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HOUSING POLICY AND HOUSING IN SOCIALIST MACEDONIA

Abstract: Owning a home as a space (apartment or house) is the inalienable right of every individual. Home is the center of the world for everyone who owns it, and its absence causes a number of repercussions in ones social life. Housing is an important context in the political, economic and social life and depends on its conditions. Regulated housing, as part of the social and spatial policy, is a witness of a functioning and developed country, while at the same time contributing to social cohesion, preserved integrity and well-being of each individual. In Yugoslav times, ideological coloration required equality in the ownership and allocation of an apartment; declaring it a personal investment and a social good, the state had the imperative to provide the individual with this good or to create suitable conditions, adapted to the existing standard, to obtain it himself without much inconvenience. Self-management and associated labor introduce mitigating circumstances for the acquisition of housing rights, but also a series of irregularities and inconsistencies in its resolution.

Keywords: home, apartment, housing, socialism, self-management

Home is where it all starts - said Thomas S. Eliot. Our home is a 'safe place', a place where we are protected and surrounded by people we love and respect¹ Throughout the history of human existence, man has needed a home or a house.² Every person needs a place to sleep and rest, a space where they will perform basic personal hygiene, a space where there will be a source of water, food; a space in which to keep personal possessions and in the end feel the safest. Most people live as part of a family, in a place called home (Allen 2008: 32–34). Home is a space in which one feels 'on his own', and quality housing is one of the

1 Initial Study on Roma Housing in the Municipality of Stip. Skopje: Habitat for Humanity Macedonia, 2017, 12. http://www.habitat.org.mk/doc/studii/STIP_mak_FINAL.PDF

2 An apartment is an independent and functionally connected set of spaces and premises, and an apartment building is a residential building containing two or more independent apartments. A family home is a housing design that houses a fully functional apartment or possibly another for the second generation of the same family. The multi-storey construction is not an "invention" of today. The earliest forms date back to ancient times in Rome in the form of multi-storey buildings. On the ground floor there were porches and shops, and on the first floor apartments. <http://www.rudarska.hr/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/VISESTAMBENA-IZGRADNJA-1-1.pdf>

crucial elements in every individual's life. Providing one's own home and quality of life meets the basic needs and rights of a decent life and determines the quality of life, while at the same time it regulates and opens up the individual's prospects for development in various fields.

Housing as a phenomenon has a dual role, on the one hand it is a social phenomenon that encompasses social and economic issues of one's life, and on the other it is an individual aspect - it covers the basic needs of human existence i.e. it provides the most important living space for survival.

An apartment or a house³ is a space that provides a family with optimal conditions and a healthy environment in which it is possible to meet our basic human needs such as eating, housing, washing, dressing, resting, and so on. The apartment allows the person and the family to fulfil their vital functions. It is a place where an average life course can normally take place. When disturbances occur in the human-housing relationship the consequences can be very severe, not to mention disastrous. The internal structures of an individual are largely built in his home (Acevski 1995: 388). In that piece of space that is the 'centre of the world' every necessary social gathering takes place like marriage and parenting. So owning a home is a basic, elementary and inevitable human need, the provision of which is nowadays burdened with complex socioeconomic characteristics. The concept of the apartment as part of the personal consumption falls into the category of food and clothing (Bežovan 2004: 89–90).⁴ Without a decent apartment, life is virtually impossible, and living conditions are difficult. Therefore, the apartment is not just a commodity but a necessity. By Article 25 of the UN Universal Declaration, the right to own a home is included in the fundamental human rights group. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in its Article 25 that 'Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the

3 Housing facilities can be residential, residential-business and business-residential. Residential buildings, depending on the number of apartments in them, can be single-storey and multi-storey buildings, and according to their use, residential buildings for special purposes. Single-family homes are family homes, villas, atrium houses, row of houses and holiday homes. Multi-dwelling buildings are apartment buildings with two or more apartments, which can be residential blocks, multi-storeys and skyscrapers. Special Purpose Residential Buildings are residential buildings intended for the temporary accommodation of persons at social risk in accordance with social protection regulations, single and home facilities (student, worker, educational, community home and therapeutic group home). If the building has both residential and business premises, and more than half of the space is intended for housing, the building is a residential-business, and if more than half of the space is intended for business and other economic activities, the building is a business-housing. *Law on Housing Article 3*, http://www.aerodrom.gov.mk/Upload/Editor_Upload/Zakon%20za%20domuvanje%20-%20konsolidiran.docx

4 Socialist egalitarianism proclaims 'the right to housing' as a basic human need, and thus a basic human right and social good - the collective wealth that belongs to the whole nation as opposed to the perception of housing as personal consumption or investment i.e. the concept of housing as a commodity (Bežovan 2004: 89).

right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.⁵ Hardly affordable housing or the inability to own an apartment are a complex physical, social, cultural, urban, environmental and economic factors that shape people's lives in a society.

