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Unit 10: History and
Theory (Consolidation)

ANTI-ARCHITECTRESS

LOOKING AT THE OVERLOOKED



fig.1

What role did women play in shaping the modernist vision of architecture and urban planning of the Polish People's Republic (1945-1989)?

The gender imbalance in the field of architecture is exaggerated by a lack of role models. I had no female role models.

Tashiko Mori, 2016

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	word count: 7666



fig.2

Architecture is the material property of the one who pays for it, but the moral property of all who look at it.

Henryk Buszko, 2017

Preface

In 2006, a disabled man moved into my grandparents' tower block. To get in and out of his flat, he had to build an access ramp connected to the building. Fascinated, I was determined to find out how many similar 'design solutions' were implemented in my town. I made a note of 23.

Fifteen years have passed since then and the ramp is gone, yet the issue of Socialist architecture's exclusivity is still present (fig. 2). The town where I was born was wholly renovated after World War II. The architecture present there is a prime example of Poland's post-war housing hunger typology. My understanding of Socialist architecture was elemental, and I had always asked myself if there was any better architectural representation of that era. The inspirational answer came from Jane Hall's book *Breaking Ground: Architecture by Women* (fig. 3) and its entry on Polish female-architects (apx.1.1).



fig.3

Introduction

This dissertation aims to initiate a discussion on the history and position of the last century's female-practitioners and examine how designers progressed during times of creativity restriction and design standardisation. The objective is to form a thesis of the role played by female-architects in shaping the modernist vision of architecture and urban planning during the Socialist rule in the Polish People's Republic (1945-1989).

There are many Socialist buildings left in Poland, the bulk of which is made up of housing estates where more than half of Poland's population resides. Thus, the architecture of that period has not disappeared from the Polish landscape. The history of Polish architecture is as turbulent and complicated as the political fate of East Europe (Springer, 2017). The fascinating relationship between the political and economic conditions and material design solutions; between the global context and architecture at its smallest scale can be observed in the spatial discipline. Consequently, the question of how political realities shape the immediate landscape, is posed.

The attitude towards the Polish People's Republic's (pol. *Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa*, PRL) architecture changes from year to year; less than five years ago there were hardly any books written about it. In addition, the general public's actions implied that the subject of Socialist architecture was better forgotten than preserved or studied. The 1990s and 2000s were the times of negation of anything built in the last political system. This ideology comes from a lack of understanding of the architecture of that time. It is pivotal to understand that the PRL's architecture cannot be generalised or judged using the same principles applied to the study of modern architecture. The criticism of visuals or service is not adequate in this circumstance; therefore, drawing attention to the relationship between architecture and politics forces one to undertake a critical reflection (Cymer, 2019).

Women's contribution to architecture has long been overlooked, and the topic of Socialist architecture in the PRL, also emphasises the still underestimated importance of female-architects (Wainwright, 2019). As in many art and science fields, men have dominated architecture for centuries and not only in Poland. While in the arts, female-artists clearly marked their presence from the end of the 19th century, polytechnic departments and architectural schools allowed them to develop on a larger scale only in the 1920s (Stratigakos, 2016, p.18-21).

'Architect-ress' (pol. *Architektka*, apx.2.1) – feminine noun of the word 'architect' in the Polish language is used to this day. To the contrary, Dorte Mandrup (2017) award-winning Danish architect, and founder of the Copenhagen-based practice *Dorte Mandrup Arkitekter* quibbles that gender-specific titles prevent a long overdue mind shift allowing men and women to work, and compete, within the same parameters.

Spatial design and architecture are not unique in their gender bias. This disparity is significantly at odds with an industry predicated on democratic and progressive ideals. However, as the concept of design came to maturity in the 20th century, it also inherited the 20th-century's prejudices and conventions, the impact of which has been disregarding women's extensive

contributions to design. Preconceptions of gender roles which associate decorative arts disciplines with women and architecture or metalwork with men have created a conditional bias that lingers today. This irregularity reveals itself not just in practice, but also in how the design commentary or history has been narrated. Written from the predominately male, and Western perspective, early 20th century accounts of design and architecture tended to use a very narrow definition of design – especially, architectural and industrial design (Sellers, 2017, p.7-11).

This approach and attitude resulted in the omission of many significant figures; generating the need to "redress the balance by placing women at the start of the action" (Sellers, 2017, p.7). In the first generation of the PRL's female-architects, two notable names stand out; Halina Skibniewska and Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak. These two pioneering female-architects robustly represent radical Modernism under Socialist rule. Chosen case studies demonstrating how these architects' forward-thinking process informed their designs can be viewed in Warsaw at the Sady Żoliborskie Estate and Szwolężerów Estate designed by Halina Skibniewska, and also in Wrocław at the Mezonetowiec and Manhattan Residential and Service Complex where the visionary and futuristic urban landscape created by Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak can be seen.

Libby Sellers (2020) former senior curator of London's Design Museum and author of *Women Design*; a critical survey of inspiring, underappreciated female-practitioners; emphasises that women's subject matter in design is timeless. Accordingly, the analysis of Skibniewska and Grabowska-Hawrylak's work is relevant in modern-day design as it depicts a progressive awakening to the unsung voices of the spatial world from whom many valuable lessons can be learned.

The structure of this paper narrates the historical dynamics that influenced Socialist construction law. The first chapter illustrates the political, sociological and economic complexes, consequently creating a more profound understanding of the PRL's design culture. Additionally, the first chapter explores women's position in the 20th century Socialist Poland and the controversial political context behind women's social function.

The following chapters show how post-war political and economic conditions influenced the architects' works by applying these contexts to the chosen case studies. Chapter 2 investigates the evident influence of foreign architecture and personal creativity searches in Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak's designs. Next chapter analyses how multidisciplinary vigilance shaped the housing landscape created by Halina Skibniewska.

The final chapter explores what led to female-practitioners' history being incorrectly recorded and the perplexing historical stigma of the only architectural creator being a man-architect. The last chapter epitomises how Skibniewska and Grabowska-Hawrylak navigated themselves in the industry dominated by men, with two perspectives from these architects' associates who were contacted as part of the academic research for this dissertation.



fig.4

Chapter 1 – The Polish People's Republic's History, Architecture & Women

The Polish People's Republic's landscape

During the Socialist years in the Polish People's Republic the country underwent a profound transformation aimed at shifting the then agricultural society into an industrial one. The rapid industrialisation lasted for 45 years after World War II. It consisted of constructing large factories and cheap dwellings to satisfy the colossal housing hunger caused by war damage and subsequent migration of people.

Socialist architecture is vital in Poland because of its universality; it is a significant element of the contemporary Polish landscape. In an interview on the PRL's architecture, Dr Jacek Gądecki (2015), sociologist and social anthropologist, stated that around 60% of city dwellers live in *plattenbau* blocks. Plattenbau (ger. *Platte* + *Bau*, lit. 'panel/slab' + 'building/construction') refers to buildings constructed of large prefabricated concrete slabs, most often found in housing development areas (fig. 5). The construction method, also referred to as large panel system-building or LPS, was pioneered in the Netherlands after World War I, and was commonly used to construct tower blocks. This building process, which slowly lost favour in Western Europe from the middle of the 20th century due to increased crime and concerns over safety regulations, gained popularity in the Eastern Block restrained by the Soviet Union (Woodcraft, *et al.*, 2020).

Author of *Ill-Born* (2017), the first significant book about Socialist architecture, Filip Springer, journalist and enthusiast of Modernist architecture, argues that the post-war period was not the best time for original designs. Over the four decades from 1950s onwards, the large nationwide construction took place, creating a landscape of housing estates consisting of thousands of large panel and "painfully typical blocks of flats" (Springer, 2014). Tower blocks became the PRL's standard housing typology (fig. 6) and the prefabricated estates were treated as a manifestation of modern construction ideas. For many, they were a dream place to live. Their main advantage was the standardisation of production and thus the short construction time (Cymer, 2018b).

