

UNDERSTANDING POST-SOCIALIST EUROPEAN CITIES



CASE STUDIES IN URBAN
PLANNING AND DESIGN

EDITORS: Melinda BENKŐ & Kornélia KISSFAZEKAS

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URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN**

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CONTENTS

- 6 — Amoeba Cities: Towards Understanding Changes in the Post-Socialist European Physical Environment
Melinda BENKŐ & Kornélia KISSFAZEKAS
- 26 — Chance for “Creative City” Turn in Belgrade
Vesna TOMIĆ
- 44 — Project for Brno Regional Centre as the
“New Heart of the 20th Century City”
Lukáš KOS
- 64 — Ephemeral Metamorphosis of the City:
Bulky Waste Collection in Budapest
Gergely HORY
- 82 — Bratislava’s Changing Urban Fabric After World War II
Peter HORÁK
- 100 — The Post-Soviet Glandini Housing Neighborhood in Tbilisi
Tinatin GURGENIDZE
- 116 — (Post-)Ideological Mass Housing Landscapes:
Transformations within the Sykhiv District in Liv
Nataliia MYSAK
- 134 — Towards a Participatory Regeneration of the Troshevo Housing
Estate in Varna
Florian FAURISSON
- 154 — The Sotsgorod in Soviet Urban Landscape
Nikolai VASSILIEV
- 172 — Decentralised Mass Housing Policy in Socialist Yugoslavia
Branislav ANTONIĆ & Eva Vaništa LAZAREVIĆ
- 188 — Post-War Single Family Settlements in Wrocław
–Analysis of their Urban Planning and Present State
Zuzanna NAPIERALSKA
- 204 — Modern Leisurescapes in Erosion: Balaton Region Case Study
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DECENTRALISED MASS HOUSING POLICY IN SOCIALIST YUGOSLAVIA¹

Comparing with the post-Socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (also known as Socialist Yugoslavia, 1945-1992) had unique political, economic and social characteristics.^{2 3} After breaking with Stalinism and the USSR in 1948, the Yugoslavian government promoted a special form of socialist organization, known as local or workers' self-management.⁴ Despite this approach, it retained the key characteristics of a socialist country, while also allowing for some novelties such as better connections with the Western capitalist countries, a combination of planned and market-driven elements in the economy, and greater territorial decentralization. Consequently, it enjoyed socio-economic progress overall and a better standard of living for its citizens, analogous to some Western countries.⁵

Workers' self-management was profoundly reflected by the spatial environment of Yugoslavian cities, and it had an immense impact on strategic sectors of a socialist state. Housing was among them; incorporating in its agenda better living conditions for the rising Yugoslavian proletariat. In line with workers' self-management, Yugoslavian housing developed some distinctive characteristics.⁶ Probably the most remarkable was the resolute

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- 1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: This paper was completed as a part of the research project “*Research and Systematisation of Housing Development in Serbia, in the Context of Globalisation and European Integrations, with the Aim of Housing Quality and Standard Improvement*” (TP 036034), financed by Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia.
 - 2 Pichler-Milanovich, Nataša (1999): *Housing Privatisation in Central and Eastern Europe: from Policy to Practice*. Tokyo: United Nations University, 3. Available from the internet: http://archive.unu.edu/hq/library/Collection/PDF_files/IAS/milanovich.pdf, accessed 6 June 2018.
 - 3 Petrović, Mina (2004): *Социологија становања* [Sociology of Housing]. Belgrade: Institut za sociološka istraživanja, 81-88.
 - 4 Djordjevic, Jovan (1959): “The Communal System in Yugoslavia”, *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, Vol. 30, 169-170.
 - 5 Liotta, P. H. (2001): “Paradigm Lost: Yugoslav Self-Management and the Economics of Disaster”, *Balkanologie*, Vol. 5. Available from the internet: <http://balkanologie.revues.org/681#quotation>, accessed 6 June 2018.
 - 6 Petrović. *Sociology of Housing*, 81-82.