After the end of World War II, the field was cleared in order to begin to actualize and seriously address the housing issue of the citizens of the then Yugoslav state, which included the Socialist Republic of Macedonia. After 1945, Yugoslavia went through a phase of transformation from agricultural to industrial country and large investments were made in the infrastructure and planning of new urban settlements to provide conditions for migration to the cities.⁶ The period of defining and forming official policies and institutions has begun just like the establishment of general population and housing policies, the regulation of urban planning, construction and housing legislation.

After the split from Stalin and the abandonment of the central and planned Soviet economic model in Yugoslavia, the early 1950s marked the beginning of a new phase of economic and social development. With the establishment of workers' self-management, which was considered a Yugoslav ideological brand (Jakovina 2012: 25) in the socio-political system, an egalitarian idea of social ownership was established.

One of the most recognizable features as the main motto in post-war Yugoslavia,⁷ which defined the country as unique in the world, was social equality

5 Article 25 (1), *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, UN 1948, at: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

6 See <https://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/prilozi/lik/%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%85%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%D0%BA%D1%82%D0%BA%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5-%D1%88%D1%82%D0%BE-%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B4%D0%B5%D0%BB%D0%B5-%D1%98%D1%83%D0%B3%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B2/>

7 The specific housing construction in Yugoslavia stemmed from self-governing socialism, policies of non-compliance and decentralization, as well as the economic capacity of the state and society. In the period from 1948 to 1970, housing architecture in Yugoslavia was of a very experimental nature due to the intense efforts to research new architectural patterns and values that marked the period of an economic development of the country. Yugoslavia, officially an urban, technical-technological and aesthetic strategy in the field of architecture and urbanism, adopted the principles of modernist architecture most clearly expressed in the Athens Charter CIAM (les Congres internationaux d'architecture moderne; Krstić 2018:132).

The passage of the Athens Charter in one way did not mean the adoption of the forms of 'capitalist urban development'. First, the values of egalitarianism and social justice are embedded in the Athens Charter in principle and in terms of the actions of the specific political actors. Concluding that 'the right to housing means that society as a whole assumes responsibility for resolving the housing issue for all citizens,' Sekulić cites several laws that are based on housing as a law in Yugoslavia: 'It was prescribed by the Decree on the Management of Housing, published in the Official Gazette of FNR of Yugoslavia no. 52/1953, as a principle that ensures permanent use in accordance with the regulations in residential buildings' (Sekulić 2012: 22–23).

as a core value of the new state, which tended to provide equitable distribution of material goods and universal satisfaction of the basic living needs. In addition to the introduction of internal political reforms, the search for an economic and political ally during the 1950s started Yugoslavia's shift to the West, which meant the introduction of new moments, both ethical and aesthetic, that the country had not known until then. Unknown, completely new, and ultimately unwanted influences have brought about changes in consumption and popular culture, which at one point appeared as a 'signal of de-Sovietization and liberalization' (Vučetić 2012: 336). The Yugoslav component of the self-management market was increasingly emphasized in the area of housing, given that 'one's residential status was directly dependent on the position of the company on the Yugoslav market, the economic sector, its occupation and its position in the business hierarchy,' as a deciding factor (Archer 2016: 11). Similar to the countries of state socialism, housing was a 'currency' in a system designed to attract professionals and reward local bureaucrats (Andrusz et al. 1996: 13).

The post-war reconstruction of the existing one and the construction of the new housing stock in Yugoslavia, or Macedonia, were most intense during the 1960s and 1970s, when hundreds of thousands of dwellings were built throughout the state (Alfirević, Simonović-Alfirević 2018: 26– 38). Numerous problems, such as widespread poverty, the inability of building materials to be sold for free, and the Communist authorities' view that 'the tendency for a private house or apartment is an expression of petty bourgeois pursuit' (Dobrivojević 2012: 115–130), have affected housing in the first post-war decade, with almost the only builder of new housing being the state (Dragutinović et al. 2017). The tendency to reduce the surface area of the apartments, the short design deadlines and the inexperience of the designers were reflected in the construction, resulting in the apartments being mostly uncomfortable for living (Dobrivojević 2012: 115–130). On the other hand, the uncomfortable and narrow space had its own compensation in the common public space, which was a reflection of the ideological concept.⁸

'The right to an apartment is the basic legal institution that provides the working class with one of the most important living conditions,' was the conclusion of the First Yugoslav Forum for Housing and Construction in 1956 (Sekulić 2012: 18). These laws were in line with the principles of socialist self-government established in June 1950 and concretized three years later. Specific decisions to invest in meeting collective and individual needs are made in the basic associated labour organizations (OZT). The employees had the right and obligation to declare the investment priorities of their enterprises. The construction of community housing is financed in two ways: with a portion of the annual associated labour organizations income and with a portion of the employee income contribution. Namely, since 1956, 4% of each salary has been invested in a communal housing fund (Krstić 2018: 132).