The architecture of the Polish People's Republic was closely related to the country's political history; ergo was often dependent on it. From the socio-political conditions to the implementation of design standardisation, creativity freedom became nationalised (Duda, 2016, p.11-13). Therefore, the PRL's housing construction is a starting point for considerations of the relationship between architecture and politics, its limitations and invention. The preeminent mechanism through which a political system influences a housing environment is determined through a given economy's system and structure. Hence, the resource allocation method's redistribution (plus the logistic degree of centralisation of this process) directly affect what is being built (Mayr, *et al.*, 2018).



fig.5



fig.6

flat housing category	# of tenants	usable floor area of flats		permissible increase of the upper limit for technological reasons	maximum upper limit of the size of a flat in a given category
		1958	1974		
F1	1	17-20 m ²	25-28 m ²		28 m ²
F2	2	24-30 m ²	30-35 m ²	1 m ²	36 m ²
F3	3	33-38 m ²	44-48 m ²	4 m ²	52 m ²
F4	4	42-48 m ²	56-61 m ²	2 m ²	63 m ²
F5	5	51-57 m ²	65-70 m ²	3 m ²	73 m ²
F6	6	59-65 m ²	75-85 m ²		85 m ²
F7	7+	67-71 m ²	N/A		

tab.1

flat housing category	# of tenants	European examples of usable floor area of flats			
		Great Britain	Norway	Finland	France
		1967	1967	1967	1964
F1	1	30 m ²	34-42 m ²	22-30 m ²	25-33 m ²
F2	2	40 m ²	54 m ²	45-60 m ²	42-50 m ²
F3	3	57 m ²	66 m ²	60-75 m ²	55-67 m ²
F4	4	67-74 m ²	72-78 m ²	75-90 m ²	66-77 m ²
F5	5	75-94 m ²	84-91 m ²	90-99 m ²	80-93 m ²
F6	6	84-98 m ²	93 m ²	No Limit	90-110 m ²
F7	7	No Limit	No Limit	No Limit	No Limit

tab.2

Design standardisation

Considering that the state's authorities treated housing matters as a political issue in the post-war period, the creation of a formal framework for the development of design standardisation was strictly subordinated to the legislation created by the government's administration until 1989 (Cymer, 2019, p.168-171). Therefore, the size-dependent housing construction law was influenced by the establishment of the first so-called standardised design norms, concerning the size and layout of housing estates and individual flats.

The state and industry's attempts to deal with micrometres' problem took the form of rationalisation and economisation of design. The first restrictions were in line with the Socialist current of housing policy; they aimed to increase the number of flats, providing them to the rapidly developing Polish society after World War II. Henceforth, the architects and inhabitants operated within a rigid framework defined by design norms plus technological deficiencies. Design standardisation, in the course of economic proceedings, got either stringent or reduced (Mayr, *et al.*, 2018).

The introduction of design norms in 1947, which were further altered in 1958, and later 1974 (tab. 1), was also supposed to solve problems with the production and availability of building materials and elements. The typification ideology strived to reduce the number of types of building materials produced. It contributed to the use of a broader range of industrial products, which were praised for their ability to be rapidly manufactured, explains Anna Cymer (2019, p.269-281) an architectural historian, and author of the first book contextualising the PRL's architectural history.

Nevertheless, material limited to the use of only industrial prefabricates was very inhibiting for the architects. Adam Szymański (*Blocks*, 2017, 03:13:03-03:39:51), emeritus professor of architecture at the West Pomeranian University of Technology, describes the Socialist architecture as a propaganda material, from which the authorities benefited. Furthermore, Szymański argues that the state had cleverly used the designers' architectural knowledge to create a system that allowed for the building of prefabricated residential complexes repeatedly; reducing costs and labour but ultimately condemning the inhabitants to live in poorly thought-out living conditions.

Female-architects in Socialist Poland

Polish Socialism not only deals with the issue of design standardisation but likewise emphasises the still underestimated importance of female-architects. The past century's appearance of professionally trained women in architecture had been a recent phenomenon (its beginnings date back to the very end of the 19th century in Western countries, and in Poland only in the interwar period) which got vehemently manipulated by the Socialist system (Stratigakos, 2016, p.20-23).

In her book *Ethics of Sexual Difference* (1982) Luce Irigaray's feminist theories emphasise that the absence of women in architecture as designers is part of the well-known paradox of patriarchal scenarios that defined Western culture's lifestyle and history. According to these scenarios, women were placed on the side of nature: their biological goal was procreation,

while men created their culture. Historically, on many grounds, women were absent for a long time, there were no great artists, painters or sculptors. Per contra, in architecture, this problem was still related to a specific enmity that the architectural profession was best suited to the male temperament and psyche exclusively (Leśniakowska, 2016).

When in 1922 Jadwiga Dobrzyńska was the first Polish woman to receive a diploma from the Faculty of Architecture of the Warsaw University of Technology, at that time she was called an 'architectress'. A feminine equivalent to the word 'architect' that grammatically should not take a feminine form in the Polish language, and a term that was much disliked by female-architects, yet is used to this day. Prof. Marta Leśniakowska (2016, p.42-45) art historian, author of essays on women's history, clarifies that cultural changes often start with language evolution. Female-architects believed the gender-specific title created a psychological barrier, questioning their credibility; thus, their wish to be referred to as architects without a pre-fixed set of values or attributes.

Under the Socialist system's realities, the feminist movement could not begin. The pre-war traditions of emancipation were not cultivated while 'women liberation' remained a slogan of Socialism's official propaganda. According to the soviet model adopted in Poland, a woman's role should not be limited to caring for the family; women should also fulfil themselves in professions and be involved in political and social activity. Under the pretext of promoting equal rights, the authorities encouraged women to take up so-called 'men's jobs' and facilitated their access to vocational or professional training (Fidelis, 2010).

Howbeit, the PRL's complicated socio-political situation and its substantial economic difficulties, as well as the family model promoted by the authorities, led to the female-architects' professional activity becoming just a "good way to make a living rather than an opportunity to fulfil their creative ambitions and develop their careers" (Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2006, p. 41). The Socialist indoctrination proclaimed that the workplace was supposed to offer room for self-fulfilment, but in the realities of life under Socialism, this assumption proved illusory.

Piotr Marciniak (2016) author of research papers conducting the history of Polish female-architects, concludes that many renowned women worked at universities and publishing houses, which allowed them to build 'independent careers'. Research and academic writing proved to be a critical feature of female-architects' work focused on improving the quality of life and humanisation of the created environment. Notwithstanding the state banned many books from being published as they promoted matters opposing the Socialist system (Fidelis, 2010). In many cases, the publications occurred only after the authors' death (fig. 8).

In the end, only a handful of female-architects who were brave enough to draw inspiration from the achievements of European architecture, with the visionary idea of using design as a way of improving living standards at the forefront, were able to breakthrough and mark their place in design history.



fig.7



fig.8



fig.9



fig.10

I am not a female architect. I am an architect.

Dorte Mandrup, 2017

Chapter 2 – Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak

The beginning of the 1950s was marked by the obligatory Socialist Realism and a “stuffy atmosphere in the offices” (Duda, 2016, p.49-51). Even if they wanted to, Polish architects could not follow trends and ideas coming from the West of the Iron Curtain. Socialist Realism or Stalinist (rus. Сталинский) architecture was realised in the years 1949–1956 within the doctrine of Socialist Realism, which had the official status of being the primary and only artistic creativity method and was the states’ “ideological brainwashing tool” (Springer, 2017, p.50). Stalinism was characterised by the glorified depiction of Communist values enforced by the Soviet Union and idealised historical principles of composition and decorative elements (fig. 11).

The situation changed in 1956 as the time of ‘errors and distortions’ was gradually forgotten and the ‘international style’ appeared. The Stalinist architecture had no reference to the surroundings because it was an artificial creation – like the whole idea of Socialist Realism (Springer, 2015). “Everything was possible from then on. Of course, if ‘everything’ did not go beyond any form of standardisation.” (Springer, 2017, p.50-53). Even the highest-ranking politicians encouraged the fight for the new Socialist architecture. During the 1956 National Meeting of the Association of Polish Architects’ (pol. *Stowarzyszenie Architektów Polskich*, SARP) Józef Cyrankiewicz, the Ministerial Council President, encouraged ‘innovation and experimentation’ to lead the creative process (Duda, 2016, p.52).

