that decided for it. The article of Malisz praised the project as the one which has a potential to express monumentality of a socialist city.

Since 1952 the new created office Cityproject in Warsaw with Kazimierz Wejchert as a leader was responsible for a design of new Tychy. Later on, in 1954, an independent branch of the Cityproject office was created in Tychy.

In 1952 the Wejcherts’ plan was presented on the Presidium of Government. After this first presentation the plan was rejected by the state authorities. The project was considered as lacking clear, monumental and socialist expression. Unfortunately there is no documentation of this first presented plan. The work on its new, improved version was carried out until February 1953. The new plan was accepted on 19th of March, 1953 as a general plan of the city.

The Wejcherts’ project was based on the clear spatial concept. The defining elements of the plan were open areas and a new communication network. Two main elements were two axis: the green axis and the railway line. The green axis was set along the north - south direction and connected two big parks at city’s ends: the Northern Park and the Paprocany Park. The railway track, running in the ditch, followed the east-west direction. Along the ditch green boulevards were planned. Network of main arteries formed a rectangle of the central district, through which the two main axes cut symmetrically.
Southern side of the central rectangle, running along east-west direction was the parade axis. On the crossing of the green axis and the parade axis, a central meeting square was designed. The square was flanked by Central Culture House from the north, House of Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) from the south, National City Council Committee from the east and Youth Culture House from the west.

The central rectangle was designed as one square kilometer of housing area combined with the system of open spaces, designed according to area’s topography and water surface level. The central part of the rectangle, at the intersection of the green and railway axis, was planned as the new center for the Tychy.

One of the most important elements of the plan was the integration of the existing village and the new city structure.

The history of the village Tychy goes back to fifteenth century; in mid-nineteenth century the settlement acquired an industrial character. In 1906 there were two breweries and a cellulose factory, that were hiring together 541 workers. The rest of village inhabitants were working in nearby mines – in Murcki, Kostuchna and Łaziska. Between The First and The Second World War the amount of Tychy’s inhabitants reached eleven thousands. As a result of gradual development the village got urban rights in 1934.

The decision taken in 1950 about building the city of hundred thousand inhabitants totally changed Tychy’s character. Maria Lipok - Bierwicz zonek, an ethnographer and ethnologist studying the Tychy case, presents the decision of building the new city in a negative light. According to her, the creation of the new city destroyed an existing function, a spatial shape and a cultural heritage of the old settlement. The existing property of inhabitants of the village wasn’t respected by designers of the socialist city. Blocks of flats absorbed private fields and historical parts of the old Tychy.

One of the most problematic issues was the way of acquisition new areas for the city investment. This process was regulated by the government decree about a realization of the state’s economy plans from 26th of April, 1949. The law set two ways of winning private plots for state’s projects. One of ways was buying the property from the owner. The second way was the act of expropriation. If the owner of the land decided to sell his property he was given the price established by the state. This price, according to Wejchert’s account, was very low. Another possibility was getting a replaceable plot on a different area of the city. Obviously most of farmers chose the “replaceable plot” option. If the owner of the land neither wanted to sell his property nor a receive compensation, the ownership was taken over by the state after the certain amount of time. This kind of policy resulted in raising objections in society.

The problem of (spatial) integration the new city - body with an existing urban network is also widely described by Kazimierz Wejchert in his book.

A part of the problem was a physical integration of two different settlements’ structures. The center of the existing village was located away
from the planned centre of the new city. The old center was marked by a XVIIth century baroque church. In the new plan for Tyty the village was attached to integrated into one of the new estates - “B”. In the project of “B” estate Wejchert integrated an existing structure of the village by design a square and enclosing space in front of the old church. The new square was surrounded by three story houses and a cinema what gave the centre of the village a character of a small town. Nowadays the square is called the Old Market and few inhabitants of the contemporary city are aware of the fact that it was created in the fifties of the XXth century.7

In such a “smuggling” way, Wejchert started to develop the new plan on the base of the existing village structure.