decentralization of housing governance from state to republic and local, municipal tiers.^{7,8} This was unique in Socialist world, where the housing sector was centralized, planned and administered by state. Elsewhere, the provision of new housing was strictly under state control, but in the case of Yugoslavia, new housing mainly depended on local authorities and local housing cooperatives.⁹



This decision had further influence on local housing policies, which became quite independent, with separate housing standards and norms for each municipality.¹⁰ Although this decentralization policy is mainly appreciated in scientific circles, it also left some negative consequences, such as the growth of illegal residential

Typical neighbourhood developed as a housing cooperative, from the late socialist period in Sremska Mitrovica, Vojvodina, Serbia.
Source: Author

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- 7 Vjelikov, Vladimir (1983): *Начини становања у граду: Урбано програмирање* [The Models of Housing in City: Urban Programming]. Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 4-5.
- 8 Petovar, Ksenija (2003): *Урбана социологија: Наши градови између државе и грађанина* [Urban Sociology: Our Cities between State and Citizens]. Belgrade: Geografski fakultet - Arhitektonski fakultet - IAUS, 50.
- 9 Tsenkova, Sasha (2009): *Trends and Progress in Housing Reforms in South Eastern Europe*. Paris: Council of Europe Development Bank, 26.
- 10 Hirt, Sonia and Stanilov, Kiril (2014): *Twenty Years of Transition: The Evolution of Urban Planning in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, 1989-2009*, Nairobi: UN Habitat.

neighbourhoods in peri-urban areas around cities in Socialist Yugoslavia. These areas suffered from weaker and less monitored local governance.¹¹ Furthermore, the inherited level of local development influenced the preconditions for housing supply and quality. For example, cities in the Northern region, Vojvodina with longer histories of regulation and better economic performance achieved higher standards in housing during the communist era than cities in central Serbia.¹²

However, housing in Socialist Yugoslavia still retained many of the main “*Socialist*” elements. The state system supported the construction and existence of publicly-owned dwellings for workers, so-called “*housing with tenant rights*.”¹³ Like in the countries under Communism, new publicly-owned housing mainly took the form of multi-family residential buildings. Moreover, these new residential projects were primarily built in towns and cities, in line with an unofficial, albeit very evident, “*urbocentric policy*.”¹⁴ Also, housing construction was very efficient, especially during the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁵ Hence, with more than 75 million square meters of built surface for residential use, socialist multi-family housing makes up the bulk (66%) of existing multi-family housing stock in Serbia.¹⁶ This housing stock was further manifested in different architectural forms, which generally substantiated the previous explanation of different housing standards and norms at the local level. Free-standing residential buildings with few flats and “*lamella*” (ribbon-shape) buildings with several entrances were most frequent. They are followed by residential buildings in row, mostly situated in the old, central parts of Yugoslavian cities. High-rise residential towers (10+ floors) were the least pervasive, making up less than 5% of all multi-family residential buildings built during socialist era.

11 Petrović. *Sociology of Housing*, 81-82.

12 Petovar. *Urban Sociology*, 11-14.

13 Milić, Vladimir (2006): *Урбанистички аспекти социјалног становања* [Urban Aspects of Social Housing]. Belgrade: Arhitektonski fakultet, 152-153.

14 Petovar. *Urban Sociology*, 11-14.

15 Plavšić, Rada (1996): Ефикасност станоградње у предстојећем (прелазном) период развоју [The Efficiency of Housing Construction in Forthcoming (Transitional) Period of Development]. In M. Ralević – N. Kurtović-Folić (eds.): *Унапређење и развој становања* [Upgrading and Development of Housing]. Belgrade: Arhitektonski fakultet, 1996, 377-379.

