Between Political Agenda and Common Desire: Genealogy of Socialist Dwelling in Postwar Croatia (1945-1960)

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Introduction: The Socialist Dwelling

"Do spaces have politics?" With this question, raised in the introduction to their acclaimed book *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, historians David Crowley and Susan E. Reid open their research into the interactions between space and politics.[1] Are there any physical and aesthetic characteristics that allow spaces to be classified according to a particular political ideology? In the public urban domain of the Eastern bloc it is fairly easy to detect spaces that, in the context of socialist ideology, answer this question in the affirmative. For the most part these are ceremonial spaces, monuments, people's palaces, often with recognizable Socialist Realism aesthetic features. However, Crowley and Reid's book also offers a whole range of examples that demonstrate how ideology permeated those spaces that did not necessarily possess the potential for representation, but rather belonged to the intimate domain of everyday life. Our paper follows this thread, examining the implications that socialist ideology had on the domain of housing in post-war Croatia, which was at that time part of Yugoslavia.

Early efforts to create a new architecture steeped into the communist ideology can be detected in the articles that were published in the federal architectural magazine *Arhitektura* (*Architecture*), founded in 1947 with this very agenda in mind. In the editorial to the first issue the editors wrote that their mission and their most pressing task is to "form the conceptual basis of the new architecture."[2] To create this new architecture, however, a radical break with prewar practices was required, as well as a clear distinction from the architecture of the "capitalist West."[3] In the beginning, the Soviet architecture served as a model, but this changed following the break between Yugoslavia's President Tito and Stalin and the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Inform-bureau (the East European association of Communist parties) in 1948. Soviet-style socialism was thus replaced with a new yet untested experiment in "self-management socialism." As a result, series of social and economic reforms implemented during the 1950s induced the shift from a planned economy towards a so called "market socialism" and in that process a unique model of a socialist consumerist society was developed.[4] Subsequently, only a few short

1 David Crowley and Susan E. Reid (eds.), *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, *Socialist Spaces* (New York: Berg Publishers, 2002).

2 *Arhitektura* 1–2 (1947): 3.

3 Ibid.; Neven Šegvić, "Zablude i kriza buržoaske arhitekture" ["Misconceptions and the Crisis of Bourgeois Architecture"], *Arhitektura* 13–17 (1948): 129–131.

4 During that period, the country experienced its own "economic miracle." The GDP grew at an average rate of 6.2 percent with the annual industrial growth rate of no less than 13 percent. This prosperity was based on increased investment in light industry and financial and technology support by the West. Nevertheless, the miracle ground to a halt, and subsequently the two economic reforms in the 1960s reduced the role of the state and brought the country closer to international trade and customs associations. This "market socialism" differed significantly from the highly centralized Soviet-type economic system on which the first post-war five-year plan was based. Igor Duda, "Jugoslavija u europskom društveno-gospodarskom

years after the end of the war, the architectural and ideological debates published in *Arhitektura* underwent a double reversal. Architectural discourse now needed to find a new ideological platform – one that was different from both Western capitalism and Soviet-style communism. It was found in the theoretical concept of "comprehensive functionalism," a breakthrough term constructed by a prominent Croatian architectural theorist, Andrija Mohorovičić, which proved incredibly flexible in ideological debates.[5] This concept rejected Soviet Socialist Realism, and although it did indeed rely on Western modernist models, Mohorovičić adopted skillful rhetorical subversion to set the concept apart from the functionalism of the "bourgeois" West. He argued that while Western functionalism was mechanically and technically fully rooted in economic considerations, "comprehensive functionalism" was not confined by it. Rather, it was enhanced with the addition of the humane social layers: local histories, regional morphologies, psychological, cultural, and political aspects, and thus fully in tune with the socialist aspirations.[6] Along with the lack of recognizable Socialist-Realist aesthetic, the study of ideological implications in Croatian post-war architecture requires a wider field of considerations – of discourses, spatial relationships, and the use of these spaces. The question of residential architecture is a particularly complex one here as in contrast to the architecture of public buildings, residential building typologies do not possess representative characteristics that can reflect political power.

The "socialist dwelling" does not exist as a unique and clear concept within architectural terminology, nor is there a precise definition of the socialist dwelling. Aspects of political influence can be found in the fact that housing was a political project from the very beginning. The rural-urban migrations triggered by the processes of industrialization along with the war-damage inflicted to the existing housing stock caused massive housing shortages that subsequently brought housing issues promptly to the center of public attention.[7] Promises to resolve the "housing issue" soon became an inevitable part of the new socialist official rhetoric, in which the dwelling was given a new symbolic argumentation – it became a reflection of the new era. From the very beginning, the political authorities approached issues of housing decisively and the Yugoslav government took on full responsibility for the resolution of the pressing housing question.[8] This, however, presupposed taking control of the entire existing and future housing stock. To maximize the use of the existing housing stock, the first measure authorities undertook was to form so-called "communal apartments." That entailed the allocation of additional tenants into "free rooms" in existing apartments.[9] This demonstration of

kontekstu" ["Yugoslavia in the European Social and Economic Context"], in *Nikad im bolje nije bilo? Modernizacija svakodnevnog života u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji* [They Never Had It Better? Modernization of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia], ed. Ana Panić (Beograd: Muzej istorije Jugoslavije, 2014), 14.

5 Andrija Mohorovičić, "Teoretska analiza arhitektonskog oblikovanja" ["Theoretical Analysis of Architectural Design"], *Arhitektura* 1–2 (1947): 6–8.

6 Karin Šerman, "The New Reality and the Phenomenon of Abstraction: On Some Aspects of Croatian Architecture in the 1950s and 1960s," *A&U (Architektura & Urbanizmus – Journal of Architectural and Town-Planning Theory)* 3–4 (2007): 135–145.

7 Demographic data show that in Yugoslavia in the five-year period of 1948-1953, the urban population grew by over 21%, and such a trend continued further, averaging 4.15 % of annual growth rate of urban population. At the same time, the average annual growth rate of overall population was 0.66 %, which implies that rural-urban migration was a principal agent of the population growth of the cities. Ivanka Ginić, "Dinamika urbanizacije u Jugoslaviji" ["Dynamics of Urbanization in Yugoslavia "], *Sociologija i prostor: Časopis za istraživanje prostornoga i sociokulturnog razvoja*, 31–32 (1971): 55. Ivica Nejašmić, "Uloga i značenje preseljavanja u suvremenom populacijskom razvoju gradova SR Hrvatske" ["The Role and Significance of Migrations in the Modern Population Development of the Cities of SR Croatia "], *Geografski glasnik*, 50 (1988): 45.

8 According to the first Constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRY) from 1946, the State was obliged to take care of the housing conditions of workers, and with each further amendment of the constitution, the citizens' right to housing was successively enhanced. For example, the 1974 Constitution guaranteed every citizen access to tenant's rights in public housing.

9 A Housing Commission was formed for this purpose, and it was relentless in its pragmatism and consistency. Citizens' lives were changed practically overnight, as the Commission made decisions and

the new social justice placed the citizens that had belonged to the prewar wealthier social classes in a particularly difficult position, as they were often moved into lower-quality housing, and new tenants moved into their former homes.[10]

In addition to the symbolism in the representation of the new social egalitarianism, socialist aspects in housing can also be considered in the context of a broad range of organizational elements and practices, through which the process of housing construction remained profoundly different from that in the West, such as the acquisition of building land (which was obtained through nationalization), finance and investment (the major players being companies that invested in the construction of housing for their workers), and the manner in which apartments were distributed (individuals were granted apartments according to their companies' priority-based waiting lists).