Moreover, the stylistic of small Polish town with a central square surrounded by three and four story pitched - roof houses, was used as a tool of the design. In the estate B traditional architectural elements were standing in opposition to the new, architectural language of socialists. When in 1954 the excursion of the city was organized for journalists, the estate B was described as the most interesting among all the others realized until that time. It was praised for individual character of streets and squares, achieved by use of right proportions and dimensions. To realize the estate B the special system of nine different repetitive “sections” was designed. They were combined with buildings with arcades and face walls that varied in shape. This kind of system was perceived in the fifties an innovative. 8

Other estates followed the ideas of functional and modern design. Architects searched for solutions for best orientation of the building in relation to the surroundings. Car circulation was situated outside the housing areas. The use of prefabrication technique changed the form of buildings. To avoid spatial monotony of estates designers combined varied forms and typologies of buildings. An important step of the plan was a building of estate “D 3” located in the area of the center. Built along the green axis the estate was composed of six high rises. Another interesting typology was applied in the estate E2, which combined two - story row houses with small flats on top floor, accessed via a gallery. 6

In 1960 the second, improved general plan of Tyty was published and in 1962 approved by the Presidium of Government. The new plan introduced few changes. One of the most important was a removal the parade axis from the plan. Moreover designed before with boulevards the railway axis lost its significance. Only the green axis kept its importance even though its monumentality and an expression of social realism were modified into cultural character. The green axis was, like before, planned as connecting two parks but it was enriched by new cultural objects like a concert hall, a music school, two cinemas and exhibition rooms. Still, on the crossing of the railway and green axes the commercial center was planned. The project from 1962 was opening the possibility of creation a university in Tyty.6

Unfortunately the updated Tyty’s plan coincided in time with a new
regional plan for the Silesian Region. The new regional plan concentrated on factories and areas attached to them, rather than new locations. The plan of building new cities started to play a secondary role. It meant for Tychy the beginning of a stagnation period. Even so in the sixties a lot of estates in the northern part of the city were built. In 1975 the northern part of Tychy was completed (a single group of buildings was the only later addition) and then started the development of the southern part, where the centre was planned.  

The initial concept for city centre and services was already changing in the fifties. In the early competition proposal central part of the city was a rectangle enclosed by main arteries, along which the centre was organized and services distributed. That concept turned out to be unrealistic. It would create too big amount of services, that was not needed. Another concept was drawn. Six local centers were to be distributed in the city: three centers were planned in the north and three in the south of the city rectangle. However, that concept was already modified in presented plan from 1953. According to the new concept one central area was planned at the intersection of the green axis and railway line. Since the city plan was supposed to be realized in phases, and starting in the area peripheral to the planned centre, architects came up with an idea of a “moving centre”. The center was being relocated together with a development of the city structure. At the beginning it was concentrated in the Old Market and Bierut Square situated in the area closer to the centre of the original village. Then the center was to be moved South along Bielska Road and in time concentrated more and more around the first (northern - west) and the second (southern - west) corner of the city rectangle. Therefore the city center was moving towards its proper, planned location.  

First detailed projects for the center, already located in the middle of the city rectangle, were made in 1962 - 63 but since they were not approved by the authorities. Because of that in 1970 a closed competition for a new project was organized. Five teams of architects participated. The first prize was won by a project of professor Witold Cęckiewicz from Cracow. The second prize was given to the Wejcherts team. Results of competition were put together with earlier studies by Wejcherts and architect Marek Dziekoński in November 1971 and provided the plan for a center for one hundred thirty thousand inhabitants of Tychy and forty thousand inhabitants of neighboring areas. In this project in the center two rows of buildings assigned for trade were designed as well as a library and a cinema. In the western part the administration center was situated. New elements of the plan was an electric railway connection with a station in the center of rectangle, big parking areas and a pedestrian path network. Similarly to the estate “D 3” high - rise block of flats were planned around the central zone. This project of the centre was commenced in mid - seventies but was never completed.
Studies carried out several years ago in the city showed that the form of services in Tychy does not have a centralized character and in northern and southern districts they took different shape. In the northern part of Tychy services are located along main arteries and in the southern part they were concentrated in islands and attached to existing important points in the city landscape, like a church or hotel.  

One of the most important decisions changing that influenced the development of the city was a location of the FIAT car factory in the neighborhood. An industrial area was created and big factories opened - among them also a factory producing prefabricated elements W - 70 used for housing.  

These decisions seemed to improve the realization of the city project. Unfortunately lack of a detail plan for the southern part of the city and purely functional way of designing consecutive estates resulted in poor spatial and material quality of projects. A basic program of services was delayed compared to a completion of housing estates. First estates in the southern district (“M” and “H”) were built in older prefabrication technique developed thanks to cooperation with the factory in Łaziska Górska. The rest of estates (“N”, “H 4”, “T”, “K”, “P”, “R”, “W”, “U”, “Z”, “L”, “H 7”, “H 5” and “H 6”) were build already by use of W - 70 technology.  