16 Jovanović-Popović, Milica, Ignjatović, Dušan - Radivojević, Ana, Rajčić, Aleksandar, Đukanović, Ljiljana, Ćuković Ignjatović, Nataša and Nedić, Miloš (2013): *National Typology in Serbia*. Belgrade: Faculty of Architecture & GIZ, 16-17.



Sombor and Pancevo, typical examples from the most active period of housing construction in Socialist Yugoslavia. Source: Author



In contrast with the effective construction of multi-family housing with tenant rights, publicly-owned flats were never as frequent in Socialist Yugoslavia's urban areas as they were in other Communist countries. Throughout the entire housing stock, they only prevailed in Belgrade and several purposely built urban settlements (for example, mining towns).¹⁷ Moreover, in terms of the main factors of housing supply, the difference between major and minor cities is also noticeable. For instance, influential state bodies (such as the Yugoslavian People's Army) were key players in housing provision in major cities, but they were barely present in smaller cities.¹⁸

The lower share of publicly-owned dwellings was especially visible in smaller cities and towns, where the construction of single-

¹⁷ Petrović, *Sociology of Housing*, 84.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 90.

family housing was dominant due to affordable bank credit. This was one of the effective measures of housing policy in Socialist Yugoslavia. In such places, publicly-owned dwellings in multi-family buildings represent the “old” housing stock nowadays, because older examples, built before World War II, are almost non-existent.¹⁹ Linking this lower share of post-war multi-family housing with the previously explained decentralized housing policy, it is very questionable to state that large mass-housing estates, typical for many cities across post-Communist Europe, feature extensively in middle-size and smaller Serbian cities. On the contrary, it seems that multi-family neighbourhoods erected in Socialist Yugoslavia’s cities are smaller in size, but also more numerous, scattered throughout cities.

This issue is in the focus of the present research. Its aim is to identify if state-sponsored decentralised housing policy had a greater impact on the territorial development of multi-family housing at the local urban level. In the other words, are socialist multi-family neighbourhoods spatially decentralized, or do they sprawl across certain smaller cities in Serbia? Along with this aim, the size and the number of these neighbourhoods will be examined. Finally, the research intends to clarify the question (if not the existence) of mass-housing developments in the case of these urban settlements.

METHODS

In accordance with the fact that similar *in situ* research has never been conducted, this research is developed through an inductive method, using a multi-case-study. This approach requires several research units with several similar features to be comparable. The set of criteria is formed to allow the proper comparison of selected cities before concrete analysis. The final comparison of all adequate results will be fundamental for research findings and conclusion insights.

Selected research units are 6 cities from the northern Serbian province of Vojvodina: *Kikinda, Pančevo, Sombor, Sremska Mitrovica, Subotica and Zrenjanin*. They share many common characteristics which are important for comparison:

19 AntoniĆ, Branislav (2016): How to understand the history of housing planning in modern Serbia to achieve new quality in housing? In C. Hein (ed.): *Proceedings of 17th IPHS Conference – Volume 02: The Urban Fabric*. Delft: TU Delft - Faculty of Architecture, 170-171.

- All of them are middle-size cities, with population of 35,000 - 100,000 inhabitants.
- All of them are district seats in the province of Vojvodina, so they have a similar variety of public institutions (district court, district hospital, 1-3 nationally important research institutes, 1-3 institutions of secondary and tertiary education, etc.).
- At the national level, they are considered smaller cities that are nonetheless important. Cities with a population of more than 100,000 inhabitants (Belgrade, Novi Sad, Niš, and Kragujevac) are internationally and regionally important. By contrast, urban settlements, without city rights, can be considered as towns. Selected cities are also designated national nodes and seats of functional urban areas by the operative spatial plan of the Republic of Serbia.²⁰
- All of them share similar histories spanning the last several centuries. First, the adoption of the features of a modern European city occurred during the Habsburg rule of lower Pannonia (18th-19th centuries),²¹ where central government in Vienna and strict Habsburg military organisation introduced and implemented various measures for the consolidation of the local economy and the regulation of the urban matrix. This was later followed by a socio-economic zenith during the socialist period.²²

Similar size, status, historical development and importance in the territorial organization of Serbia imply similar key urban patterns. Moreover, their size and status enable enough varieties in socialist multi-family housing. On the other hand, they are not very large and thus not too complex for such research, like Belgrade or Novi Sad.