According to Maciej Hawrylak (2020, apx.3.1), the son of Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak, who is an architect and lecturer at the Wrocław University of Science and Technology, Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak’s designs differ from the typified Socialist architecture not only in aesthetic but also an entire mindset. Hawrylak provided an insight into the design philosophies of Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak in an interview conducted as part of the primary research for this dissertation.



fig.11

Mezonetowiec

One of the outstanding examples of modern Socialist architecture was the Mezonetowiec (fr. *maisonnette*, lit. 'small house') designed between 1958-1960 by Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak as part of a team with Edmund Frąckiewicz, Maria and Igor Tawryczewski at Miastoprojekt Wrocław.

At the end of the 1940s, the production of architectural designs in Poland was subordinated to public institutions. After the war, the massive investments planned for implementing housing complexes required the preparation of projects on an unprecedented scale. Therefore, large project offices – Miastoprojekty (pol. *Miasto + Projekt*, lit. 'city' + 'project') were established. Grabowska-Hawrylak (2012a) recalled:

"Despite factory-like organisation of the state-owned office, we managed to work on our own conditions. [...] In those times, we didn't have much architectural literature. The office subscribed to 3 foreign magazines: *L'Architecture D'Aujourd'hui*, *Werk* and *The Japan Architect*." (fig. 13).

Le Corbusier's influence was evident in Grabowska-Hawrylak's work, lacking in "angular, block-like forms" (Sural, 2017). Le Corbusier's housing units were self-sufficient facilities; equipped with roof gardens, shops and service points. The not too spacious, two-level *maisonnette* flats (fig. 14) were designed according to Modulor – Le Corbusier's language of proportions with the human closeness as a basic value (Le Corbusier, 1948). Similarly, Mezonetowiec was the first maisonnette block in Poland from that period. Grabowska-Hawrylak (2006) justified how such a design concept came from the impossibility of building single-family dwellings. The team intended to build a high-rise building with flats similar to freestanding houses in the heart of the city.

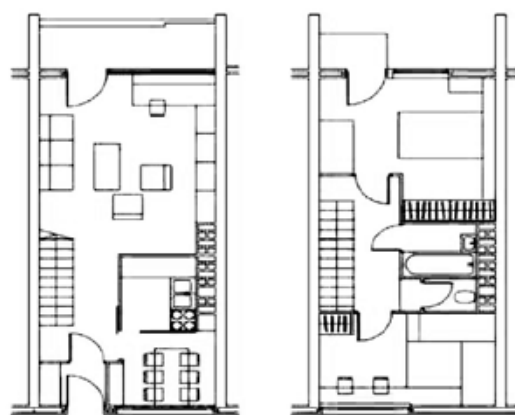


fig.12

Their goal has undoubtedly been achieved. In the second half of the 1950s, the building was a sensation which "signalled the advent of new architecture" (Duda, 2016, p.54). While monotony prevailed in construction at the time, Mezonetowiec was supposed to be the answer to those problems. Duplex flats seemed to be the height of luxury then, although, in reality, their living space resulting from the size design norm was not that large (fig. 12). Notwithstanding the interior space was maximised by replacing internal corridors with galleried docks. It was a crucial decision as the site was very narrow due to the existing buildings (Duda, 2016, p.55-57).



fig.13



fig.14



fig.15



fig.16



fig.17



fig.18



fig.19



fig.20



fig.21

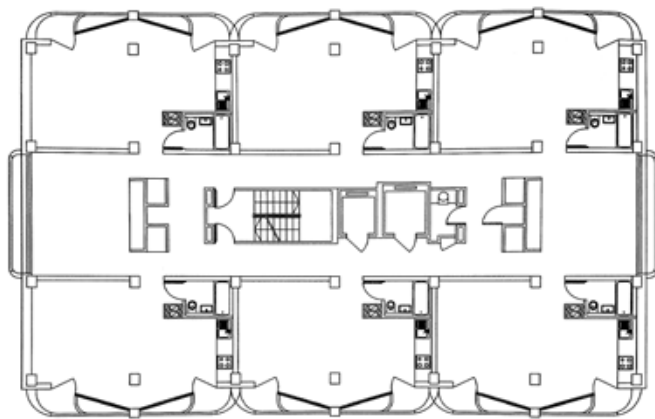


fig.22

Manhattan

In 1963 Grabowska-Hawrylak became the creative director of Miastoprojekt Wrocław. In the same year, her office received a proposed plan for the construction of six residential towers with the mandatory use of prefabricated elements (plus design norm restrictions). The project was of great significance in terms of urban planning, due to the site's location in the very centre of the city still underdeveloped after the war (Duda, 2016, p.137-142).

Based on the housing estates built between the 1960s and 1970s, it can be concluded that varied, original forms were more easily achieved in complexes with a smaller scale or the number of buildings (Springer, 2015). However, precast technology did not have to lead to monotony, and the most exciting example is undoubtedly the Grunwaldzki Square (pol. *Plac Grunwaldzki*) Residential and Service Complex in Wrocław (1968-1978), colloquially called Manhattan.

Despite the use of prefabricated elements, the estate impresses with its unusual and individual character. As Stefan Müller (1973, p.381), architect and senior lecturer at the Wrocław University of Science and Technology writes in *Architektura*:

"Prefabricated façade elements with a complex multi-curvature and multi-plane drawing are an interesting and rarely used attempt to fully use the morphological properties of reinforced concrete, which give great freedom of shaping it without violating the rules of statics."

As the draconian design norms of 1958 controlled a building's size and layout (plus the 1974 update of the compulsory number of rooms for each flat), it was impossible to exceed their specifications by even a centimetre. For that reason, Grabowska-Hawrylak used the H-frame structure – a type of prefabricated element forming the constructions of skyscrapers – which allowed for any interior transformation. No wall served as a load-bearing wall; each one could be demolished with the possibility to join the flats and arrange the new space from scratch. The only limitations were the external walls, frame poles and the arrangement of risers. Given the restrictions of that time, this flexibility was a resounding tribute to the user (Duda, 2016, p.162-164).

Initially, the Manhattan Complex did not have a functional programme apart from the housing. It was also assumed that the towers would be 12 floors high as that was the height design norm and the upper building limit without need of the central authorities' special consent. The originator of the further expansion of the towers was Jerzy Hryniewiecki, invited by Grabowska-Hawrylak to participate in the project's work as a consultant. Hryniewiecki, co-creator of the Socialist icon 'Spodek' in Katowice (fig. 23) provided advice and vast experience; moreover, his position and respect had the power to dispel many bureaucratic doubts (Duda, 2016, p.158-160). Grabowska-Hawrylak (2016) summarised:

"When I look at the possibilities in architecture nowadays, I'm simply envious. However, you have to appreciate what you had in your time. For example, I appreciate that I was able to design the Manhattan Complex. I was able to create appropriate conditions for myself though – by commissioning Jerzy Hryniewiecki to consult this project. I knew that everyone would take his opinion into account."

The buildings' unique character brings to mind Brutalism (fig. 24) or Japanese Metabolism (fig. 25). Metabolism (jap. 新陳代謝, *shinchintaisha*) which originated in Japan as early as 1960 remains relevant to this day. Grabowska Hawrylak (2012a) interpreted Metabolism as the evident principle in which the architecture and the city, like all living organisms, undergo cycles of change; constant renewal and destruction. Destruction, because something must disappear in order for something new to arise.

"Although we had difficult access to new currents, I discovered Japanese architecture, led by Metabolism, very early [...]. It differed from the European one in that it was being built there, and in Europe, it was being debated." (Grabowska-Hawrylak, 2016).

Michał Duda (2016, p.146-150), Wrocław's Museum of Architecture's curator and author of *Patchwork: The Architecture of Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak*, explains that it was necessary to create something that, having all the advantages of downtown surroundings, would respond to local restrictions. A micro-urban alternative to the street, offering everything that can be expected from the centre of a large city. Grabowska-Hawrylak's resolution was the service pavilion, one and two-storey modules stacked on top of each other with the pedestrian traffic transferred from the road level to an elevated plateau, on top of which a new urban environment was organised with hidden car parks and tenants' garages located underneath the platforms.