The gray image of Tychy with poor quality prefabricated high rises tried to be changed by architects in the project of the estate “S”. Designed on the edge of Pszczyński Woods the estate was formed by interior, pedestrian streets. Car traffic, a parking and garages were located on the lower level.  

A depressing image of southern district of Tychy is intensified by a lack of green, recreation and sport areas. In time plots reserved for greenery were filled up with buildings. Last bigger investments in the city took place in 1982/83. Popularly called a “factory of houses” producing system W - 70 collapsed. The city built in a socialist reality had to face new economy conditions.

4. NORMATIVE REGULATING BUILDING PROCESS

The organization of building process of Tychy was based on a normative given by the state authorities. Normative was applied to building heights, sizes of flats, an orientation of buildings, structure of flats and distances between streets. Most of these norms had an obligatory character and resulted in many restrictions. These ones did not help in a process of searching for new solutions. Moreover projects of estates had to be approved by administration which had nothing to do with architecture or urban planning. Kazimierz Wejchert was of the opinion that a lot of problems were related to an incoherence between a normative related to design, laws of housing associations and the actual need on the housing market.  

The situation was even more complicated when the province authorities started imposing the size of flats. These sizes were changing in
time. For example, in 1950 - 58 the flats called a PK (a room and a kitchen), were obligatory to be built. In 1959 - 60 new types of flats called M1, M2 - M7 were introduced. Every type of the flat from the “M family” had defined amount of square meters. To give few examples a M1 had 17 - 20 square meters, a M2 had 24 - 30, a M3 33 - 38 sq m, a M4 42 - 48 sq m, a M5 51 - 57, a M6 59 - 65 and a M7 67 - 75 square meters. In 1966 - 70 these norms were slightly modified and adopted to the new introduced construction system. In 1974 the state authorities proclaimed the decree defining amount of inhabitants for a flat depending on its size. For example, the flat M4 which in 1974 had 56 - 61 sq meters was occupied by four people. 

Another normative applied to building heights. During a period of socialist realism in Polish architecture a height of five stories was obligatory to be built. Every deviation from this norm had to be approved by provincial authorities. Moreover a planned amount of flats in every Tychy’s estate had to be always archived. Because of that if architects get a permission to reduce height of few buildings in an estate other buildings in the same estate have to heighten. In case of Tychy decisions about building height depended on an approval of Juliusz Goryński, the chairman of ZOR.

5. STYLE OF SOCIALIST REALISM

Normatives were not the only factor which had an influence on designs. The form of estates rising in Tychy was also under the impact of authorities.

First estates of the new city were growing in the fifties when the style of socialist realism dominated Polish architecture. In that period, the estate A as the one of the first in Tychy, was designed by professor Tadeusz Todorowski. Characterized by a fast tempo of realization this estate has a stringent geometry and traditional detailing. Despite of the fact that Tychy’s project was rising in the socialism regime aesthetics of the city stand out from the canon of an “obligatory style”. In the article from 1993 Marcin Czerwiński, a sociologist, described the approach of Wejcherts to the socialist realism. According to Czerwiński socialist realism was generally accepted without discussion by most of Polish architects. However Wejcherts almost officially opposed the style. Thanks to them the city got a human scale and a charm. 

Attempt was made to add a “humane” dimension to the new estates by calling them women names, according to the letters they were given at the beginning, for example the estate “K” was called Karolina, the “M” - Magdalena, the “G” - Genowefa. That characteristic way of calling residential districts was also helpful for inhabitants, coming often from rural or not highly educated families, to orientate themselves in the city. 

There was a “propaganda of success” accompanying the process of building the new city present through years with changing intensity.
6. AN EXEMPLARY ROLE OF TYCHY

If we have in mind that project of Tychy was arising in communist reality we realize that it was treated in a special way in the scale of the country. Even though architects of Cityproject office did not have a wide access to Western publications in Poland, they had possibilities to travel abroad and to participate in international meetings, which in a country behind the “steel curtain” was a rare thing. The contact with foreign architects was an additional factor motivating the Polish team to work on new solutions. They were searching for new ideas which could compete with these from abroad. An exceptional position of the office was also related to the fact that designers of Tychy were at the same time tutors at university.4

Kazimierz Wejchert in his book “How the city was build” (“Jak powstawało miasto”) describes foreign examples of cities that were comparable to Tychy in size and location.