20 Danciu, Mihai-Ionuț, Antonić, Branislav and Bica, Maria Smaranda (2016): How to Understand the Global Phenomenon of Urban Shrinkage at Local Level? Comparison of Urban Areas in Romania and Serbia. In E. Vaništa Lazarević - A. Krstić-Furundžić - A. Đukić - M. Vukmirović (eds.): *Proceedings of 3rd International Academic Conference on Places and Technologies*. Belgrade: Faculty of Architecture, 328-329.

21 Pušić, Ljubinko (1987): *Урбанистички развој градова у Војводини у 19. и првој половини 20. века* [Urban Development of Cities In Vojvodina in 19th and the First Half of 20th Century]. Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 17-21.

22 Djukić, Aleksandra (2011): *Keeping the Identity of the Main Streets in Vojvodina Towns* (Ph.D. Dissertation). Belgrade: University of Belgrade – Faculty of Architecture, 105-111.

STUDY: MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING IN MEDIUM-SIZE CITIES IN VOJVODINA, SERBIA

Criteria

The theoretical basis presented in the introduction defined major characteristics as a backbone to identify the spatial reflections of decentralized housing policy during the Socialist era in the case of multi-family residential neighbourhoods. Three adequate criteria are derived from these data:



Two residential areas of different size: the big Prozivka Estate in Subotica and the small Orao neighbourhood in Sremska Mitrovica.
Source: Author



- *size of neighbourhoods* – The term *neighbourhood* is very fluid and highly dependent on local context.²³ This means that the proposed types of neighbourhoods must be shaped according local features. For this research, the minimal size of a neighbourhood is three multi-family buildings with in-between open space in an urban block.

23 Wellman, Barry and Leighton, Barry (1979): “Networks, Neighborhoods and Communities: Approaches to the Study of the Community Question”, *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, Vol. 14. 363-366.

The presence of this in-between open space is crucial to create a neighbourhood. For example, three residential buildings in a row along a street cannot be considered as this type. Small neighbourhoods are up to one complete urban block. Medium-size neighbourhoods are from one to four urban blocks, and large ones include more blocks. The last case can be considered a type of mass-housing.

Socialist-Realist
neighbourhood in
Sremska Mitrovica,
an urban reconstruction
of the inner core.
Source: Author



Completely new
neighbourhood at the
periphery of Kikinda
from the 1980s.
Source: Author

- *frequency of neighbourhoods* – this criterion will be checked as the quotient of the entire number of the neighbourhoods, defined by the previous criterion, and city size (i.e., number of inhabitants within the administrative limits of a settlement).
- *position of neighbourhoods* – This criterion is the most complex one. It refers to typical situations regarding the construction of socialist multi-family housing in urban fabric. Three proposed types are: (1) position of socialist housing within historic core, built as an “*urban reconstruction*” project;²⁴ (2) position in the “*middle belt*”, or in previous zones of single-family housing with low density, where this housing upgraded the level of urbanity, bringing some elements of urban reconstruction; and (3) position at the urban periphery, in the form of new residential projects.

In order to simplify the analysis of this criterion, the cities are divided into zones according to the three types, with divisions drawn at “*point zero*” of the city (usually the main square in the historic centre) and the administrative limits of a settlement. Thus, the resulting zones are historic core/centre, older/inner residential areas, and new/outer residential zones with industry built during socialism. This is in line with the presence of a clear mono-centric urban structure in all cases.²⁵

24 Vaništa, Lazarević, Eva (2003): *Обнова градова у новом миленијуму* [Reconstruction of Cities in New Millennium]. Belgrade: Classic map studio, 25-28.