Author of an article on Socialist architecture, Artur Szczepaniak (2013) chief designer of the architectural studio *AP Szczepaniak*, underscores that the buildings, shops and pavilions' programme was very diverse. Sizeable underground car parks prove that this was undoubtedly a project in which the car is the key factor shaping the city. What distinguishes Grabowska-Hawrylak's design work is the simultaneous sensitivity to style changes while maintaining a sense, talent and consistency.

Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak worked in the times of extremely dynamic political, social, economic and identity transformations, which influenced the constant evolution of her work (Prosky, 2019). Over the years, many of Wrocław's architects accentuated how, for those times, Grabowska-Hawrylak's projects were very innovative. The buildings are rare examples of a proper search for architectural individualism. Despite all their flaws (unarrangeable interiors or non-functional staircases were criticised), they are one of the most striking examples of Socialist housing architecture (Głowicka-Wolska, 2015).

Anna Cymer (2018a) reiterates that works of Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak occupy a unique position in the context of post-war European architecture. Despite practice limited by Socialist realities, Grabowska-Hawrylak was one of the few female-architects in the 20th century who managed to create buildings combining a formally robust and functionally transparent output with bold design and construction.



fig.23



fig.24



fig.25



fig.26



fig.27



fig.28

Chapter 3 – Halina Skibniewska

Over time, state-imposed industrialisation of housing made it impossible to diversify projects. Due to the housing hunger, people very often moved to unfinished housing estates. From the second half of the 1960s, the standard of the flats themselves declined. The infrastructure (e.g., schools, shops) and the surrounding areas were often not completed. Design standardisation had undoubtedly left its mark on the supplementary buildings (Springer, 2017). Likewise, the standardisation update of 1958 also introduced stricter restrictions in shaping the compositional layout of flats, and a design norm for the height of residential blocks appeared.

Sady Żoliborskie

Ewa Kuryłowicz studied as a student of Halina Skibniewska and is a professor at the Warsaw University of Technology. In an interview analysing the work of Halina Skibniewska from the unique perspective of a student an insight into the aspects of architecture that Skibniewska considered noteworthy was gained. Ewa Kuryłowicz (2020) argues that the Sady Żoliborskie Estate (1953-1972) is an ultimate example of the architect's sense of the scale of its future inhabitants' needs. On the one hand, it evoked ideas of social housing. On the other hand, it was an attempt to move away from the German concept of *Die Wohnung für Existenzminimum* defining the minimum habitable space, by introducing a flexible layout of the flats and creating an intimate space among the buildings (Marciniak, 2016).

West of the Iron Curtain, Modernism was booming, which critics perceived as promoting consumerism and ownership convenience. The major event of those times was EXPO '58 in Brussels (fig. 29). A completely new Modernism image was shown: pavilions built of hyperbolas, light structures, boldly composed elevations and solids (usually with intense colour contrasts with references to organic forms).



fig.29



fig.30

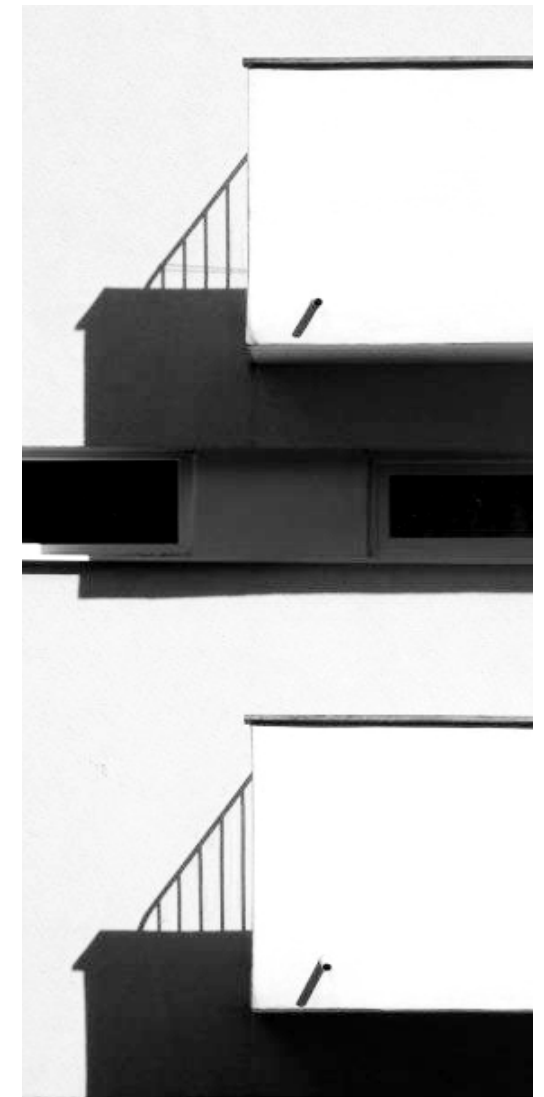


fig.31

Rather than trying to kick the establishment walls down, we're walking in through the front door.

Elizabeth Diller, 2017

Model Otwarty The Open Model

4. Zasada zmiennego wyposażenia mieszkań z elementów: meblówścianki tzw. „paczkowane”, zestawione kombinatorycznie - projekt
5. Różne możliwości podziału wnętrza mieszkalnego
4. The method of changeable flat equipment made up of elements - 'package' wall-units, various combinations - design
5. Various possibilities of the space division in the typical flat

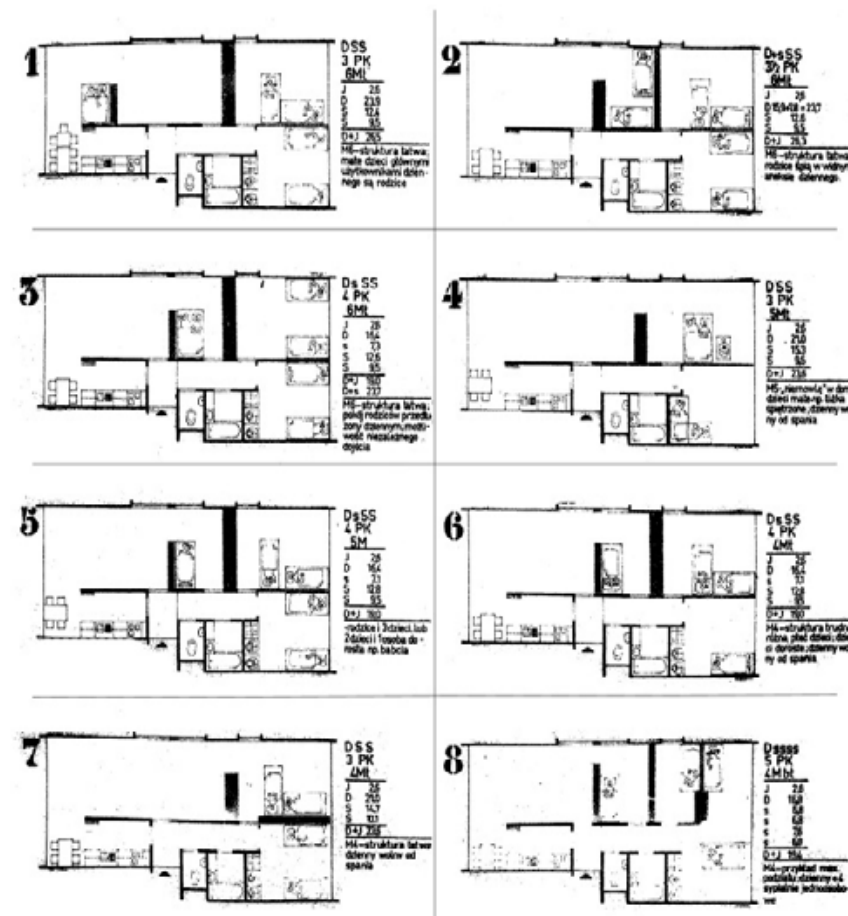
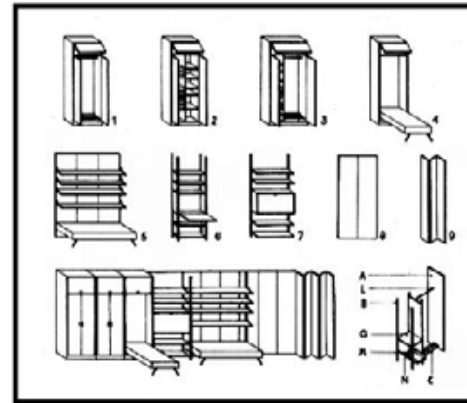


fig.32

Echoes of these events and aesthetics can also be found in Skibniewska's realisations, which are very close to the less effective, but deeply humanistic, European architectural searches (NIAiU, 2018).

