Main author
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Summary and appraisal of the project by the jury
The author proposes to convert an abandoned factory building into a multifamily housing ensemble in an industrial neighborhood of the city of Lodz. A new wood structure is inserted within the existing steel frame, creating a careful balance between the old and the new. The individual housing units are distributed to create an alternating sequence of outdoor court-yards and indoor living spaces, with trees irregularly dispersed throughout the building complex. Spatial qualities unfold from the juxtaposition of the existing large-scale factory structure and the small-scale frame-work of the new housing units. A range of measures are additionally introduced to increase the building’s ecological performance, while foregrounding community-building via participatory processes, ultimately giving credence to the author's vision of an “ecommunity” architecture.

The jury greatly appreciated the design’s vision to address both the physical and social fallout of the post-1989, post-communist deindustrialization of Poland and particularly welcomed the idea to transform rather than demolish existing factory buildings – very much in the spirit of the by now well-known maxim, attributed to Frédéric Faccin, Anne Lacaton, and Jean-Philippe Vassal, “never demolish, never remove or replace, always add, transform, and reuse.” In this re-gard, the project was read as a manifesto promoting a discourse on the need to address the existing building stock of cities as a resource in its own right. While the jury argued that greater attention could be given to the question of renewable energy production and storage, members of the jury nonetheless applauded the projects social agenda to rediscover some of the positive tenets of Poland’s socialist past and its collective communal spirit as lived reality.

Statements on the sustainability of the project by the author
Building re-use
Trying to re-use existing architecture and avoiding its demolition should be one of the main concerns when designing for cities. Eliminating the demolition process reduces pollution and cost of investment, and often saves historical value. Ecommunity Factory is showing how to activate post-industrial plots in a simple way. Wooden skeleton is designed among existing steel structure and reinforced concrete walls of an old production hall from the 1960s. Each housing unit is connected to the roof to obtain good lighting conditions. As the design is divided into existing “outer shell” and “inner frame” structure, the building process is shared into two stages: adjustment of production building and never-ending stage of formation the evolving living space.

Active community
Most of the multi-family housing buildings are designed and built without any involvement of future residents in the building process. In this project, inhabitants take action in designing their own living space. Each housing unit of Ecommunity Factory is made of wooden beams and insulation – the technology that allows changes to be applied at any time in the future. Existing factory “shell” represents the community gathered under one roof, housing units reflect specified, individual needs. Shared space creates a field for activity of inhabitants, as well as a meeting place for local groups. The strength of future societies lies in “cooperation in diversity”. Architecture should allow for the expression of individual needs together with common goals of society.

Ecological change
There are several levels of ecological approach in Ecommunity Factory. First is an idea of using a non-ecological factory as a mean to create a green futuristic way of living. Second is creating the “space in between” as a ventilated thermal buffer between interior and exterior. Space in between is filled with plants and wood that creates healthy environment. Third layer supports the idea with technical solutions. Each housing unit is connected to flat-plate collectors for solar water heating and rainwater harvesting. Factory space allows for cultivation of plants, roof terraces can be equipped with greenhouses.

Ecommunity
Converting a factory into housing, Lodz, Poland

Ecommunity Factory is located in Lodz, a city in the center of Poland. Existing factory building is a part of larger industrial area placed among residential area and 500m from busy downtown. Project shows a method to absorb old industrial buildings into living urban tissue and activate its surroundings as well as the interior. In the picture: Left: location scheme, project parts, cross-section of factory building.