25 Djukić, *Identity of the Main Streets*, 105-111.

26 Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia – SORS (2014): *Comparative Overview of Population Numbers in 1948, 1953, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2002 and 2011: Data by Settlements*. Belgrade: SORS.

Results

Research results were obtained through *in situ* investigations in six selected cities, research of relevant literature, and analysis of existing urban matrices through aerial photographs. Obtained results are presented in a cumulative table which simplifies comparative analysis of selected cases:

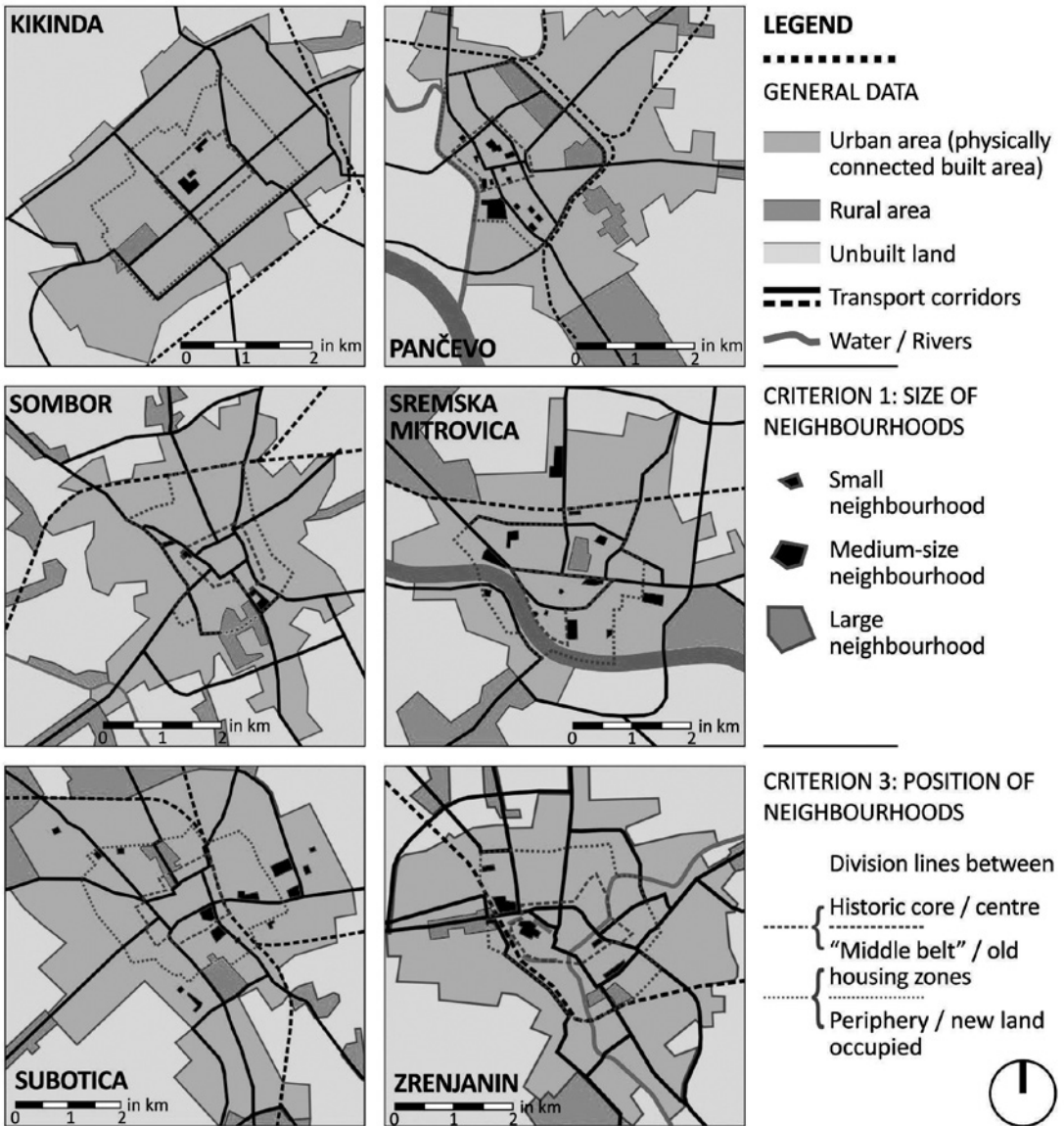
CITY (number of inhabitants ²⁶)	TOTAL NUMBER OF NEIGHBOUR- HOODS (TN)	CRITERION 1 – SIZE OF NEIGHBOURHOODS	CRITERION 2 – FREQUENCY OF NEIGHBOURHOODS	CRITERION 3 – POSITION OF NEIGHBOURHOODS
		Small / Medium size / Large (numbers and share)	Number of inhabitants / Total number of neighbourhood	Central / middle / peripheral (numbers and share)
Kikinda (38,065)	4	2/1/1 (50%/25%/25%)	9,516	3/1/0 (75%/25%/0%)
Pancevo (76,203)	16	11/2/3 (69%/12%/19%)	4,762	8/7/1 (50%/44%/6%)
Sombor (47,623)	4	2/1/1 (50%/25%/25%)	11,906	1/2.5/0.5 (25%/62%/13%)
Sremska Mitrovica (37,751)	14	7/6/1 (50%/43%/7%)	2,697	4/8/2 (29%/57%/14%)
Subotica (97,910)	16	9/5/2 (56%/31%/13%)	6,107	1/6/9 (6%/38%/56%)
Zrenjanin (76,511)	7	2/3/2 (29%/42%/29%)	10,930	2/4/1 (29%/57%/14%)