"Working in the 1950s for the outstanding architect Romuald Gutt [at the Capital Reconstruction Office], I travelled a lot around the world and watched new projects. It was then, that I re-imbibed the theory of modern European architecture. I got to know France and Scandinavia well; I had lectures in Italy. These were my experiences. Ideas were born from them." (Skibniewska, 1977).

Humanistic design approach cultivated in West Europe inspired Skibniewska to precede her design work with careful research on the diversity of families' needs to adjust the estate and flats to each user. Skibniewska constructed a model of the family development cycle, which was the basis of her design studies. Quite a variety of flats in the estate were designed for families with children, the elderly and the disabled. Skibniewska focused on the issues of housing and social architecture; especially for people with disabilities being a real forerunner in this field in Poland (Cymer, 2019).

Marta Urbańska (2016, p.102) architectural historian, critic and author of an essay on Halina Skibniewska, emphasises that Skibniewska's sociological background was fundamental in her work. Skibniewska frequently collaborated with Prof. Marian Weiss, founder of the Polish Rehabilitation School. Implementation of such studies and research can be observed in the entrances and ground floor flat designs which, contrary to the design norm standards, were adapted to the needs of disabled people.

In her book, *Rodzina a Mieszkanie* (lit. 'Family vs Flat') Skibniewska (1974, p.29) rationalised that the problem of the flexibility and adaptability of flat layouts to the changing family structure is of particular importance in the "conditions of rationing space imposed by the construction law". Skibniewska believed spatial arrangement created a chance for the user to satisfy their personal needs and, at the same time, required different principles of flat designing and allocating.

Hence, the type of 'interchangeable flat' design, Skibniewska's theory of an open-plan dwelling was created. This idea was based on the belief that every family changes over time: first, it grows, then it shrinks, and even in the period when it remains in the same numerical composition its housing requires change (fig. 32-33). Skibniewska stated that the most significant numbers of changes occur in families with children. According to Skibniewska, the conditions for meeting the needs of transitional and adaptive changes could only be met by flats with a flexible, open layout, calling design standardisation "fair in intentions, but with diminutive living areas" (Skibniewska, 1974, p. 32).

Furthermore, Skibniewska had a vision that the flats should be "modern machines to live in" (Skibniewska, 1974, p.35). For this purpose, Skibniewska designed movable wall units (fig. 34-35). In other words, it was a self-assembly modular chipboard system with different surfaces. The openwork shelves were to enable the division of rooms into functional zones, without optically reducing the space and allowing for the maximum use of daylight coming through the windows (Springer, 2014). Skibniewska designed the blocks' plans so that despite their small sizes, only the sections containing the sanitary and kitchen interiors

remained unchanged everywhere; the tenants could shape the flats' remaining spaces according to their needs.

The entire complex was designed "from urbanism to the door handle" (Springer, 2014). Skibniewska arranged the buildings in such a way that they created intimate courtyards between them, so the estate was open with all car traffic and public transport led to the outskirts of the estate, so as not to disturb the peace of the residents.

Halina Skibniewska paid great attention to the building's surroundings. It was also an expression of Skibniewska's ecological awareness. She believed that housing estates should be designed so that open areas constitute an equally important element of the development concept. Regarding daylight and access to distant views from the windows as a significant spatial elongation (Cymer, 2019, p.178-180). Halina Skibniewska (*Projekt*, 1973, p.11) writes:

"Harmony, that is a beautiful spatial arrangement is achieved by the architect not as "a gift"; if it does not exist – the result is not true architecture."

In 1981 at the International Union of Architects Congress in Warsaw, Skibniewska described her methodology as striving to give each housing estate a separate, individual expression through the closest reference to specific conditions: the atmosphere of the place, tradition, history and landscape.

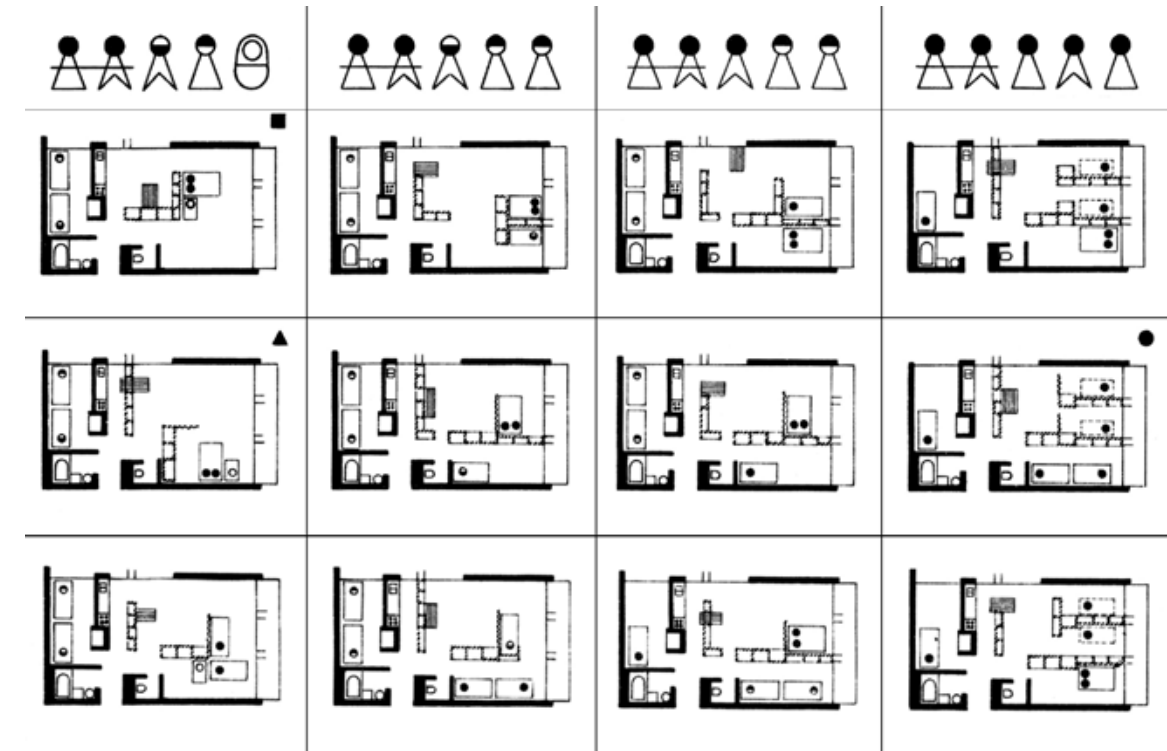


fig.33



fig.34



fig.35



fig.36



fig.37



fig.38



fig.39

Szwolężerów

Halina Skibniewska's design of the Szwolężerów Estate was not vastly sophisticated in formal terms. The blocks were implemented during times of stricter design norms (1972-1974), and the interiors could no longer have an open-plan layout. Nonetheless, Skibniewska compensated this disadvantage with the untypical shaping of the space between the blocks, which can be compared to pre-war avant-garde housing complexes (fig. 40) (Urbańska, 2016, p.111).

The luxurious and intimate location echoes the atmospheric setting of the buildings; no other Socialist housing estate in Warsaw had a meadow with a stream in the middle, hills, a maze for children or decorative stone sculptures. There are evident links between Skibniewska's work and the dynamically composed body of Frank Lloyd Wright's realisations, where the distinction between the human-made environment and nature was blurred (fig. 41) (Majewski, 2011).

As an art historian and author of a book on Warsaw's Socialist landmarks, Jerzy Majewski (2010) summarises; what is most interesting, is that Skibniewska appeared not only as an architect that respected the spirit of the place but also as a precursor of historical architecture details. Skibniewska (1977) affirmed:

"The distinctive feature of the estate is its layout and the significant fractions of the space, which are also a symbolic link with the history of the place: the Stanisławów Axis and the Łazienki Park" (fig. 42).