In the search for the socialist attributes of housing, however, this paper turns to the first post-war discussions of this topic published in *Arhitektura* magazine, and it is from here that it adopts the term "the socialist dwelling." Following the First Yugoslavian Congress of Architects and Urban Planners that took place in 1950 with the housing issue on its agenda, *Arhitektura* featured a range of articles that chart the exchange of professional positions and the search for a genuine kind of socialist dwelling. Nevertheless, all of the sides in this professional debate had their origins in the same thesis, namely that the housing is not an abstract technique or an economic category; it is not constructed for some abstract person "but rather for a precisely defined person, in a particular society, our laborer – the builder of socialism."[11] This thesis was in tune with the official rhetoric that inaugurated the birth of a new subject personified in the role of the laborer. The political relevance of the housing issue is therefore considered self-evident, as is the fact that the housing to be built must reflect the new social reality. Opinions differ, however, when it comes to the extent to which this new social reality should change an individual's intimate domain and everyday habits: is it enough that it provides shelter, satisfying this basic human need, or should a dwelling also play an instrumental role in the construction of the new socialist individual, together with new public building typologies such as cultural centers, workers' clubs, community and union halls, which likewise received particular attention in various issues of *Arhitektura*.

This paper traces the post-war architectural discourse on housing and discusses examples related to different theoretical positions. It questions to what extent housing was politically instrumentalized, and to what extent it was instrumental in shaping the new social and political reality. The research methodology is based on a parallel reading of primary sources coming from different research domains and dealing with the issues of architecture, politics, demographics, and sociology. Articles in the *Arhitektura* magazine, the most significant architectural periodical in Croatia in the after-war period, were used as valuable resources on the architectural discourse

resolutions about moving one family out and settling another in their place. The criteria for communal apartment clearly show the dreadfulness of the housing conditions at the time: a married couple with three children could receive a room of a maximum of 25 sqm in size, a 16 sqm room was given to a family with two children while a 9 sqm room was intended for couples with one small child, or two adults of the same gender. This lack of personal space and the clashing habits of old and new tenants led to tensions. Exclusively those suffering from tuberculosis could be given a private room, and only doctors with a private practice, midwives, lawyers, cultural workers, and scientists were permitted to have a study. Sanja Matijević Barčot, "Utjecaj društveno organiziranih modela stambene izgradnje na arhitekturu Splita 1945.-1968" ["The Impact of Socially Organized Housing Strategies on the Architecture of Split 1945-1968"] (Phd diss., University of Zagreb, 2014), 17.

10 For example, in 1949 the main administrative body of the City of Split reported that "From the time of the liberation to the present 7,500 housing applications by workers have been resolved, and of that number 3,650 were granted apartment space that had been previously occupied by the bourgeoisie; of the resolved applications 700 were granted private apartments, while the rest were given communal ones, and the bourgeoisie were moved out of those 700 apartments and into poorer workers' apartments, and some of them left Split …." Ibid., 18.

11 "Prvo savjetovanje arhitekata i urbanista Jugoslavije" ["The First Congress of Architects and Urban Planners of Yugoslavia"], *Arhitektura* 11–12 (1950): 6.

of the time, while political reports from the period as well as relevant secondary sources are examined for the wider political and social context. The research simultaneously follows these different layers of inquiry and chronologically unwinds dominant narratives along with their vicissitudes, whilst at the same time looking into the built environment for the representative architectural examples. Finally, while considering what the description of a socialist dwelling might be in the context of Croatia, the discrepancy between what was envisaged and what was realized has been noted – the former representing the official, collective, that which was promoted and thoughtfully considered in accordance with the socialist modernization agenda, the latter including informal, self-built housing developed along the margins of the urban space without any noteworthy attention of architects or socialist authorities.

Dwelling in Happiness: The Family House

> "It seems to me that a certain number of architects do not have a clear view of the prospective development of our socialist society. A mistaken understanding of social development is the one that sees socialism as leading to some kind of dissolution of the individual into the social collective, a kind of spiritual levelling and standardization of people's way of life … that they eat together, that they use communal spaces, including sanitary facilities … this kind of understanding is an expression of old social democratic ideas, which still find their way to us from time to time …"[12]

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, the field of housing was marked by a lack of clear and coherent professional discourse and problems when it came to construction: primitive technology, shortages of building material, and a lack of qualified workers. More substantial steps towards a systematic organization of housing construction were made in 1948, when the Federal Ministry of Construction passed the "Temporary Economic Standards for Apartments," which standardized apartment sizes.[13] Nevertheless, in the early post-war period the construction of new housing was largely left to local authorities and to their own organizational and professional resources.

It was the re-establishing of professional associations and the architectural and urbanistic conferences that eventually led to the formulation of a professional public discourse on the topic of housing.[14] The first polemical articles in *Arhitektura* were published in late 1950, and they were followed by a whole range of texts that considered various aspects of the housing issue. However, what emerges from these texts are two opposing positions, with the first arguing for individual housing and the other finding an authentic reflection of the new social reality in collective typologies.

The first position is founded in the idea that what should set the new socialist dwelling apart from its prewar (capitalist) counterpart is the comfort that it must be offering. It holds that in contrast to the cramped and unhygienic spaces that belonged to a prewar time, when workers could only afford the humblest of dwellings, the socialist era needed to offer the most comfortable living space possible, where workers could retreat from the daily hustle of an eight-hour shift at the factory and live surrounded by family and nature. Accordingly,

12 Vladislav Ribnikar, "Problem stanbenih zgrada," *Urbanizam i arhitektura* 11–12 (1950): 16.

13 Comparing size standards prior to and following the war reveals a reduction in the size of living spaces, as well as the disappearance of the so-called "girls' room," which was in fact a maid's room. In the early 1950s, when the Soviet-type centralist manner of administration was decisively suspended, all housing size standards were abolished for a time. Size standards were reintroduced in the late 1950s, and from that time onwards were a standard tool for rationalizing housing construction.

14 The first professional association in Croatia was The Club of Engineers and Architects founded in 1878 in Zagreb. After WWII, professional associations were re-established as follows: The Association of Engineers and Technicians of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in 1946, The Society of Croatian Architects in 1950, and The Association of Architects of Yugoslavia in 1952.

the first stance was formulated as follows: "In socialism the ideal dwelling, the dwelling that can best meet the needs and desires of the working man is the individual, detached family house, in which man may live according to his own habits."[15] It also suggested that since the collective housing typologies are based on the premise of economizing construction, rather than on improving workers' quality of life, they therefore cannot be a genuine socialist typology. This argument is bolstered by the example of Soviet *dom-komunas*, Fourierist forms of communal living that had been developed by the Russian OSA group (Organization of Contemporary Architects) in the 1920s, while at the same time an analogous concept was developed by Le Corbusier with his "machines for living in." Adopting the family house typology will therefore signal a simultaneous break with the prewar treatment of workers' housing, with Soviet practices of communal living, and with the Western modernist "machines for living in."[16]

