



NEW POST-SOCIALIST CITY:
COMPETITIVE AND ATTRACTIVE

University of Ljubljana

FACULTY OF
ECONOMICS

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VALUES, STANDARD OF LIVING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF POST-COMMUNIST HOUSING ESTATES

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ABSTRACT

Like silent witnesses of existing communism giant housing estates tower in the horizon and influence the structure of towns in the the former Czechoslovakia and other post-communist countries even today. In connection with new political and economic conditions after 1989 the public started to talk about further development of these residential units with an unflattering name „rabitt hutches“.

Currently, almost 1/3 of inhabitants in Slovakia lives in the housing estates built between 50s and 90s in the last century. During the communist era these housing estates were characterized by heterogeneous structure of population with relatively homogeneous demographic structure and high percentage of families with children.

Processes which started during the post-communist transformation led to the social polarization.

Better-off households and families with children are leaving the estates for better living and more indigent inhabitants stay in less attractive and cheaper living in the estates. Pessimistic scenarios of 90s were dramatic as they predicted massive depopulation and decadence of housing estates. The estates being most at risk from physical and social degradation are mostly situated in economically stagnating regions and in regions with high unemployment rate. Currently, three possible scenarios of further development of these estates are presented:

- 1. housing estates with good prospects*
- 2. housing estates between regeneration or degradation*
- 3. housing estates with social problems and little hope for major improvement*

First group includes the housing estates in big cities. In these estates the generation exchange and preservation of mixed structure of inhabitants with average to higher living standard are occurring. Future of the second group depends on the internal and external conditions, very important is the attitude of self-governments towards the privatization, social living and regeneration of the housing estates built in the communist era. The citizens of these estates achieve the average level of standard living. Some problems of the estates in the third group originate in the communist era. These estates, mainly populated by Roma inhabitants, are currently coming into existence as the result of unfavourable economic and social situation. Paradoxically, the last twenty years since 1989 have been similar to the 40-year period between 1948 – 1968 – 1989. The situation after 1948 is occurring again, however, reversely. The previous period is refused and criticized, only post-modern and neofunctionalism survive. New



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schools of architecture are formed and reorganized; new social structures are generated and after relatively short period of turbulent formation of new state – Slovakia, the boom in investments and constructing is started. After the revolution in 1990, after gradual dissolving of design institutions funded by government, new private architectural ateliers have been formed. Most of the housing estates built in the communist era are in the process of revitalization and are becoming an attractive architectural part and the base of sustainable development of Slovak towns and villages.