These fractions, or stone decorations, were baroque sculptures constituting a theatrical scenery which made the estate's public space a great asset – green and devoid of streets – it resembled a recreational area, not a residential estate (Majewski, 2010).

Skibniewska treated architecture as a service; combining it with her knowledge of urban planning, sociology, ecology, economics and psychology. The estates' success resulted from the architect's knowledge and social sensitivity (Szustakiewicz, 2019). From the very beginning, Skibniewska's works were examples of how it was possible to build human-friendly housing estates by adhering to rigid construction law standards. Prof. Konrad Kucza-Kuczyński (2006, p.7), architect and lecturer at the Warsaw University of Technology writes for *SARP*:

"The estates, implemented in times of standardisation and financial constraints, prove that even in those difficult times it was possible to create better, with the sense of ethical responsibility for the work and the recipient."

Halina Skibniewska exemplifies that Socialist housing estates' construction could excel even in the world of binding design norms. Skibniewska's designs are considered to be one of the most outstanding residential complexes built in post-war Poland. This occurrence is a result of her dissatisfaction with the monotonous standardisation of architecture. Skibniewska's idea of integrating green spaces within her overall design stands the test of time and to this day these residences are still considered to be pleasant places to live (Springer, 2014).



fig.40



fig.41



fig.42



fig.43



fig.44



fig.45



fig.46

Design became male by default.

Caroline Criado-Perez, 2019

Chapter 4 – Architecture's gender

Like so many social injustices, the gender imbalance in design can be squarely attributed to women's historical access to professional design education. It must be remembered that in the majority of European countries, women were not permitted to study design until the early 1900s (Stratigakos, 2016). The first design school to actively encourage female-students was the Bauhaus, the German school of the 1920s. It was a cathedral of progressive, avant-garde elites and cultural radicalism where in its first year in 1919, women outnumbered male students by 84 to 79. The schools founding director, Walter Gropius, was fearful of the impact women would have on the professional reputation of the school so he later put a limit on the number of female-students and pushed those few who were still able to enter towards the so-called 'feminine subjects' of weaving and ceramics (Sellers, 2017, p.11-13).

Even if women of the 20th century overcame obstacles in education or found alternative routes around them, they were then presented with another prejudice: the critique of amateurism (Criado-Perez, 2019). Somewhat related to this, is the problem of prescribing credit within a husband and wife partnership, in which the women were seen as a mere support system for their clever and talented husbands (Massey, et al., 2020, apx.1.2). The situation was no different in reborn Poland, as many female-architects worked as a part of a husband and wife team. Emancipation in the period of Socialism acquired purely cosmetic and superficial notions of equal rights meaning that the significant input to design concepts by females-architects was largely unrecorded (Paletta, 2019).

Despina Stratigakos (2016) architectural historian and author of *Where Are the Women Architects?* ponders the crux of women's historical oversight, concluding that female-designers were disregarded by historians and academics eager to emphasise Modernism's love affair with machine manufacturing, industrialised production and architecture. The stereotypical view in the patriarchal world of architectural design of a male only culture is clearly evident in academic writing. This pattern only became acknowledged when a wave of feminist design historians started asking: where did all the women go?

Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak

While Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak was the first architect educated in post-war Wrocław, in 1974 she also became the first woman to receive the Honorary SARP Award; the most prestigious award that an architect can receive in Poland. Awarded annually since 1966, it has been handed to only five women; of which only two received individual awards (the remaining three women were recognised in partnership with their husbands with whom they worked). For this reason alone, it is worth appreciating the work of female-architects more and drawing attention to the fact that many well-known buildings are the work of women (Marciniak, 2016).

Fascinatingly, during an interview conducted on 23 November 2020, Maciej Hawrylak (apx.2.1) indicated that Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak did not allow to fall victim to many gender prejudices. However, the reason behind that happening was not very much apparent or spoken about at the time, nor was it historically recorded.

"My Mother has shown from the very beginning that she's capable of establishing herself in the environment (Wrocław) [...]. She was a talented perfectionist and devoted herself to her passion-profession with great commitment [...]. In the beginning, she worked in a team with Edmund Frąckiewicz, Maria and Igor Tawryczewski. The so-called House of Scientists on Grunwaldzki Square and the Mezonetowiec were implemented under her direction because she "won" an internal competition. The whole team based their designs on her concepts [...] proving her work level."

Maciej Hawrylak (2020, apx.2.1) also deduced that it is uncertain whether Grabowska-Hawrylak was a feminist; elucidating that her neglect of the women's emancipation issues came from Grabowska-Hawrylak's conviction that her status at Miastoprojekt Wrocław was the result of talent, hard work and strong character. Grabowska-Hawrylak (2016) additionally disclosed this supposition:

"I must admit that I have never taken gender into account, it didn't matter to me in the slightest. The fact that I am a woman mattered only in as much that having a home and family, I had more work than my fellow architects."

Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak was obliged to use repetitive, stylistically typified elements in her constructions. Nevertheless, Grabowska-Hawrylak demonstrated her commitment and architectural awareness as a creator by "bringing the Manhattan experiment to an extreme form" (Duda, 2016, p.146) and earning the nickname "Mr Engineer" on construction sites (Hawrylak, 2020, apx.3.1).

"When I started to design the Manhattan Complex, I knew that the basis is irrefutable: you have to find a way out so that the prefabricated elements would create an original, non-standard form. Since we couldn't afford to model each residential building individually – I arranged [sculptural] compositions from ready-made, serially reproduced elements. Concrete can be a perfect sculpting material." (Piątek, 2006, p.82).

The key to obtaining an attractive elevation form was the use of the unique prefab casts, a technique new to construction in Poland at that time. Grabowska-Hawrylak (1973, p.376) reflected that the industrial typification and design standardisation were inevitably accompanied by monotony, therefore every opportunity to achieve distinctiveness needed to be taken. "Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak remains an architectural giant, and nobody or anything will take her position away" (Springer, 2015).

Halina Skibniewska

Halina Skibniewska managed to secure estates remarkably different from Socialist Realism or prefabricated tower blocks. Some critics assigned this phenomenon to Skibniewska's political commitment or highly placed husband, Zygmunt Skibniewski. Such thinking is wrong as many of her designs had been finished before she joined the parliament (Springer, 2017, p.188-192). Moreover, Halina Skibniewska's involvement with the Socialist authorities was often looked upon critically without much apperception given to the tremendous sociological research and work she achieved because of it.



fig.47



fig.48



fig.49



fig.50

Studies on sociology, ecology and urbanism in architecture were not practised in Poland before the post-war period. Skibniewska could not come to terms with the growing design standardisation and the lack of consideration of its consequences (Springer, 2014). Halina Skibniewska demonstrated her interdisciplinary and user-oriented alertness through conduction of public surveys with the goal to determine the future inhabitants' living expectations. Such activities fuelled research presented in *Tereny Otwarte w Miejskim Środowisku* (lit. 'Open Areas in the Urban Environment', Skibniewska, 1979).

Furthermore, Skibniewska's critical architectural understanding of sociology and urbanism led her to disagree with the state's suggestions that bathrooms and toilets should be located in the hallways and shared by several families, banning the proposed legislation from entering the construction law standards (Springer, 2014). Bogdan Dzierżawski (*Ill-born*, 2017, p.201-202), Skibniewska's colleague from Warsaw University of Technology, architect and lecturer pointed out:

"The moment she learned that running from office to office doesn't bring any results, she decided to organise cyclical conferences at which she presented her findings. She spoke in plain language so that gentlemen in ties understood what she meant. They sat and listened; she talked – like at a lecture. Then they left, convinced of her point. We all [fellow architects] shook our heads in disbelief".

As the professor at the Warsaw University of Technology, Skibniewska trained and educated a sizeable group of architects, among them women who have a high standing in the profession today. One of the students being Ewa Kuryłowicz (2020, p.90-91), and as she recollects:

"Professor Skibniewska was able to accomplish a lot in the [architectural] field. Conversations with her were like a breath of fresh air. She explained that residential architecture must be approached as seriously as any other. I remember once her reprimanding a classmate who designed a bathroom without a window, although he could have done so".