After 1958 architects of Cityproject office were visiting satellite cities of Stokholm, London, Liverpool, Paris and Rouen. What is interesting, according to Wejchert, Western designers admired the Polish system of urban planning for a relatively easy way of getting an ownership of private areas for a new investment. At the same time Polish designers admired by a variety of technologies and numbers of materials accessible in the West.

Wejchert had a personal contact with French architect Motez (the author of Evry - city located nearby Paris) and with German professor Egeling (the designer of Wulfen - city in the Ruhr). The Tychy office kept in contact with designers of forty cities in Europe and other ones from USA, China and Mexico.4

In 1993 in the City Hall of Tychy the seminar “New European Cities of XX century” was organized. On the meeting Tychy’s plan was compared with other plans. In terms of urban landscape French and German examples were perceived as similar to Polish city. They all had similar typologies of multifamily houses. However Western realizations were characterized by a much better detailing, more varied solutions and used materials. In terms of program Western cities had higher level of realized services. On the other hand the plan of Polish city was perceived as more compact then foreign examples.4

Comparing to most of Western realizations the Polish city was built in an extremely short period of time. The plan of Tychy was supposed to be realized in thirty years. There are only a few examples of some of English (new) cities that reached the planned size in ten - twenty
years time. Paradoxically, Western cities located twenty or seventy kilometers from a bigger metropolis, were criticized by foreign designers for separation inhabitants from a city center and for too big amount of planned single family housing estates.  

7. Tychy and Its Society

The fact that Tychy having today one hundred thirty thousand inhabitants grew up from the village of nine thousands of people makes an interesting structure of the city’s society. Intriguing is the way how Tychy’s inhabitants perceived themselves in the past and how they perceive themselves now as citizens of the city. That was changing and depends on people personal histories.

The oldest inhabitants of Tychy are those who in the past were living in villages incorporated with the new city. They could be called as the “original inhabitants” of Tychy. What is interesting, a lot of people who came to the city during the fifties also call themselves “original inhabitants”. They have already roots in the city and their children were born here. A special group of inhabitants are repatriates form 1957 - 58. For them moving to Tychy was related to a radical change in life. They came back to Poland from areas of the country that after the war no longer were part of Poland and here they could build again their ”private homeland”.

Another group of Tychy’s society are people who were growing up in the city. Tychy became a part of their childhood. They were witnesses of changes in the city. Other group are inhabitants who came to Tychy in the seventies and eighties. Most of them are living in the southern part of Tychy.

8. Relations Between Designers and Contractors, Local Authorities, Role of Media in a Process

The project of the city completion was not only dependent on the state authorities. A lot depended on relations between the investor (the State), designers and the contractor. These relations were changing in time and depending on a socialist economy. According to Wejchert in the fifties of twenty century contractors had a dominant role in the building process. That changed in 1958 - 64 when the role of a designer and an investor increased.

Some problems were emerging because of complicated organization of the building process. At the beginning thirty seven companies from different parts of Poland were working on the building site. Every company had its own construction manager. That changed few years later when the one contractors’ company with a one boss was set up. Working conditions of first Tychy’s builders were very primitive. Because of lack of building machinery they had to carry building materials on their backs. At the beginning bricks used on the building site were transported by carriages.
The contractor responsible for finishing exact amounts of flats was trying to avoid and simplify complicated forms of buildings. In the seventies the institution of inspectors controlling the contractor was canceled. That caused detraction of designer’s role and as a result ridiculous situations related to a realization of projects took place. Kazimierz Wejchert in his book gives an example: the building with more complicated form could be realized according to drawings under unspoken condition that foundations are not going to be checked in detail by the investor or designer. If the deal was not fulfilled by architects the contractors company could build an additional floor which wasn’t designed in a building. This extra floor was supposed to be built “by chance”. Of course a lot depended on people who were in charge of contractor’s company. Wejchert recalls a good cooperation with engineer Götz in 1955-57.

Wejchert as the director of the Cityproject was responsible for the contact with the investor. If the plans of the project were changed by the authorities during the building process the team of designers submitted an application to particular institution responsible for an issue. That was taking place especially in the seventies when the amount of realized flats seemed to be the most important for the investor and spatial quality of designs played the secondary role. The realization of the main railway station in the center of the city also met with difficulties and lack of understanding from the authorities. In the sixties Władysław Gomułka, the first secretary of Central Committee, during his visit in Tychy said that building the railway track in the city is an “unproductive element of consumption”. That kind of opinions combined with the sceptical approach of national railway company caused the end of the railway network plans in the city.