Moreover, this typology is most in keeping with the ideas expounded somewhat later in the League of Communists of Yugoslavia's 1958 Programme, in which "Man's personal happiness is the highest aim of socialism," because socialism "is not built with some abstract aims in mind, but rather for real, living and breathing people."[17] Happiness in this case is living in a house with a garden. And this is precisely what the Yugoslav worker truly wants, because in general he is from a rural background and has traditional habits that were shaped by a patriarchal prewar society.[18] His household usually consists of three generations (father, mother, their children, and one or other of their parents) that are a subset of his much larger rural family network.[19] And while construction for the collective aims at "spiritual levelling" and the "standardization of their lives," a family house offers him the freedom to spend his free time in keeping with his earlier habits.[20] And no, the aspiration for one's own family house is not just a provincial desire as its opponents characterize it, but rather "a real human need."[21]

In late 1951, the Croatian Council for Communal Works and Construction launched a design competition for a workers' and employees' dwelling that would house four people. The same competition was also launched in all the republics of Yugoslavia. This was essentially a competition for a typical family house project that would serve as a model for the vast construction of new residential areas.[22] At this time, the idea of typification and standardization already became generally accepted as a tool for rationalizing and accelerating housing construction along with the size standards that had to be followed. Ironically, however, it meant that despite the family house typology being celebrated as one of individualism, the result was in fact standardized, uniform family homes. The winning entry proposed a house with traditional, regional characteristics that powerfully integrated

15 Ribnikar, "Problem stanbenih zgrada,"16.

16 Ibid.

17 Duda, "Jugoslavija u europskom društveno-gospodarskom kontekstu," 15.

18 "It is typical that as yet there has been no survey or other attempt to collect the opinions of, for instance, miners, metallurgists, and other workers and their wives about what they truly need …. The lists of the representatives of the Zenica Ironworks and mines (based on a survey that was undertaken) reveal that the majority of workers wish to build a single-storey house around 70 m2, with 2 rooms, an outbuilding, and perhaps a basement." Bogdan Teodorović, "Stan i pokućstvo" ["The Apartment and its Furniture"], *Arhitektura* 2 (1953): 49.

19 Milorad Macura, "Stanovanje" ["Housing"], *Urbanizam i arhitektura* 11–12 (1950): 24.

20 People who migrated to cities from the countryside often retained some of their rural habits, at times even when their living space no longer allowed this. This led to an issue with residents building improvised outbuildings (pigsties, hen coops, and small shacks) in the green areas surrounding apartment blocks. Vladimir Antolić, "O našim stambenim naseljima" ["About our Housing Estates"], *Arhitektura* 4 (1952).

21 Ribnikar, "Problem stanbenih zgrada," 16.

22 Similar competitions were also launched at the local level as some cities also held competitions for so-called "economic single-storey homes." Darovan Tušek, *Arhitektonski natječaji u Splitu 1945.-1995.* [Architectural Competitions in Split 1945-1995] (Split: Građevinski fakultet Sveučilišta u Splitu and Društvo arhitekata Splita, 1996), 6-10.

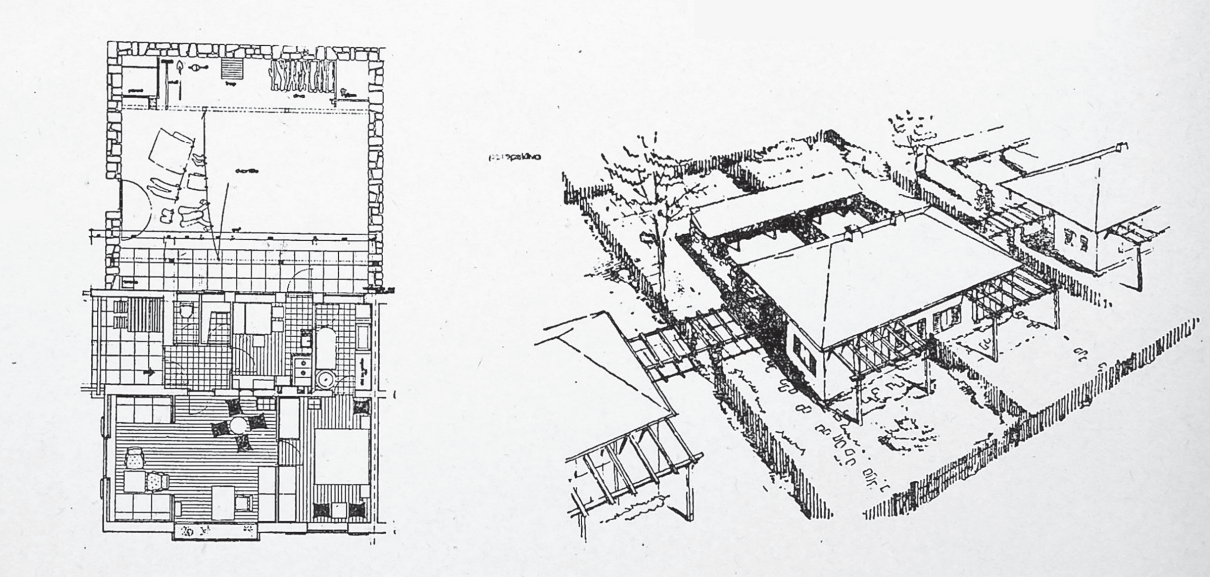


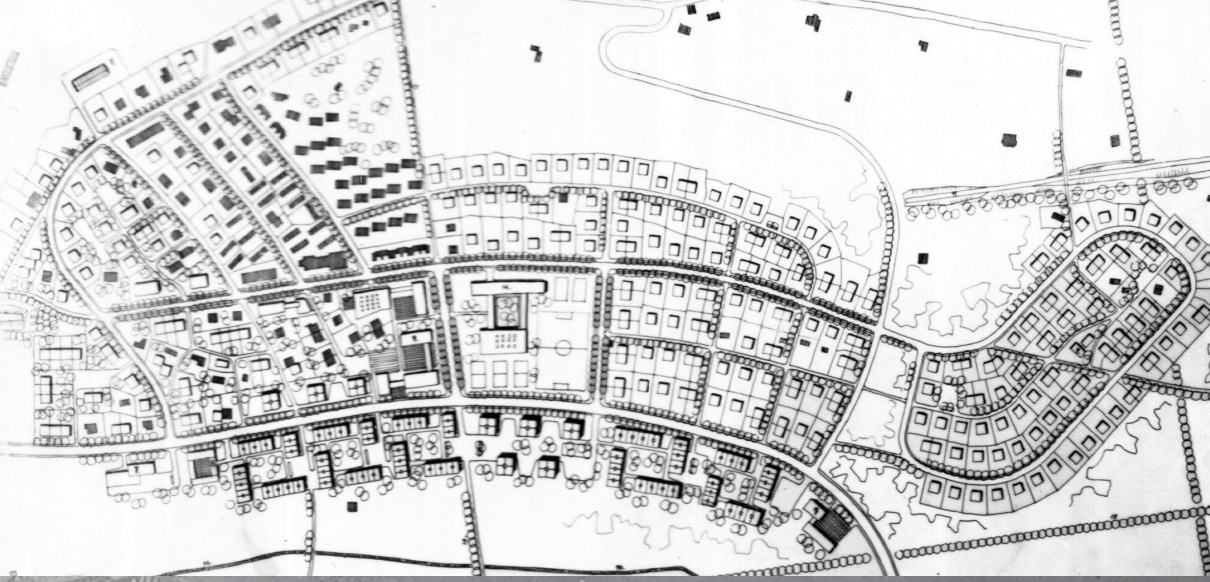
Fig. 1: Architectural competition for workers' and employees' dwellings in Croatia, winning entry by Architectural Atelier Ostrogović, 1952.
Fig. 2, 3, 4 (facing page): Individual housing settlements in Split, 1945-1955.