8 After World War II, expanded communication comes as a result of the tendency in the structure of the apartment to form two centres: a) primary - living room and b) secondary - family gathering space around the dining room outside the kitchen area (Bajlon 1979: 27–38). According to Bailon, expanded communication stemmed from the need to 'find a form of family gathering around the table' in places where overcrowding of the apartment does not allow for it, and is increasingly being introduced in addition to the living room. However, placing a couch in the living room, according to Bailon, is not only contrary to life but also

In practice, however, the cost and the high demand for housing enabled the independent construction of family homes, which became the cornerstone of Yugoslav housing provision. Yugoslavia never attempted to settle its inhabitants in ambitious, utopian ways as the USSR did between 1956 and 1965, when a third of the population was housed in newly constructed housing (Attwood 2004: 189), while authorities assured that the lack of dwellings will be settled in a period of 10 to 12 years (Harris 2013: 9). In terms of providing housing, Yugoslavia had more in common with the neighbouring Albania, Hungary and Bulgaria, where, despite the cultural and civilizational taste for family homes according to socialist sensitivities, housing construction still exceeded the number of public sector housing (Archer 2018: 35). Although housing was given “an advantage as a true form of socialist living” (Fehérvári 2013: 76), individuals were encouraged to independently build houses to remove the burden of securing a home that would be outside the authority of the state. With the transition to worker self-management in the early 1950s in Yugoslavia (Unkovski-Korica 2016: 24), public living became part of the social sector. In the social housing system, tenant rights were most often acquired in the workplace,⁹ based on a census of workers whose housing issue had to be resolved, and was closely linked to the investment of a particular enterprise or institution, or the so-called worker organization (WO) in the construction of housing. The allocation of funds from consumer funds, following the principles of self-management¹⁰ and associated labour, was decided

to the concept of extended communication. The application of expanded communication in scarce socio-economic conditions provided various opportunities, such as: a) the establishment of an entrance space for the reception of guests; b) the creation of a daily learning and play space for children; c) separating the activities of the children and their association from those of the parents and their friends; d) experiencing more space in the apartment, etc. Although, in terms of the time and circumstances in which it came about, the idea first appeared in theory, its application in practice led to various bad interpretations in which the daily residence was replaced by extended communication, which was supported by the norms of the time. All of this in practice had the effect of turning the living room into a living and sleeping room for another family member at night, thereby worsening general comfort in the apartment (Alfirević, Simonović-Alfirević 2018: 8–17).

9 By law, there were rules or principles for granting an apartment; the criteria were: those in need of housing, number of family members, seniority and contribution to the job. However, in reality, the organizations or institutions where people worked had complete freedom to decide who should be the lucky one: first the position in the organization and the economic success of the organization were the deciding factors. Official statistics also confirm that highly skilled workers, whether white or blue collar, had the advantage, as well as those highly positioned, who were in a better position than others (Nord 2005: 231–234).

10 While, due to the economic crisis and austerity measures, the decline in social housing production, the accelerated commercialization of the economy as a reflection of global economic trends, in fact, administrative and urban centres has made social housing a magnet for migration and a place with increasingly severe housing crises. In all this, lower-educated workers and workers in the low-accumulation sectors felt a multiple burden - excluded from the displayed system of prizes and merits by the end of the 1970s, they were disproportionately burdened with austerity measures as well. In addition, there was an increasing deficit of democracy in self-management and a conflict of interest between the production and the consumer-economic and the appropriate urban model, that is, the producer-worker and the consumer-

by the workers' council of the worker organization, but the regular allocation of funds for housing allowed for a faster discharge of the waiting list (Duda 2010: 122). In addition, irregularities occurred in the allocation of housing or affordable loans. Some acquired their housing rights by skipping the waiting list, others with purpose-built home loans built holiday homes themselves, and yet others retained the social apartment after moving into a family home that was built not with ordinary loans but with a loan from the worker organizations. Employees who did not exercise their tenancy rights only had the opportunity to obtain affordable loans through the worker organizations or regular consumer housing loans and to build on their own.