For a better understanding of obtained results (particularly for Criteria 1 and 3), accompanying maps of the six analysed cities are provided. In addition to the third criterion, the division between historic core, older/inner residential areas, and new/outer residential zones is indicated on the maps.

Characteristics of
multi-family housing
in medium-size
cities in Vojvodina.
Source: Author

DISCUSSION

Presented results undoubtedly confirm that the decentralisation of housing policy in Socialist Yugoslavia has left an unavoidable impact at the urban level. This is clearly demonstrated by the spatial distribution of multi-family housing, the most significant housing type in. First, there is a great variety in the number of identified neighbourhoods within the cities under analysis, from 4 to 16. In relation to the size of the city, it serves to emphasise the local approaches even more. In the case of *Sremska Mitrovica*, one multi-family neighbourhood occurs with 2,700 inhabitants,



allowing the idea of a “sprawl”. By contrast, *Kikinda and Sombor*, cities similar in size, have very centralized residential development – only 4 new neighbourhoods were formed in both cities – that is, one neighbourhood per 11,000-12,000 inhabitants. Second, the number and frequency of identified neighbourhoods pertain to their size. Generally, there are many small neighbourhoods in *Sremska Mitrovica and Pančevo*, comprising just several buildings around a yard in many cases. However, *Pančevo* also differs from *Sremska*

Spatial decentralisation of socialist-era housing neighbourhoods in medium-size cities in Vojvodina. Source: Author



Mitrovica by having three large neighbourhoods. Third, the position of analysed neighbourhoods within urban fabric also supports the identified variety of approaches. For example, just one of *Subotica*'s 16 neighbourhoods from the communist period was built in historic core. On the contrary, three-fourths of such neighbourhoods are located in the historic centre in *Kikinda*. Other examples lie between these two extremes.