According to Prof. Kuryłowicz (Urbańska, 2016, p.101), the reason behind Halina Skibniewska becoming a politician was her focus on social issues. Skibniewska stood on the side of those excluded due to illness or disability, cleverly taking advantage of her high position as the first female Deputy Marshal of the Sejm (1965-1985) in Poland. She was also the second, of only two women to be 'individually' awarded the Honorary SARP Award in 1978. No female-architect has achieved that accolade since then. However, all of her political influence would not have helped at all, if not for the architect's talents, knowledge and a certain empathy; seeking high-quality solutions that would meet the needs of users (Szustakiewicz, 2019).

Conclusion

In recent years Socialist architecture and its history has gained more interest for many reasons, but the most important of them is the need for Polish modernity's history to be written, understood and appreciated (Springer, 2017). In the process of analysing Modernist architecture; Polish, British or global; categories such as aesthetic or functionality are mere guidelines. In Poland's case, Socialist architecture was Modernism's branch and as such had an intrinsic philosophical and ideological background. It is crucial to acknowledge that Polish culture was not placed on the margins of the most critical changes in the 20th century. However, it consistently and in an original way contributed to them. Therefore, Socialist architecture that accompanies Poles' everyday life is the evidence of Polish modernity (Cymer, 2018b).

Although 30 years have passed since the collapse of Socialism in Poland, the post-war architecture is still assessed not for its quality, technical or artistic value, but by the times in which it was created. There is a lack of criteria for its evaluation and methods of conservation, so subsequent buildings are lost, ultimately forgetting what in post-war Socialist modernism was the main force of the architect's expression: the creation of a new modern world (Cymer, 2019, p.462).

Western 20th-century's architects visualised the urban landscape through the creation of raw concrete blocks. In contrast, Socialist architects were presented with the limitations of material typification and strict norms. However, the nostalgic idea behind all of the last century's' architects' designs was related to the community. For the creators of 20th-century's architecture, the beneficiaries of design became the society, or more precisely, the society of the future. Interior and Spatial Design fundamentally focuses on the spatially-humanistic aspect of architecture; therefore, acknowledging architecture's global history, and learning inspirational lessons, is vital in modern-day design.

Furthermore, as Libby Seller (2017) stresses, it is impossible to discuss design history without engaging in male and female binary notions. It is also impossible to ignore another very uncomfortable truth that design historically was, and in no small way, remains irrefutably patriarchal. Similarly, in an era where gender neutrality is the topic of conversations, it prompts a discussion about whether such gender-specific stereotypes should exist. Notably women's participation in the Polish People's Republic's social, political and economic life has also not aroused much sympathy among researchers over the years. Women's role in building the spatial environment has so far been a real 'blackhole' and women's names appear too sporadically; rarely referring to such a complicated matter as architecture (Marciniak, 2016).

Historically, "women have thrived on new turf where there are no male custodians and have been free to invent their ways of thinking" (Massey, *et al.*, 2020). Consequently, the 20th-century design has expanded into new areas in line with advances in science, technology, and social and economic changes, all of which have positively benefited from women's contributions to it (Sellers, 2020). It is important to remember that although the beginnings of some systematic research into female-architects' achievements (and the failure to

always notice them) is evident, it is still a new topic on architectural forums. Thus, the need for such studies and conversations to continue.

In Socialist Poland during the post-war period, the number of female-architects who gained singular recognition for their work and gained success in their field was insufficient. More adequate records of women who worked in tandem with their husbands were kept, but women rarely developed independent careers for themselves (Fidelis, 2010). Therefore, Halina Skibniewska and Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak's individual contributions to the Socialist architectural thinking exemplify the female-architects' ability to influence, shape and create the modernist vision of the Polish People's Republic. Maciej Hawrylak and Ewa Kuryłowicz agree with this perspective in their insightful reflections of the two architects; recognising that personal goals and visionary ideas fuelled their roles as designers of the reborn country.

Halina Skibniewska was the creator of architecture, at heart close to people and nature; through the closest reference to specific conditions: the atmosphere of the place, surroundings, tradition, history and landscape. Skibniewska is an example of a designer who felt the architect's social responsibility for creating inclusive environments. Additionally, Halina Skibniewska wisely used her political power and respectable position to aid design and users, later contributing to the overthrow of the Socialist system in 1989 (Szustakiewicz, 2019).

Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak's forward-thinking urbanistic visions surprised the Socialist design industry, powered by industrial typification (Duda, 2019). Grabowska-Hawrylak created the Socialist architecture's icons; showcasing personal creativity exploration and uniqueness; which later became evidence of her search for a diverse and distinguishable form of architecture. Moreover, as Filip Springer (2015) maintains what counts the most, is the reassurance that historically, a female-designer dared to create such challenging constructions.

The overall research presented in this paper determines how Halina Skibniewska and Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak have achieved what today, in the age of consumerism and aesthetically driven projects, is merely unattainable for many creators: they focused on functionality, attention to detail and users. Skibniewska and Grabowska-Hawrylak were characterised by their interdisciplinary and innovative thinking that questioned the standardised understanding of architecture and urban planning in the post-war Poland. They focused on the modern, regenerative awareness of space that affects a person as the user in a variety of ways.

Thereupon the thesis on the admirable influence of female-architects on the modernist vision of the Polish People's Republic is formed. Nonetheless, the subject matter of women in design is a crucial complex of global importance. The role of the female-practitioner in architecture as a topic for discussion is timeless, and as more feminist movements challenge the toxic culture of overwork, underpay, precarious contracts and historical dynamics, it is bound to be explored (Wainwright, 2019). Thence, this dissertation is a call and an inspiration to further study other female-designers' achievements yet to be acknowledged.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Lectures

1.1 Architecture on Stage: The Barbican Estate at 50

On October 11, 2019, as part of the *Architecture on Stage* programme, the Barbican Centre held a conference honouring 50 years since the Barbican Estate's completion. This lecture aimed to showcase the project's evolution, exploring how the estate has changed since it transformed the City of London in 1964. The debate further explored how Modernist estates can still serve as a model for future housing and urban design developments. With guest speakers such as Stefi Orazi (designer and author of *The Barbican Estate* book), Elain Harwood (architectural historian), and many more, the lecture was an exciting event that fuelled my dissertation's thematic searches.

The conference served as an inspiration for the topic of this dissertation. My initial idea was to focus on analysing British Brutalist architecture. However, at the dissertation proposal tutorial, I was presented with an alternative route. Acknowledging that my fascination with all forms of Modernism came from my interest with post-war architecture, upon seeing Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak's "Brutalist" architecture in Jane Hall's *Breaking Ground: Architecture by Women* I change the thematic trajectory of my dissertation. From then on, I was focusing on the Modernist architecture in Poland, or rather Socialist architecture, as it was linked to the political fate of the country. All the same, answering the question which I had been asking myself since childhood days: why does every housing estate in Poland look boringly the same, and who let that happen?

The Barbican Estate and Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak's Manhattan Complex have many distinctive and similar features. For example, both projects were adapted to the users' comfort: specially designed cabinets for milk and newspapers daily deliveries, public services and cultural amenities at the door or hidden car parks located underneath the platforms on top of which the estates were built, to name a few. Moreover, both projects showcase outstanding user awareness and consideration to inclusivity and functionality of the buildings.

Furthermore, The Barbican Estate has a unique service of replacing any used/missed structure or interior elements. The maintenance team keeps many original components, e.g., door handles, faucets, etc., which were all thrown away in the 1980s. During the Postmodernism movement, many inhabitants "gut out" the flats entirely and create new spaces from scratch, which had very little connection to Modernism's simplicity, or Brutalism at that. Similarly, this attitude was observed in Poland between 1990s and 2000s, resulting in many significant buildings being demolished or destroyed in other ways. Therefore, the subject felt relevant to write about, as I started making personal observations and linking one topic to the other as they are interwoven.

1.2 Women in Design: Exploring the Gender Imbalance in Design Education and the Design Workplace

On November 20, 2020, Professor Anne Massey, on behalf of the University of Huddersfield's School of Art, Design and Architecture, held a webinar dedicated to the women of the design industry. This event explored the reasons behind gender imbalance in both the design workplace and design education. Furthermore, the speakers discussed ways in which the imbalance can be addressed. The aim of the debate was to raise awareness and propose new solutions by looking critically at design histories, analysing the present and mapping out the future. Given the unique

pressures of homeworking under lockdown, the issue of women in design felt more pressing than ever.