Whereas, on the one hand, housing policy was concerned with the allocation of social housing according to 'social arguments', and this meant that housing was allocated to those most in need (socially disadvantaged), a high factor in scoring was also the length of service, when it came to the decision of the workers' councils from certain enterprises. However, in practice it has been shown that the distribution of tenancy rights was made according to a list of criteria based on the functions held by employees (Sekulić 1986: 335) which meant apartments were allocated to those who were higher in the division of labour and in the organization of production. This created a paradoxical pattern in which the lower social classes often with private investment - loans - acquired ownership of the apartment, although tenant rights were desirable because of the symbolic instalment payments.¹¹ This is evidenced by Vladimir Lay's research, which showed that the upper strata of society were the most commonly held tenants in which managers were the most represented then the intelligencia, the officials, and ultimately the workers (Lay 1986: 36).

Through the case study of my interlocutor called Jovan, I will vividly try to capture the living situation of a family that chronologically exists through two crucial moments (Socialist Republic of Macedonia and after) and try to fully depict the housing problem in Skopje. The main character is Jovan, the interlocutor who tries to tell of his experience but also to bring the family story closer to us. He spends half of his life trajectory in socialist Macedonia, and still has a great memory when it comes to the way allocation of apartments and construction sites

worker. In practice, this led to the depoliticization of the self-managing worker: 'The distribution of apartments was primarily organized by the management of the company, and the workers' councils nominally approved the decisions of the management' (Archer 2016: 12). The lack of available housing in urban centres and the chronic inability of official institutions to cope with it have fuelled the population of various alternative housing strategies: surviving in multi-family housing, renting and informal building.

¹¹ Rent for socially owned apartments in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was extremely low, averaging about 5% of one's salary, while those who rented apartments had to pay a full salary for it. The construction firms themselves also made a lot of money but also risked losing the entire investment. There were tendencies to raise the housing rent but at the same time people were not to be overburdened with housing costs, unlike today when about 35–40% of one's salary is spent on rent and housing costs. See more at <https://www.masina.rs/?p=6055>

was carried out at that time. He embodies his life story precisely at a time when the General Urban Plan of Skopje was being brought “the law above the law”, as well as all the possible changes and interventions therein; the detailed urban plans which were carried out through complex and lengthy procedures under the management and the supervision of the state and possibly the city public services.

Given the state ownership of the land and the building parcels, the alienation of land, especially construction land was preceded with pre-established rules and disclosed in the form of a public competition. The commercial principle was minimally present throughout the proceedings because the prices were set by the state authorities, and the payment of funds to those to whom the plots were allocated was made on purposely-created bank accounts. Jovan is actually a child of university professors, who at the time were originally given an apartment in a building in Debar Maalo, which belonged to the University, but due to the small living space and poor comfort, his father applied to the university administration to get a building plot because there was not enough spacious apartments, and those offered were of a small size. The relevant state authority established a list of sites which were subject to sale within one year. At the same time, various state-owned enterprises, institutions, and the University submitted lists of requests for a number of locations for the construction of family houses for the needs of the members of their work collectives. Such lists were established by previous internal competitions that, using a scoring system, made a ranking of potential bidders for the purchase of construction sites. The highest ranked families were the largest in number, with the lowest level of income and the least affordable housing area. A similar principle was applied in the allocation of apartments. Construction sites received as many candidates on the special lists as the locations (or housing units) received at a given institution. Jovan and his family waited for four years exactly to get a construction site and eventually, with a little intervention, received it in the Taftalidze neighbourhood.

It was only after that part of the procedure was completed that they then concluded a contract for the use (not ownership) of the construction land and paid the necessary funds as compensation. After all these procedures had been completed, his father, as a new customer, received a property certificate, and that document enabled him to obtain a long-term bank loan at the value of the house they were to construct. The project, i.e. the potential object (family house, in this case) could not exceed the parameters set by the GUP and DUP for the height of the structure, the size, etc. Jovan still has one case in his memory that ends with tragic consequences, precisely because of and related to the allocation of building land to build a house for lack of apartments. He perceives that period of socialism as a time when morality was ‘nurtured’, especially when it came to housing. The case that ends tragically for not respecting the legal framework also reflects the moral behaviour, that is, the perception of moral values in the seventies of the last century and almost leaves the impression of incomparability with today’s corrupt environment, deprived of a normal dose of conscience. Perhaps the extraordinary solidarity, which was the main principle of the system at the time, caused the tragedy. Namely, it was a well-established social figure in the game,