the interior living space with the garden, with subtle increases in the levels of privacy offered.[23] The house layout adopted a kind of live-in kitchen, which contained a dining and living area as well as an area for food preparation. Parents and children shared a bedroom, and additional sleeping arrangements could be made in the living room. In the garden there was a separate outbuilding for agricultural facilities. However, this design somewhat deviated from the size standards that had been set, as it was larger than the prescribed 65 sqm. (Fig. 1) It seems that a certain skepticism was present among supporters of the concept of individual housing, which cast doubt on the standardization and the reduction of room sizes.[24] Nevertheless, the construction of new residential areas containing the individual dwellings remained a very widely accepted concept until the mid-1950s. (Fig. 2-4) It is difficult to say whether this was because the authorities were in favor of its ideological interpretation, or if it was entirely a pragmatic decision, given that an acute shortage of building materials, machines, and a qualified workforce in the post-war era meant it was simpler to build small scale buildings. What is certain, however, is that the decision to abandon this concept of individual houses was largely made due to pragmatic concerns. It was eventually determined that although family houses were economic in terms of the materials and workforce required to build them, they were entirely irrational in terms of the other, external resources they required – space and infrastructure.[25] The professional public thus came to a consensus determining that only the construction of collective dwellings would allow to adequately address the housing issue and from the mid-1950s onwards its attention was therefore directed entirely towards this goal.

23 "Natječaj za stambene kuće radnika i službenika u NRH" ["The Competition for Residential Houses of Workers and Employees in PRC"], *Arhitektura* 1 (1952): 7–9.

24 It was even proposed that only large housing units be built, which in the beginning would accommodate several families and function according to the "communal apartments" model. Later, when a sufficient number of large living spaces had been built, every family would eventually be able to move into its own living space. In this manner all workers will be able to live in a comfortable space of adequate size, and the undesirable practice of building small dwellings will be avoided; it was believed that such housing units would become unusable as living standards undergo the expected improvement. Ivo Bartolić, Kazimir Ostrogović, and Vladimir Potočnjak, "Projektanti govore o svojim projektima"["Designers Talk about their Projects"], *Arhitektura* 1 (1952): 21–24. Stjepan Gomboš, "Problemi projektiranja stanova od oslobođenja do danas" ["The Issues of the Housing Design from the Liberation to the Present"], *Arhitektura* 5–6 (1950): 47–50.

25 Sanja Matijević Barčot, "Splitska stanogradnja u neposrednom poslijeratnom razdoblju (1945.-1951.)" ["Housing Construction in Split in the Immediate Post-war Period (1945-1951)"], *Prostor* 27, 1 (57) (2019): 71-72.







Dwelling as an Agent of Change: The Collective Housing

> "We are experiencing a transition from a fairly marked backwardness in our housing culture towards a more collective lifestyle, and we are therefore witnessing more salient effects of the housing construction."[26]

The second half of the 1950s in Yugoslavia might be characterized as "a consumerist society in the making." Yugoslav politics began directing its economic strategy towards investing in the so-called social standard, and encouraging consumer spending in keeping with economic growth. A legislative template was also formed at this time for the development of public housing programmes, which allowed the large-scale construction of new housing to begin.[27] The subsequent increase in housing construction that was also the result of implementation of industrialization, standardization, and rationalization strategies, began changing the urban landscapes of Croatian cities by the day. Socialist progress came to life in the new residential neighborhoods of modern apartment buildings arranged around public green spaces. Despite not being intrinsic to any one political context, this urban matrix that was in fact part of a very contemporary international discourse initially promoted at the fourth CIAM, in Yugoslavia it was also given political connotations and ascribed ideological validity. The transition to an "open system of building" was seen as overturning the prewar practice of "maximal exploitation of a building plot" that was characteristic for the perimeter urban block and prewar capitalist system. Moreover, the adoption of a new urban matrix was seen as one of "the greatest achievements of our architecture from the time of the liberation to the present," which "represents one of the most determined transitions from the old to the new."[28] (Fig. 5)

In addition to the consensus on an ideologically valid urban matrix, the texts published in *Arhitektura* also brought together the arguments made by supporters of collective housing in one (unspoken) thesis: that the new socialist man was in fact a woman. Accordingly, the efforts to develop a new socialist habitat can be identified within the framework of two currents: women's emancipation and, as a result of this, changes to the structure of the family. The 1946 Yugoslav constitution granted women full civil and political rights so they became formally equal with men. Entering the workforce was promoted as a proof that the battle for women's equality had been won. Family structures were viewed more liberally, ranging from single person households (a 1959 statistic reveals that 12% of households were single person households) to families with divorced parents.[29]

Amidst these changing family structures new collective housing typologies were developing: the communal buildings for singles and childless couples, which offered significantly less individuality and privacy, instead emphasizing communal living. The residents shared bathroom facilities, living rooms, studies, reading rooms, and they dined together in the communal restaurant. These buildings were often built specifically for workers of one single industrial enterprise. Communal building for singles and childless couples of the company "Rade Končar" in Zagreb designed by architect Božidar Tušek represents a typical model of that typology.[30] (Fig. 6, 7)

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26 Vladimir Antolić, "Mehanizacija u kućanstvu" ["Mechanization in the Household"], *Arhitektura* 2 (1952): 44.

27 This refers primarily to two legislation acts. The first was the *Law on Housing Construction Contributions* in late 1955, which would establish a firm and stable financial basis for housing construction. This law prescribed that every citizen would have to give 10 % of their wages or pension for public housing construction, irrespective of whether they had an apartment or not. The second was the *Law on the Nationalisation of Buildings for Rent and Building Lots* in late 1958, which provided an unambiguous mechanism for acquisition of building land.

28 "Prvo savjetovanje arhitekata i urbanista Jugoslavije," 6; Macura, "Stanovanje," 25.

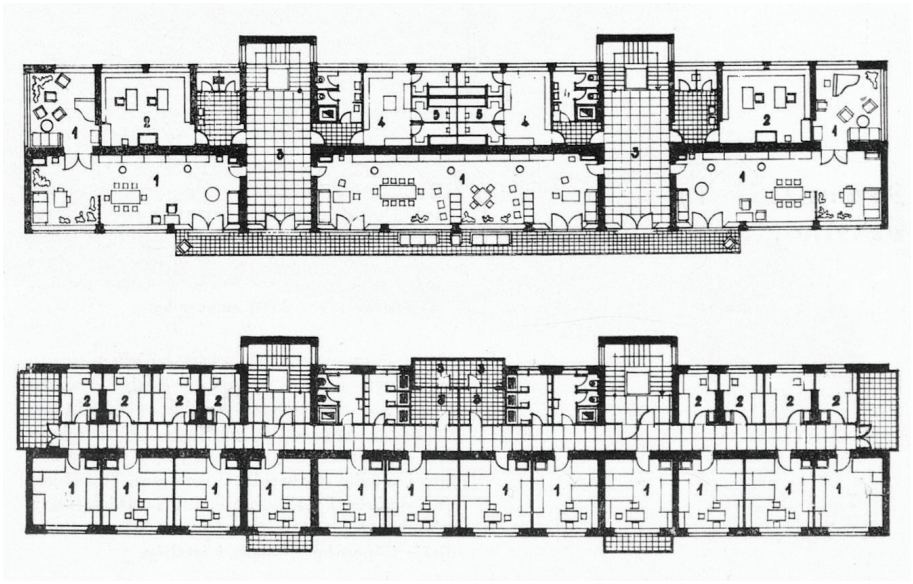
29 Tomšić Vida, "Porodica u socijalističkom društvu" ["The Family in a Socialist Society"], in Žena i porodica u socijalističkom društvu [*The Women and the Family in a Socialist Society*] (Zagreb: Izdavački zavod Jugoslavenske akademije, 1959), 20.