Despite of problems a project of Tychy found proponents as well. Among the patrons of the city was a governor of Katowice - colonel Jerzy Ziętek, Stanisław Maroń and Jan Wilk - secretaries of City Committee of Polish United Workers Party (PZPR) or presidents of the city - Świrad and Jamruszkiewicz. These people, in Wejchert’s opinion, had a positive impact on the development of the city. Some decisions, like the one about the location of the FIAT factory in Tychy, had an important impact on the history of the city.

Access to information about the progress of building the new city was a factor playing an important role. Every five years the Cityproject office published an illustrated magazine which informed the inhabitants about new investments and future plans for the city. Covers of following publications had different colors to be easily recognizable. The first publication, characterized by white cover and describing the general planning of the city, was translated in four languages. The second one, with red - black cover, was describing detailed planning from the period 1955 - 65. The next publications were presenting realized and future projects. Apart of them architects of Cityproject office were often asked for additional articles publishing later in varied professional Polish monthlies like “Architecture” or “City.”
Kazimierz Wejchert in his book presented three options of possible future of the city.

The first option foresaw the creation of the new coal mine "Mikołów" on the area of the city. Wejchert made a warning that this kind of investment would result in pollution and a destruction of the city’s landscape. In this case there was a threat that the population would grow too rapidly and agricultural areas would transform into building sites. Authorities of the city should protect main elements of the city plan and finish the process of building the city center. Soil and air should be protected and an existing industry in Łaziska modernized.

The second scenario for the city is an optimistic one. This would be the case when the new plan for the city development is established by urban planners, authorities and specialists. The city is becoming an important attraction for investors. The existing infrastructure and buildings are renovated. The raising amount of investments contributes to a decrease of unemployment.

The third vision described by Wejchert is the pessimistic one. If economic stagnation prevails it would result in a lack of working places and slow downfall of Tychy. Already organized areas would become derelict and planned services for the city would not be built. The economy of the city is dominated by a private sector or the city is absorbed by industry.

If we inquire if any of the above mentioned scenarios represents contemporary image of Tychy it is difficult to judge. The city is changing. It has grown from a commuter town into an independent and dynamic city but the plan was not all completed. There is still a problem of unfinished centre. The city also has to deal with low quality of buildings built during the socialist era and an abundance of open spaces that are not designed or tended.
The question arises how to treat the communist heritage. In 1995 Kazimierz Wejchert already suggested two solutions. One is based on renovation of old buildings and combining small flats into bigger ones. The other way is demolishing old and building new housing estates. Wejchert is of the opinion that cities like Tyhcy or Nowa Huta are part of history and physical evidences of their times. That's why their structure should be kept. According to the architect the general plan of the city is realized in seventy per cent. A fifty per cent of the detail plan and urban planning is finished and only twenty five per cent of the plan on the architectural level is realized. The green axes and program of services are also fulfilled only in twenty per cent. These statistics drive to conclusion that the general plan of the city didn't change so much but the detail planning was modified few times under different conditions. The Tyhcy's example shows how theory and practice are far from each other.4

Last years the authorities of Tyhcy are trying to find a solution for the center of the city. The few competitions on the project of the central housing district combined with services were organized. In the first one, announced in 1988, the work of Krzysztof Barysz got the first prize. The second one, from 1996 was won by Malgorzata and Marcin Wlodarczykowie. However none of these projects were realized.4

In June 1998 the company “City - center” was created. One of the main shareholder of the “City - center” was the Municipality of Tyhcy. The task of the company was to buy back the areas from current owners for future investments in the city. That was especially applied to areas located in the centre planned by Wejchert.

In the nineties the company ordered an elaboration of more detailed plans of the green axis development. As a result three concepts for the northern part of the axis were created and another concept for the whole axis.

The “City-centre” company was also an author of other initiatives. One of them was organizing (together with Architecture Faculty at Wroclaw University of Technology) an international urban and architectural workshops “Tyhcy 2006 - city center - city of inhabitants”. Participants of the workshops as students of different Polish architecture faculties tried to prepare a proposal for the center of Tyhcy. Groups of students were guided by foreign tutors invited by organizers. During the workshops students and foreign guests attended lectures about the Tyhcy’s history and a current situation of the city. At the end of the workshops students’ project was presented to the public in the City Museum of Tyhcy.10

One of the main goal of the students’ project was to give an identity to the planned by Wejcherts’ city’s rectangle. In the proposal the rectangle is enriched by varied zones with specified characters. A part of the project is a new definition of green spaces in the city center. The thematic parks were designed along the planned by Wejcherts' axis: the Municipality Park with space reserved for open galleries, the strips with...
facilities for the youngest along the green axis and the green boulevard along the railway line integrated with planned by Wejcherts' central square. All these elements being part of the greenery network emphasized the North - South, green axis and East - West, railway one. To connect existing parks - the Northern Park and the Paproczany's Park with the new designs the Romantic Park (on the North) and the Skate Park (on the South) were created.