later I learned through casual conversations that it was a university professor with a large family, low economic power and inadequately resolved housing issue. The professor possessed a certain privileged position in the society of that time, but never thought of seeking higher rankings and unconditional earning to be awarded a faster construction land.¹² But his peacefulness and kindness, and his poor financial status and inadequate housing situation, have indirectly helped him find people, influential enough, who have voluntarily responded to his rankings outside the regular scoring list, to move it from lower to very high. This allowed him, without fulfilling the criteria, to gain the right to obtain a construction site, but at the same time to exclude someone from the list who regularly met the criteria. The case later comes up in the media, his name was revealed, his identity and the misconduct made public. The man, loaded with shame, with a disrupted public and family reputation, suffered a heart attack and died. Cases of corruption, abuse of office, abuse of political power and, ultimately, nepotism were not common practices in a society in which equality and solidarity were the main principles of management and action.

In the models of the former socialist countries, the dominant form of the housing economy was permanent housing (tenant law) in state housing, in which the market played almost no role and represented a certain form of quasi-ownership. The state sought to reconcile supply with demand, and management and maintenance services were provided at the cost of a lease that did not cover all costs. The allocation of housing contained more of the element of reward or merit than a real necessity for housing. The housing shortage caused by such a system has led to the emergence of a dual market: private house-building, private rental housing transactions, private real estate transactions, housing market and small, fully private sector for renting apartments (Damjanović, Gligorijević 2010: 87).

According to Bourdieu, 'the organization of space in the form of a built environment does not only reflect certain structures and identities but also generates specific practices and structures and imposes a social organization on human perception' (Poenaru 2007: 30). Hence, in the socialist ideological discourse it was necessary to create a specific and unified urban discourse that would form a space 'as a shell in which social processes are transformed into nuts' (Čaldarović 1989: 2), and to construct a 'new organization, the workplace and the street' (Crowley, Reid 2002: 15) and to insert in their production the ideological

12 Instead of contributing to the formation of a classless society, the social housing sector gave birth to new social inequality. Namely, the system was not able to provide sufficient housing for the numerous Yugoslavs who moved to the cities, and the distribution was favoured by experts in relation to manual workers. Obtaining social housing has become a kind of privilege or incentive for labour mobility (a means of attracting professionals), not an option available to the working class. Many failed to get such an apartment, with their housing issue being resolved by individual building or renting a social apartment from current customers. This is not only specific to Yugoslavia. A similar dynamic has been observed throughout Eastern Europe by sociologists like Ivan Selenii. See more at <https://www.masina.rs/?p=6055>

significance of new social relations and thus to provide 'control over the meaning, use of space and spatial practices of citizens' (Crowley , Reid 2002: 4).

The formation of specific socialist relations in terms of housing was contributed by the new way of organization by the state, which sought to shape new social relations and build new social consciousness. The direct intervention in the norms of the living standard, the quality and way of life was preceded by two important processes: the process of industrialization, which created the narrative of life in the cities, and the process of modernization, which influenced the new organization and quality of life in its technological sense. The material culture of a socialist's housing implied its definition through the material conditions in a man's own home and the goods he possessed, and that moment of class distinction is lost within the concept of objectification of labour. Accordingly, every member of a socialist society could achieve a new, modern culture of housing and material progress for the whole of society, and the state, under whose care the standard of living lay, through the nationalization and confiscation of excess housing provided 'the right to an apartment' - a material basis which is a prerequisite for a cultural revolution as the basic and lawfully established concern of the socialist state.

Momcilo Markovic, one of the most influential Yugoslav leaders, at that time a federal health minister, stated in 1962 that: 'The apartment is a commodity, a potential private property, and it is useful to help anyone build or buy it' (Le Normand 2014: 138).

This housing policy research points to the conclusion that housing and other spatial policies in Yugoslavia, which included the then Socialist Republic of Macedonia, were partially successful. Housing policies in Yugoslavia have been able to reduce housing shortages in urban areas and significantly improve post-war housing quality, but not to reverse the housing crisis. Worse still, the economic crises, the hierarchy of investment priorities, and the growing influence of the market components of the worker self-management system have led to an uneven distribution of social housing stock. The failure of the housing policy of Yugoslavia to resolve the housing issue universally and in an egalitarian way according to the ideology it advocated contributed to the delegitimization of the very principles of universality and egalitarianism. Lack of housing, poor quality and its poor distribution have diminished citizens' confidence in socialist strategy, policies, institutions and values.

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