30 Singles were given one-bed and three-bed rooms (designs that featured rooms with two beds for some reason were not recommended). To ensure couples had somewhat greater privacy, their accommodation was separated from that of singles.



Fig. 5: Urban transformations occurring with new collective housing developments, aerial view from Split, 1960. Individual housing settlement built in the aftermath of the war is visible in the lower part of the image.

Fig. 6, 7: The emergence of a new housing typology: Housing for singles and childless couples of the factory “Rade Končar” in Zagreb by architect Božidar Tušek, 1952.





In the context of women's emancipation and the fact that women were becoming valuable members of worker's cooperatives, architectural discourse drew on the overall objective to relieve women of the burden of domestic work, and for communal services to take over as much of this work as possible. One of the key changes in this vein was the introduction of communal dining. Every company was obliged to build a workers' canteen or at the very least contribute to the founding of one; as a result, the use of communal dining facilities became a widespread practice. It was predicted that by the mid-1970s as much as 60-70% of the Yugoslav urban population would eat in communal restaurants.[31] These predictions prompted changes to the apartment layout, and thus architectural endeavors that sought to redefine the cooking and dining areas appeared. They did away with the concept of the traditional so-called live-in kitchen that contained a dining area in addition to the food preparation area. This was where women had previously spent the majority of their time, cooking, child-rearing and socializing; it was therefore not only a place for preparing meals but the vital center of daily family life. In the new era, in which people spent the majority of their time outside the home and ate in communal restaurants, there was no need for such a kitchen. The so-called working kitchen was thus promoted and subsequently appeared in housing standards as part of the so-called apartment with a kitchenette. It was seen as the most utilitarian, scientific, and "laboratory-style" kitchen of minimal dimensions.[32]

The further endeavor towards communal services taking over women's other traditional roles, such as child rearing and housekeeping came to life in practice through so-called *stambena zajednica* (residential community), the concept comparable to Clarence Perry's neighborhood unit or the Soviet *mikrorajon*. *Stambena zajednica* was envisaged as logistical urbanistic and communal unit that brought together between 2,000 and 8,000 residents. Its responsibilities included the founding of crèches and kindergartens, laundry facilities, ironing services, clothing and shoe repair services, appliance rental services, building maintenance and repair services, as well as the organization of milk deliveries, food supplying, communal dining, and even cultural and social events. *Stambena zajednica* did not merely provide essential services; rather, it represented continuous institutionalized support in the everyday of the modern socialist family.[33] *Stambena zajednica* literally became the essential functional extension of the apartment itself. Thus, in the new socialist world the family's everyday life leaves the domain of the individual household and is transferred into the social sphere. Although the obvious denominator of this new socialist lifestyle is the notion of modernization, the official rhetoric disregards it, while it emphasizes the aspect of collectivization.[34] It was believed that this kind of coexistence between the individual residence and *stambena zajednica* would result in monetary savings for households, as well as the rationalization of housing construction, in terms of savings on the total floor area of newly-constructed apartment buildings which estimates put as high as 15%.[35] Moreover, in the light of ideological propaganda, this organizational model ensured that *stambena zajednica*'s contributions to supporting households would be returned in the form of additional free time that the family would use for social, political, and cultural activities with the aim of "self-improvement" and the construction of socialism.[36]

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31 Ribnikar, "Problem stanbenih zgrada," 16.

32 The *izba*, an ancillary kitchen space for storing food and supplies, likewise disappeared from housing standards. Bartolić, Ostrogović, and Potočnjak, "Projektanti govore o svojim projektima," 21-24.

33 Tomšić, "Porodica u socijalističkom društvu," 18.

34 "… It is extremely important to emphasize the collectivisation, and not modernization, of the household. Some of our fellow countrymen take the modernization to mean only the mechanization of an individual household. If we talk about the collectivization of household tasks, that is, if the Programme of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia talks about developing a technical foundation for the collectivization of the household, then we know that we are wealthy enough to purchase a washing machine that will be available to a dozen or more families, and we cannot in any way assume that this is available to each of them separately." Tomšić, "Porodica u socijalističkom društvu," 17.

35 Emilija Šeparović, "Neki problemi ekonomike domaćinstva" ["Some Issues of Household Economics"], in *Žena i porodica u socijalističkom društvu* [*The Women and the Family in a Socialist Society*] (Zagreb: Izdavački zavod Jugoslavenske akademije, 1959), 86.

36 Tomšić, "Porodica u socijalističkom društvu."

However, this new socialist way of life also required a change in the culture of habitation. To encourage a shift towards this new lifestyle, the socialist authorities now began to promote it intensively. In the presentation at the fourth congress of the League of Communists in 1959, Vladimir Bakarić, the president of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Croatia (CCLCC) highlighted a particular architectural prototype as an example that needed to be followed, namely the housing prototype *Eksperiment-57* (Experiment-57; E-57) by the architect Vuko Bombardelli. In his design of E-57 which was intended for mass production, Bombardelli comprehensively used the technological inventory of serialization and standardization elements in order to achieve what was at that time the lowest possible building costs for a living space. Yet it is clear that President Bakarić promoted the E-57 not only because of its cost-effectiveness, but for other considerations as well, foremost for its potential to transform its occupants' culture of habitation.[37] The basic cell of E-57 is organized towards the idea that communal services are an essential functional extension of the dwelling and some spaces are therefore reduced in size. In the E-57 food preparation is for instance transformed into a quick "scientific" process in a small artificially ventilated niche that is, notwithstanding, technically fully equipped and as functional as possible. The dimensions of this niche are minimal, and it is easily hidden from view with a curtain. This kitchen is sufficient for preparing small meals, breakfasts and suppers, while communal restaurants provide the main meals. Moreover, the bedroom area is reduced as it contains only a bed and a built-in closet, as well as a bathroom with a shower (instead of the bathtub that had previously been commonplace), suggesting a change in personal hygiene habits. While the spaces for cooking, sleeping, and personal hygiene are reduced and utilized to as great an extent as possible, the living space combining dining area and open southern loggia is larger than expected, respectively. The activities of socializing, leisure, and "self-improvement" thus became a relevant programmatic input of the apartment's layout design. With the E-57, the architect Bombardelli not only created what was at that time the most cost-effective housing solution, but he also transformed the dwelling into an operational mechanism for modification of workers' everyday life.[38] (Fig. 8-10)

In addition, Bombardelli assumed that citizens might be reluctant to accept a reduction in kitchen and bathroom space, and so compensated for this with the addition of technology that became part of the apartment's structure, indivisible from it, and so the starting price for the unit included: an automatic boiler, an electric stove with a range hood, a washing machine, and even lighting. Because there was no choice of furniture on the market that matched the dimensions and standards of these new spaces, modern furniture was specially designed for the E-57 and produced serially.[39] It seems that it was precisely the E-57's industrial and consumer potential that became the second major reason why it attracted the attention of President Bakarić and became "an example to be followed."[40] As part of the economic changes that were

37 "I have already mentioned the architect Bombardelli's attempt in Split to approach the problem in a fairly novel manner. He radically reduced the cost, and opened the doors of the new dwelling to industry. The standard is somewhat reduced in comparison to the newly constructed dwellings of the preceding period, but not all of them, and it is immeasurably greater than that of our average dwelling. It demands that its inhabitants become more cultured in terms of habitation (but it also guides them in this process)." Vladimir Bakarić, *Unutrašnji razvoj i zadaci komunista* [Internal Development and Tasks of Communists] (Zagreb: Naprijed, 1959), 15.