The session included contributions from Dr Elizabeth Darling (Oxford Brookes University, co-editor of *Suffragette City: Women, Politics and the Built Environment and AA Women in Architecture 1917-2017*), Libby Sellers (curator and author of *Women Design*) and others. Their perspectives on the subject matter helped me navigate my understanding of the size and importance of female-creators' historical context. It was such an inspiring and moving lecture from which I gathered enormous knowledge and research which in many ways benefited my writing. The webinar was a fascinating opportunity to listen to women's history being presented by the leading female-experts who write about the topic and have an enormous perspective and knowledge of the industry.

Interestingly, inspired by the lecture, I too decided to create my own statistics. I found that out of 63 participants at the webinar – only 3 of them were men (with one being there to record the session)! Most guest speakers (all women) were between the ages of 40 and 60. There was only one student (female) other than me who participated in the talk. This disparity proves that the topic still has very little popularity amongst researchers and historians, further emphasising the need for conversations on women's matter in design.

Appendix 2 – Language

2.1 Architectress

Despina Stratigakos' 2016 book *Where Are the Women Architects?* translates to Polish as *Gdzie Są Architektki?* with the word 'architektki' being stylised as 'architekt-ki' (lit. 'architect' + feminine noun gender ending). This served as an inspiration for the word architect-ress (lit. 'architect' + feminine noun ending). This word does not exist in the English dictionary and was created solely for the purpose of this dissertation. Just like there is a feminine noun of the word actor – actress, I created architectress to act as a feminine gender noun of the word architect to distinguish the gender specific title and the issue that comes with it even more.

Appendix 3 – Interviews

In order to understand Jadwiga Grabowska-Hawrylak and Halina Skibniewska design philosophies better, I decided to contact Maciej Hawrylak and Ewa Kuryłowicz. My intention was to find out how the two architects navigated themselves in the industry defined by men. That was something professional researchers have not contextualised at all. In my dissertation, I aimed to show what can be learned from the study and analysis of these architects' work. Their insights gave me critical information on how architecture was perceived in the past century plus what were the architects goals back then. Hence, contacting Maciej and Ewa influenced how I answered the question my dissertation posed; through architectural analysis and description of design priorities resulting from the architects' "biographies" presented by the two people from Jadwiga and Halina's lives.

Contact details of the two architects were found on the universities' websites.

**Both Ewa Kuryłowicz and Maciej Hawrylak have agreed for their names to be used in this paper.*

3.1 Maciej Hawrylak – Transcript of the Interview/Email from 23 November 2020

Dear Paulina,

The answer to your questions is not that simple, as the matter is not so obvious. The system in which my Mother lived and created was based on the patriarchy, which now could be considered natural at that time (whatever it means). Therefore, women had a more difficult path of promotion or realisation of their talents – except for actresses, I guess.

It seems that not only the party imposed its norms on women, but that was the social perception of the role of women back then, not only in Poland. In the UK and other places too, but at a different level - our living standards were different.

She was indeed the first woman awarded by SARP. Of course, she felt distinguished because, as a talented person, she knew from the beginning of her work that she could compete with men. I don't know if she was a feminist and if she would have fought for women's rights. She was a talented perfectionist and devoted herself to her passion-profession with outstanding commitment. Her colleagues praised her, so she probably did not feel any discomfort about being a woman. The award is also a matter sought by Stefan Müller, then a person who had constant contact with SARP and was able to lobby for his friend whom he claimed he admired.

In the beginning, she worked in a team with Edmund Frąckiewicz, Maria and Igor Tawryczewski. The so-called House of Scientists at Grunwaldzki Square and the Mezonetowiec were implemented under her direction because she "won" an internal competition. The whole team based their designs on her concepts, suggesting that they knew the proposed solution was better, proving her work level.

Of course, things were completely different at the construction site. A woman issuing orders or "requesting" corrections was unheard of. Not only in Poland but all over the world, at least that's what my fellow female-colleagues tell me. On a more anecdotal note, she was often referred to as Mr Engineer by the builders, who must've been shocked by her bold and strong character!

Since my Mother has shown from the very beginning that she is capable of "it" in the environment (Wrocław), she was therefore respected and did not have to prove anything. That said, it was different to obtain approval for the construction of Manhattan at Grunwaldzki Square. She went to the Ministry of Infrastructure for permissions, etc. It's funny because, in fact, Mum hated Brutalism; tarred cracks in concrete slabs (caused by water freezing in the gaps) were the work of administrative bungling of those times. She couldn't even go by the buildings, absolutely detesting how they turned out.

Mum's career was definitely more significant thanks to her husband – not only as a child guardian. It was our Father who did the day-to-day 'school run' so that Mum could focus on work; she'd spent days and nights at Miastoprojekt. Back then we lived in the House of Scientists (which Mum designed – it was a housing estate developed for academics of the Wrocław University of Science and Technology). It was easier for him because he had a 5 min walk to work. Undoubtedly, Dad's help and understanding played a considerable role.

Moreover, as a professor (or earlier the postdoctoral researcher) in opencast mining, my Dad had "colleagues" in the industry. I believe they could somehow convince their construction pals to listen to what my Mum had to say. Of course, this is not a proven theory. Nonetheless, the bespoke moulds for concrete prefabs at Manhattan were made by a friend of the house and my Dad at the Polytechnic foundry. If my Mum hadn't designed those, the blocks would've looked like any other housing estate in Poland. Reason being: she would've had to use typified elements that everyone else was using at the time – there is only so much one can create from a 50x50 block.

So, as you can see, it was rather a non-standard situation of the time. It's hard to frame all the aspects that helped my Mother in realising her passion. That said, my Mum worked a lot. Much more than other colleagues. But not because she was a woman, but because she was a perfectionist. Capable at that! She wanted to show it all the time, so she worked on the 24/7 basis (literally even on Sundays). She didn't have a big team because she wanted to design everything herself. She was not a born leader of a large office who knows how to manage it well. Yet, she (somehow) was possible to fight the stereotypes effectively. As I said: she "fought" to get where she was because she was hardworking and talented, so it was easier, but that does not mean EASY.

I hope I have answered your questions/doubts in some ways, Paulina. It's hard to describe my Mother's persona because she was beyond the standards and even now, trying to fit her into a format, she sneaks out :-)))))

I have no problem with my name being referenced in your work - and good luck with writing!

Kind regards,

PhD arch Maciej Hawrylak,
Faculty of Architecture,
Urban Design and Settlement Processes Chair
Wrocław University of Science and Technology

3.2 Ewa Kuryłowicz – Transcript of the Interview/Email from 26 November 2020

Dear friend of female-practitioners,

I think that women's topic in architecture should be the theme of design research in the following years, and I am pleased to see your interest. I feel about this subject as a reaction to long years of silence. We must put an end to pretending that the problem does not exist.

Prof. Halina Skibniewska was a great role model for me. The most you will learn about her approach to design norms is through reading her book *Rodzina a Mieszkanie* or *Tereny Otwarte w Miejskim Środowisku* (they are out of print, but you can access them in the National Library and Archives). I can say that nobody contested standardisation in practice then, because there was no other option. That said, nobody liked design norms, of course. It was a hated part of the Polish People's Republic design culture, which was finally happily expelled (with much credit and thanks to Prof. Skibniewska). I never heard her complain about male domination, and I believe she did well in the male world. She knew how to sway them towards her rights!

I recommend a few sources from which you could gather some research:

- 1. The book 'Architektki' with Dr Marta Urbańska's essay about Prof. Halina Skibniewska, I was also interviewed for it.
- 2. I probably talked about my professor the most in an interview for the *Polityka Salon* magazine. A draft for this interview (in fact, the content remains the same) is attached.
- 3. I also talked about her in an interview with Agata Twardoch, which will be published in *Architektura-Murator*, but I do not have the final text yet, so keep an eye on that.

It is time to revise both sexes' positions in culture and look at it from a modern perspective; seeing every human life as a unique opportunity. Of course, you have the permission to include my name and I wish you success in writing your dissertation. Best of luck!

Paulina, I hope I helped 🤗

Best wishes,

Ewa Kuryłowicz