To enclose and give a special character to the open space along the railway line a multi functional building attached to the Grotta – Roweckiego avenue (working today as a shopping street) was designed. Apart of that along the railway line a green zone with free – standing pavilions of different heights was defined.

In terms of function students’ project increased cultural and recreation facilities in the city. The general plan was enriched by detailed solutions showing ways of slowing down car traffic in the city, introducing “active” ground floors with services in the center and small architecture projects.¹⁰

It’s difficult to foresee today a future of Tychy. On one hand the socialists’ character of the city is a part of its gray and sometimes even depressing image. On the other hand the socialist heritage could be an unique quality of Tychy being a witness of Polish history. The question arises how the city’s authorities and inhabitants themselves are going to cope with current Tychy's situation. How to combine already the old, socialists’ city – body with new investments in Tychy represented by the Special Economic Zone or newly built housing estates ..
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page 5:
Wejchert K ‘Jak powstawało miasto’ (‘How the city was built’), ‘Pergamon’, Tychy 1995, pp I - 45
drawings of competition’s proposals published in the article of Malisz (schematy prac konkursowych z artykułu B. Malisza)

page 6:
photos of rising Tychy from the exhibition of Andrzej Czyżewski opened in the Tychy’s City Museum in November 2007
11. Index of surnames

Hanna Adamczewska - Wejchert (1920 - 1996) Polish urban designer and an architect, professor at Warsaw University of Technology, together with husband, Kazimierz Wejchert was the author of the project of Tychy.

Bolesław Bierut (real name Bolesław Biernacki, 1892 - 1956) was a Polish Communist leader, a Stalinist who became President of Poland after the Soviet occupation of the country in the aftermath of World War II.

Witold Cęckiewicz (1924 - ..) an architect and an urbanist, tutor at architecture faculty at Cracow University of Technology, rewarded for numerous architectural projects.
Władysław Czarnecki (1895 - 1983) an architect, professor of University of Technology in Poznań.

Marek Dzikowski (1930 - 2002) - a Polish architect working mainly in Wrocław and Tychy, since 1959 working in Cityproject Office in Tychy, since 1975 tutor at Silesian University of Technology

Maria Lipok - Bierwiaczonek - an ethnologist, an initiator and currently a director of the City Museum in Tychy, author of articles about Tychy, its history and inhabitants

Wacław Ostrowski (1907 - 1990) an architect and urban designer, professor of Warsaw University of Technology, an author of varied books about contemporary urban planning and history of urban planning.

Tadeusz Todorowski - a professor of Silesian University of Technology, author of estate A in Tychy

Tadeusz Ptaszycki (1908 - 1980) Polish architect, author of the plan for New Huta and reconstruction of Wrocław

Bolesław Malisz (1910 - 1995) Polish an architect and an urban designer, in 1956-63 main urban designer in the Institute of Urbanism and Architecture, author of the article evaluating the competition on the project of Tychy.

Bolesław Malisz (1908 - 1995) Polish architect and urban designer, since 1945 working mainly in Silesia. In 1949 – 55 under his leadership the first regional plan for Upper Silesian Region was created.

Tadeusz Ptaszycki (1908 - 1980) Polish architect, author of the plan for New Huta and reconstruction of Wrocław

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Romuald Pieńkowski - (1906 – 1955) an architect and urban designer, since 1945 working mainly in Silesia. In 1949 – 55 under his leadership the first regional plan for Upper Silesian Region was created.

Tadeusz Ptaszycki (1908 - 1980) Polish architect, author of the plan for New Huta and reconstruction of Wrocław

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Tadeusz Ptaszycki (1908 - 1980) Polish architect, author of estate A in Tychy

Kazimierz Wejchert (1912 - 1993) an architect and urban designer, professor at Warsaw University of Technology, together with wife, Hanna Adamczewska - Wejchert was the author of the project of Tychy

Jerzy Ziętek (1901 - 1985) Polish politician and general, a Silesian Insurrectionist in his youth, during the Second World War he joined the Polish armed forces in the U.S.S.R and later became an important politician representing Silesia in the People’s Republic of Poland.

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