38 The basic cell was 36 m² and could be combined to create larger apartments. It could likewise be used in various housing typologies. In practice, it was most often used in apartment blocks organised according to the gallery access system. See Sanja Matijević Barčot, "Arhitekt Vuko Bombardelli i Eksperiment–57" ["Architect Vuko Bombardelli and Eksperiment–57"], Život umjetnosti, 107 (2020): 60–79.

39 Ibid., 71.

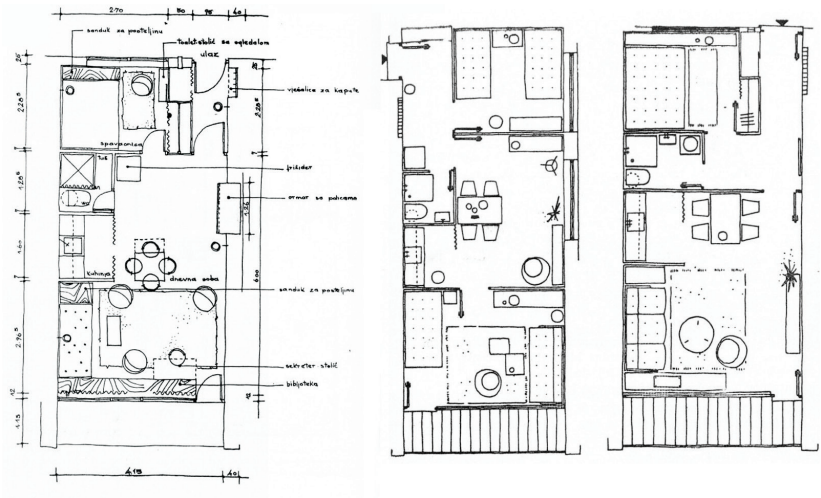
40 "With the aim of decreasing the expense of building housing units, and that this reduction should have as little impact on standards as possible, architect Bombardelli significantly reduced the costs, but introduced electric installations with a 10 kW capacity, with a medium usage of around 5 kW, which is an astounding increase in comparison to the prewar standard, and leads to unexpected changes to the way in which housing units are built, requiring a significant reorientation of the house construction industry." Bakarić, *Unutrašnji razvoj i zadaci komunista*, 11-12.





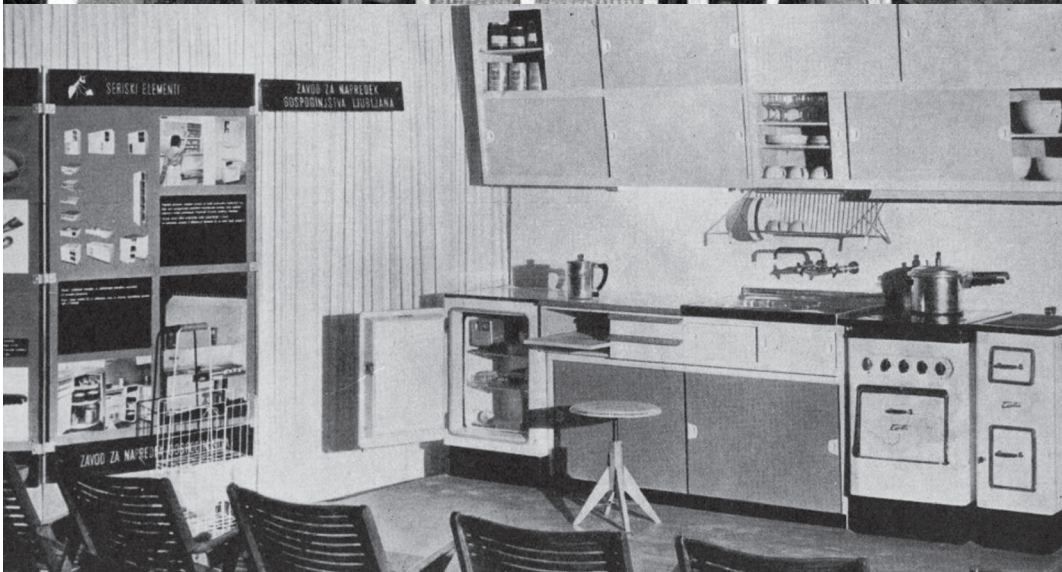
Fig. 8, 9, 10: Apartment as an operational mechanism for modification of worker's everyday life: Housing prototype "Experiment-57" by architect Vuko Bombardelli, 1958.

Fig. 11, 12, 13 (facing page): Learning how to dwell: "The Apartment of our State of Affairs" ["Stan za naše prilike"] exhibition.








SERIJSKI ELEMENTI
ZAVOD ZA NAPREDEK GOSPODINJSTVA, LJUBLJANA

under way, Yugoslav industrial manufacturing was redirected towards the development of light industry and the production of consumer goods, in which the production of furniture and home furnishings played a significant role.[41]

The interior of new living spaces was therefore approached in a multi-layered fashion. It was not merely a product; rather it was a carefully designed, purposeful process that brought together design, manufacturing, sales, and use. Modern furniture prototypes were perfected in ateliers, laboratories, and research institutes. It was only after the prototype passed a meticulous professional examination that production could begin, and the manufacturing process had to be as cutting-edge as the product itself. It was envisaged as a serial process that would manufacture a product everyone could afford.[42] Although the products that emerged from factories did not entirely match the innovative designs that were presented at exhibitions, the aim was achieved; in the new consumer environment of supermarkets and ready-to-wear clothing stores, furniture salons likewise began to appear, which allowed new and modern furniture to find its way to the consumer. (Fig. 11-13)

However, in order for the inhabitants to truly participate in the perpetuation of this consumer and production process, it was necessary that they accept the new and promoted culture of habitation as well as the modern aesthetic of the interior design. The attempts to introduce housing-related subjects to the school curriculum are therefore particularly interesting.[43] This educational pattern was further expanded through the organization of didactic exhibitions, of which the most notable were the *Family and Household* exhibitions that were held three times in Zagreb: in 1957, 1958, and 1960. These exhibitions presented visitors with life-sized models of living spaces, the most memorable of which was a fully-furnished reproduction of an apartment.[44] Moreover, in newly-constructed buildings it became common to fully furnish a display apartment as the most direct method for shaping the taste of future residents. The consumerist impulse was likewise carefully directed through numerous publications and in the popular press.[45] As a modern socialist lifestyle developed, the Yugoslav family hence became an essential consumer unit, and furnishing their homes became an important link in the production and consumption chain.

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41 The industrial production of furniture was part of the Five-Year Plan of 1951–1956. Subsequently, the furniture was produced on a mass scale, as well as décor, and electrical products. Even the development of the food industry partly relied on the modernization of the household, as it was believed that reducing the size of kitchens would render the preparation of more complex meals impractical; housewives would therefore turn to ready meals with increasing regularity.

42 The economic premise in which this was grounded was that "one's income must not prevent the furnishing of one's home to a basic standard." Andrija Mendelson, "Kako da se planski obezbedi našim trudbenicima kvalitetni namještaj" ["How to Systematically Provide our Workers with Quality Furniture"], *Arhitektura* 5–6 (1950), 68.