Graphic illustrations of the results (maps) probably better explain the cause-effect relations in this analysis. The influence of local context and approaches is evident. Small and medium-size neighbourhoods are positioned more often in older urban fabric as examples of “*small-scale*” intentions in the process of urban reconstruction. Larger residential estates, which may be referred to locally as mass-housing projects, were built on the edge of the former limits of urban areas, where bigger land plots were available. This dichotomy indirectly shows that financial issues played an important role in housing construction and allocation in Yugoslavia during socialist period.

It is also interesting to emphasize that, in many cases; socialist multi-family neighbourhoods bear the elements of “*new urban gates*” due to their location along the main entrance corridors from bigger cities. For instance, the two largest neighbourhoods in *Zrenjanin* are built along the corridors to Belgrade (southern axis) and Novi Sad (western axis). Similar patterns occur in the cases of *Kikinda* and *Sombor*. Connections to new industrial zones, which was a significant part of socialist urban development agenda, are not so prominent in the cities of Vojvodina under analysis. For example, huge industrial plants in Pančevo are located at the southern outskirts of the city, far away from three aforementioned large-housing neighbourhoods. Similarly, just one of fourteen multi-family neighbourhoods in *Sremska Mitrovica* is located close to a huge socialist-era industrial plant, located at the eastern edge of the urban area.

CONCLUSION

Obtained findings delineate the unique qualities of the spatial consequences of housing policies in Socialist Yugoslavia. Although specific housing policies in the country have often been cited and explained, and plenty of data have been collected at the national and regional levels, investigations *in situ* have been rarely conducted. Thus, this paper represents valuable research into Yugoslavian socialist housing at the local level. Furthermore, identified characteristics indicate that some elements of local housing policy from the socialist period can be significant for the ongoing improvement of current housing trends. The formation of new neighbourhoods in outer and less urbanised parts of the historic urban fabric, viewed as reconstruction and upgrading, is particularly viable, because these parts of the cities are in focus today, in the time of post-socialist transition. Present-day projects usually target these areas. However, they are usually independent architectural solutions, without ambitions and intentions to go beyond this level and to contribute to wider/urban scale.

The findings of this research are also a good base for further research, which could improve general research into the unique housing policy in Socialist Yugoslavia, as well as investigations of the divergent local urban policy in Yugoslavian cities. It is obvious that the presented figures and spatial distribution of multi-family residential neighbourhoods in the cities of Vojvodina can lead to the formation of the specific typology of these neighbourhoods, where types followed some elements of local urban development during this period. In some cases, these neighbourhoods carried a visible formalistic approach – for example, they strived to create new city boulevards or new city gates; in other cases, they contributed to the densification of the city core; still others aimed rather at filling gaps in urban matrix; and some were simply located on then inexpensive land. These new angles of research can further clarify the links between non-spatial causes and spatial effects, because each selected city had its own development trajectory during socialist era, with different demographic, social, location-related, economic and financial conditions. Such research can be crucial to the goal of summarising and comprehending the connections between the housing and urban policy of cities in Socialist Yugoslavia, as products of the specific socio-economic conditions within this uniquely independent country.



The post-socialist environments of eastern and central Europe are now witnessing a ferment of regeneration opportunities and creative solutions. This book, authored by a wide range of innovative researchers from the regions, including architects, urban designers, planners and historians, provides a richly diverse variety of contemporary insights into this topical and vitally important subject Ð encompassing both historical origins and present-day challenges. **Professor Miles Glendinning, University of Edinburgh / Convener, Docomomo Specialist Committee on Urbanism and Landscape**

Progress? Lost path? Mistake? Rebuilding? Or destiny, that we need to accept? Should we or are we able at all to catch up with the West? Or should we walk our own path? The post-socialist urban development is struggling with its own identity. In this fascinating book today's young researchers Ð architects, architectural historians, and urban planners Ð raise questions, and try to process answers from the past of the Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) in an effort to get a clearer vision of their future. **Professor Emeritus Tamás Meggyesi, Budapest University of Technology and Economics, Faculty of Architecture**

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