Chapter 12

HOUSING POLICY AND HOUSING-SYSTEM MODELS IN SOME SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

BY

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I. THE CONCEPT AND ELEMENTS OF A HOUSING MODEL

In this paper I shall try to analyse a number of variants of the housing-system model prevalent in the socialist countries of Europe and to outline the tendencies of housing policy. When I speak of a ‘model’ here, I mean something rather different from what is generally meant by an economic model. In the paper which follows the word model will be used to signify the fundamental principles which characterize the organization and working of the housing system within a given economic system. Just as one may speak, in this sense, of different models of the socialist economy, one may also speak of different models of the housing system. What is meant are not theoretical macro-economic models, but institutional models.

A housing model so defined encompasses the economic and organizational aspects of the production, management, and distribution of dwellings as well as the system of meeting housing needs. I shall analyse some of the relevant problems, as follows:

(a) The property order, institutions, and executive agencies;
(b) Sources of accumulation and the system of allocation of funds;

1 Translated from the French by Elizabeth Henderson.
2 *Mały Słownik Ekonomiczny* [Short Economic Dictionary], Polskie Wydawnictwa Gospodarcze, Warsaw, 1958. Cz. Bobrowski uses the word model, in this sense, to describe a certain variant of the socialist economic system, that is, the whole set of management and planning methods applied in the economic policy either of a given country or during a given period. See ‘Modèle gospodarki socjalistycznej’ [Models of the Socialist Economy], in: *Zagadnienia ekonomii politycznej socjalizmu* [Problems in Socialist Economic Policy], Ksiazka i Wiedza, Warsaw, 1960.
3 Western authors, too, use the term in this sense, with reference to Polish terminological sources; see, for instance, P. J. D. Wiles in *Political Economy of Communism*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1964.

The Economic Problems of Housing

(c) The system of housing distribution and consumer preferences;
(d) Relationships between housing and the national economy.

While these are not all the elements that count, they are sufficient to characterize the mechanism of the housing system as a whole.

When discussing economic models in general terms, I stressed that they are part of a given social and economic system. For this reason, we must make a distinction between essential and secondary characteristics of the model. The former derive from the general principles of the régime and have to do with such things as the property order and the purposes, motives, and general forms of economic activity.¹ The latter derive from the particular conditions of the economy and social life in any given country, from the level of economic development, the rate of growth, etc.; they include the methods and operational tools most commonly used for the implementation of economic and social policy and, in our case, of housing policy.²

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HOUSING MODEL IN SELECTED SOCIALIST COUNTRIES

This report deals with housing problems in the Soviet Union, Poland, and Yugoslavia.

It will be useful to recall briefly the general conditions in which housing policy developed in these countries. Although at different times, all three countries have taken the path of economic planning and intensive industrialization, and have overcome their previous economic backwardness by dynamic growth. All three, also, suffered heavy losses and damage during the war. In the field of housing, these circumstances found reflection in an initially great shortage, in the need to do away with inherited social contrasts and in a rapid expansion of new housing needs in the wake of urbanization and population growth. In the early stages of urbanization housing policy was faced with difficult problems, in so far as expanding

¹ In Marxist terminology, they result from the fundamental economic law of a given social formation. This law is itself a result of the type of ownership in means of production within the given social formation, and as such determines the purpose which governs the use of the means of production and the whole of society's productive forces. See O. Lange, Ekonomia Polityczna [Political Economy]. PWN, Warsaw, 1959.

² The distinction between essential and secondary characteristics, so defined, does not coincide with the classification (a) to (d) in the text above, but applies within each separate item of this classification.

150