43 "Home economics" was introduced to the school curriculum in 1958. Šeparović, "Neki problemi ekonomike domaćinstva," 91.

44 The prototypes on display were the work of the architect Bernardo Bernardi. At the second exhibition, he presented a prototype of a standardized apartment for three to four people. It was constructed according to contemporary understandings of a living space as rational and flexible, equipped with built-in and movable furniture designed according to a "creative standardization" process. This process met the requirements of minimal space combined with maximum use of that space, and would become the basic principle of design. At the third exhibition Bernardi exhibited a somewhat larger prototype, which was conceived earlier for the architectural competition The Apartment of the Near Future. The goal was to meet the demands of rationalization of the building process, not only in terms of construction, prefabrication, and standardization, but also with appropriate design and the use of furnishings. In addition to this, Bernardi consistently highlighted the fact that the value of a living space was constructed not only out of measurable economic parameters, but also that the apartment was a testing-ground for a wide range of emotional, psychological, and cultural expressions of life, which is what finally determines its true value.
Jasna Galjer and Iva Ceraj, "Uloga dizajna u svakodnevnom životu na izložbama porodica i domaćinstvo 1957.–1960. godine" ["The Role of Design in Everyday Life as Presented at the Family and Household Exhibitions (1957-1960)"], *Radovi Instituta za povijest umjetnosti* 35 (2011), 277-296.

45 Ivana Dobrivojević, "Kuće na selu" ["Houses in the Countryside"], in *Nikad im bolje nije bilo? Modernizacija svakodnevnog života u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji* [They Never Had It Better? Modernization of Everyday Life in Socialist Yugoslavia], ed. Ana Panić (Beograd: Muzej istorije Jugoslavije, 2014), 49.

Back to the Family House: The Emergence of Informal Building Practices

But some lifestyles proved more enduring than expected. Although women's roles had been redefined in theory, in practice the notion that it was women who automatically took over childrearing and looked after the household remained deeply rooted in society. Despite their formally established equality, women remained on the margins of the socio-economic scene, but stayed at the forefront when it came to housework.[46] After the first enthusiasm for communal dining it was reported that the number of subscribers was decreasing and that communal restaurants were not at full capacity.[47] Architects began reporting that some investors were opposed to kitchenettes, and were looking for projects with larger housing units.[48] The sale of modern, industrial furniture was likewise lagging; stores reported that there was still greater demand for bulkier furniture produced by craftsmen.[49] Although housing construction was increasing, the supply of newly built apartments could not meet the demand. Moreover, although a part of citizens' salaries went towards housing construction, this did not guarantee one a fair place on the waiting list; numerous sources confirm the fact that high-ranking employees received preferential treatment over the low-ranking workers, which compromised the official political agenda of an egalitarian workers' state.[50] For many, this meant that they were left to solve their housing issues autonomously, which they did by undertaking the pragmatic, albeit precarious venture of building a family house completely on their own. The mid-1950s thus saw the appearance of self-built informal construction of family homes. This phenomenon appeared most frequently in those city areas that had remained outside the scope of nationalization and urbanization.[51] In a discussion of the terms used for this type of construction, historian Brigitte Le Normand argues that it was neither truly "wild building," nor were these structures always entirely against the law, as the term "illegal building" suggests; since these terms both have pejorative overtones, she therefore suggests the term "rogue construction" as more appropriate to describe this praxis. In the beginning, the city authorities were registering illegal construction, issuing fines and preventing it. However, issuing fines for such practices soon proved paradoxical, clashing with the moral imperative at the heart of socialist ideology, which held that every worker must have access to housing. With time fines therefore became sporadic, serving only to demonstrate the regime's power.[52] After all, every home built in this manner was one home less that the public housing stock had to provide. The authorities thus began not only overlooking the construction of houses on the city's outskirts, but even supporting it financially with extremely reasonable loans that to some extent compensated for the unreturnable financial contributions made to the construction of

46 "Although men and women were supposedly equal, companies were reluctant to send women to professional development courses, were hesitant to offer female students scholarships, and when it came to redundancies women were generally the first to be let go; an unemployed woman was seen as a less pressing social problem, since she could rely financially on her husband and the other members of her family." Ivana Dobrivojević, "Planiranje porodice u Jugoslaviji 1945-1974" ["Family Planning in Yugoslavia 1945-1974], *Istorija 20. veka* 2 (2016), 84.

47 "Stambene zajednice, društvena prehrana i kulturno zabavni život omladine" ["Housing Communities, Collective Dining, and Cultural Entertainment of Youth"], *Slobodna Dalmacija*, March 11, 1960.

48 Bartolić, Ostrogović, and Potočnjak, "Projektanti govore o svojim projektima," 22-23.

49 "Građani se teško odlučuju na kupnju modernog namještaja" ["Citizens are Reluctant to Purchase Modern Furniture"], *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 1958.

50 The points-based waiting lists that companies drew up for public housing were created according to internal guidelines which in most cases favoured higher educated employees and higher skilled workers. Slobodan Bjelajac, *Bespravna izgradnja u Splitu: Sociološka studija* [*Informal Construction in Split: A Sociological Study*] (Split: Urbanistički zavod Dalmacije, 1970), 79.

51 The so called "nationalization line" divided the city up into an area marked for urbanization and one that was to remain undeveloped and was intended for agricultural production.

52 The report of a survey of illegal builders conducted in 1968 shows that 67% of the respondents had never been fined for this practice. Slobodan Bjelajac, *Podijeljeni grad: Urbosociološka istraživanja o Splitu u razdoblju 1970-1990* [*Divided City: Urban Sociology Research on Split 1970-1990*] (Split: Redak, 2009), 29.



public housing, as well as a personal investment.[53] Also, they tried to improve the situation by offering sites, complete projects, and fast building permits.[54] This type of building had begun as a temporary way of "making do," but over time it transformed into a true phenomenon. Individual housing, which had at first been favored and later abandoned by official housing strategies, thus returned; this time, however, it was without the necessary participation of architects and without any attention from professional publications.

The informal construction of family houses was influenced by the pre-modern practice of self-help building (using one's own workforce and recruiting friends and family to participate) and the reproduction of the traditional family structure (houses were home to multiple generations, based on the system of one floor for every child or elderly parents).[55] The family lifestyle here remained self-sufficient as *stambena zajednica* was not established in an informally built city area and often not even public utilities were provided. There were also residual echoes of the capitalist system, which this kind of construction brought with it, above all the concept of private ownership. Social historian Rory Archer provides a useful description of the gradual shaping of the other side of

53 Le Normand sees this kind of private investment in housing construction with the aim of achieving an equal distribution of residential spaces as a "radical redefinition of the notion of 'equality'." Referring to Marković's words that "an apartment is a consumer good – a possible object of personal ownership, and it's helpful to aid every person who has the means to build or buy an apartment" Le Normand writes that "They did not, however, portray this as a retreat from egalitarianism; instead they redefined equality not as access but as opportunity." Brigitte Le Normand, "The House That Socialism Built," in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, ed. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 360, 369.

54 Such behaviour of the authorities was propelled with the conviction that these informal areas can be "easily separated and isolated from the urban fabric, and will not present a problem for the future city expansion." Matijević Barčot, "Utjecaj društveno organiziranih modela stambene izgradnje na arhitekturu Splita 1945.-1968.)," 89.

55 Qualified workforces were only used in about 30% of cases. Bjelajac, *Podijeljeni Grad: Urbosociološka istraživanja o Splitu u razdoblju 1970-1990*, 27.



Fig. 14: Informal housing settlement in Split, current spatial situation, 2021.

this ideological coin, considering the process through the prism of the moral economy. The right to a home as the basis of social justice overshadows any potential personal gain and dismisses a range of morally questionable activities: not securing a building permit, purchasing materials in a suspicious manner via one's workplace, taking paid sick leave during construction, and so on. These tactics gradually entered into the sphere of the legitimate, particularly because the manual labor that it encompassed successfully "resonated with dominant socialist discourse valorizing physical labor."[56] However, they were stifled to some extent by the fact that individual housing was no longer considered prestigious; in the new socialist society, greater prestige was ascribed to life in a publicly owned apartment building in new, modern city neighborhoods.

The culture of habitation which was an enlightened thread woven into the carefully designed exteriors and interiors of public housing could therefore have little impact in this context of individual housing. The lack of architectural design is readily apparent – the houses are frequently large, albeit impractical in terms of layout and interior design. Because they lacked any kind of planning as well as public investments, these informal neighborhoods were characterized by spatial disorder and became spaces that ruralize the city instead of urbanizing it. Informal construction as an alternative supported by political discretion was not often the focus of discussion, but it gradually came to form a part of the narrative of Yugoslav socialism. (Fig. 14) Moreover, despite the commonly held view that housing provision was primarily controlled by the public sector, an overall count of all dwellings built in the socialist period shows that the privately built family houses were in fact predominant.[57]

56 Rory Archer, "The Moral Economy of Home Construction in Late Socialist Yugoslavia," *History and Anthropology* 2 (2018), 146. The concept of the moral economy was developed by the British Marxist historian Edward P. Thompson in 1971.

57 Nikolina Vezilic Strmo, Alenka Delic, And Branko Kincl, "Uzroci problema postojećeg stambenog fonda u Hrvatskoj" ["Causes of Housing Stock Problems in Croatia"], *Prostor* 21 (2013), 344.

Discussion and Conclusion

In post-war Croatia, the intrusion of political ideology on the domain of housing was fairly obvious, and particularly explicit in political rhetoric and professional discourse, which considered how to implement ideology in this architectural domain. The effect of this political influence was eventually materialized in two domains of the built environment that are not only different but one might even say, contradictory.

The first belongs to the important political project of socialist modernization, in which housing is granted a key role. On the one hand, it became a powerful tool of socialist emancipation and collectivization, and on the other, it was an extremely useful tool for implementing the national economic strategies of production and consumption. The success of modernization can be seen in the distinctive attempts at city-building; the urban landscape, in which modern neighborhoods of high-rise buildings shape the desired image of socialist progress. One can thus trace the political instrumentalization of housing, from political and professional discussions to the creation and promotion of a new lifestyle and desirable consumer tastes. An important part of the political agenda here became the establishment of a *culture of habitation* – inhabitants had to learn to live in these new spaces. This was achieved through systemic education and propaganda mechanisms that engaged the educational, architectural, designing, and artistic professions. It also engaged the industrial sector and the distribution and consumer sectors as a result. The recipe for a new lifestyle was reflected in all aspects of the new dwelling, from its redefined layout (which included a tendency to reduce the size of the kitchen and increase the living room space) to the interior design and purchase of furnishings. This new kind of habitation relied heavily on communal services offered by the *stambena zajednica*, which was a functional extension of the intimate domain of habitation, and became a mechanism for the collectivization of the household. The symbiosis of the individual residence and the *stambena zajednica* was not only an expression of society's concern for the family, but above all a paradigm of the ideological imperative that the community's role in family life is essential. The dwelling thus became an operative instrument for the emancipation and modernization of workers' everyday life, and at the same time transformed citizens into consumers who participated in the perpetuation of the peculiar Yugoslav economic system of "market socialism."

While one aspect of the built environment in the post-war period belongs to the successful project of socialist modernism, the second can be considered its less successful by-product. The powerful political rhetoric, which promised each worker their own dwelling, could not be put into practice according to the optimistic plan that had been laid out. Many families were therefore left wanting and turned to a deeply ingrained traditional mechanism, building a home using their own resources.

Traditional housing patterns, which were at first accepted and then finally rejected by professional discourse and official housing policies thus reappeared, this time on the margins of the law, the margins of architectural and building standards, the margins of the city, and completely outside the professional discourse. At the same time, the political authorities were forced to confront the painful truth that the plan to build every family a dwelling was unlikely to become reality. Seizing on the opportunity, they changed their position and allowed private ventures to ease the pressure on the lagging state housing construction system. Informal construction thus became *de facto* an (unspoken) part of the socialist city. Those who constructed their own homes were guided by their own values, which disbanded an officially constructed repertoire: the builder ensures a home for his family, parents, and children by himself. He invests his physical labor in his own and in others' houses, thus establishing social links with his neighbors and relatives, and all the while his family does not rely on public inputs for the organization of their daily lives. There are only rare traces here of the kind of modernization promoted by socialism, primarily because the builders' capacities were limited when it came to architectural design, building technologies and materials, as well as in their perception of the new lifestyle. There was minimal intervention from the authorities; public

utilities and public infrastructure were therefore substandard, and society's intellectual and professional contributions were minimal. The construction of family houses becomes a kind of unspoken subversion of the idea of modernization. The city's outskirts see the emergence of socialist society's obverse image: the landscape of the ruralized city, of failed modernization.

The quest for the genuine socialist dwelling, originally framed as a choice between collective and individual housing typologies, unexpectedly materialized in both. The first was the official one, promoted by the authorities and inspired by the notion of socialist collectively, the result of a carefully developed architectural and technical discourse that was instrumental in the processes of modernization and representative in terms of the built image of socialist society. The other was informal, traditional, self-built version of individual housing that was overlooked by political and professional discourses, and in which the idea of socialist modernization remains obscured. Although their architectural and urban features remain contradictory, both typologies are nevertheless still present in today's city environments, together reflecting a modernization that remained unfinished, as well as the socialist promise of equality that eventually remained unfulfilled.

Furthermore, a harsh shift of the socio-political paradigm in Croatia in the 1990s, accompanied by a disintegration of spatial and urban planning policies, led to a severe increase in informal building practices, which became one of the main signifiers of post-socialist spatial condition. Informal housing settlements, with their non-existent urbanity, the lack of public infrastructure and troublesome fringes represent today demanding and challenging research issues both in the theoretical and the practice-based direction. At the same time, the legacy of the socialist mass housing estates, burdened by the socio-economic changes caused by the processes of privatization as well as the issues connected to the aging of the housing stock, serve as a fruitful source for research on urban regeneration perspectives and sustainability. In addition to the field of urban history, the genealogy of socialist dwelling presented in this article may provide a useful stance for both above-mentioned directions of possible future research.

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Fig. 1: *Arhitektura*, no. 1 (1952): 7.

Figs. 2, 3, 4, 5: National Archives in Split.

Fig. 6, 7: *Arhitektura*, no. 4 (1952): 31.

Figs. 8, 9: FGAG Archive.

Fig. 10: *Arhitektura*, no. 1-3 (1960): 60-61.

Figs. 11, 12, 13: *Arhitektura*, no. 1-6 (1956): 33-35, 54.

Fig. 14: Photo by Sanja Matijević Barčot.