

Historical Evolution and Contemporary Examples of Hungarian Social Housing

Historický vývoj a súčasné príklady maďarského sociálneho bývania

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	number of apartments	type of housing	location	year of realization	project architect	research of antecedent	research of program	research of plan	site visit	interview with the architect	interview with the tenants	interview with the operator	additional information
State-Supported Rental Housing Program	120	social housing	Pécs	2003	Margit Pelényi	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	36	social housing	Szentendre	2003	Péter Vizér, Tibor Dénes	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	116	social housing	Csepel	2004	Gábor Cseryánszky	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	23	social housing	Budapest, 8th District	2004	Judit Tótpál, Zsolt Félix	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	45	social housing	Budapest, 8th District	2004	Katalin Csillag, Zsolt Gunther	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	116	social housing	Pécs	2006	Miklós Ráth	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
7.550	number of apartments built by the program in total												
Housing Replacement Program Corvin-Szigony	28	social housing	Magdolna str. 33.	2007	Péter Janesch	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	44	social housing	Práter str. 30-32.	2007	Péter Kis , Csaba Valkai	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	43	social housing	József str. 47.	2007	Zoltán Szécsi, László Váncza	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	35	social housing	Vajdahunyad str. 23.	2007	György Tóós, Gergely Sándor	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	30	social housing	Orczy road 31.	2007	Péter Bach, Csaba Molnár	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
180	number of apartments built by the program in total												
Housing Management Concept 13th District of Budapest	67	social housing	Petneházy str. 61-63.	2002	Tibor Tóth	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	66	social housing	Bulcsú str. 11.	2005	Iván Nieder	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	107	social housing	Szabolcs str. 12-16.	2005	Ferenc Nedár, Pál Dóczy	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	34	social housing	Béke str. 7.	2006	Bence Vadász, Miklós Miltényi	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	54	social housing	Lóportár str. 7.	2008	Ferenc Nedár, Pál Dóczy	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	34	social housing	Reitter Ferenc str. 13.	2008	VIKÁR & LUKÁCS Architects Studio	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	45	social housing	Ambrus str. 6.	2010	János Roth, Balázs Vizer, Péter Lasztóczy	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	70	social housing	Zsinór str. 38-40.	2010	János Roth, Balázs Vizer, Bence Kertész	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	100	passive social housing	Jász str. 91.	2014	ARCHIKON Architects	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	23	passive social housing	Kartács str. 14.	2018	n.i.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
	33	mixed-use complex	Klapka str. 17.	2018	KÖZTI Architects	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
35	passive social housing	Jász str. 72	2022	n.i.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
67	passive social housing	Petneházy str. 90.	2023	ZIP Architects	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
735	number of apartments built by the program in total												
	* marked projects were built under the period of the State Supported Rental Housing Program												
80	social settlement	Ócsa	2013	KVADRUM Architects	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
80	number of small houses built by the program in total												

LIST OF EXAMINED HUNGARIAN SOCIAL HOUSINGS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

ZOZNAM SKÚMANÝCH PROJEKTOV MAĎARSKÉHO SOCIÁLNEHO BÝVANIA A METODIKA VÝSKUMU

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V Maďarsku chýba systém bývania postavený na spoločnej sociálnej zodpovednosti. Po prechode na demokraciu nastali pokusy o vytvorenie obsiahlejšieho systému sociálneho bývania, no pre nedostatok koherentnej sociálnej podpory sa nepodarilo vytvoriť komplexný systém.

Izolované sa realizoval malý počet nových projektov sociálneho bývania, tie však nikdy nedosiahli kritickú hranicu. Okrem nich plní túto funkciu historický, zastaraný obecný bytový fond.

Nedávne dianie, ako hospodárska kríza v roku 2008, kolaps hypoték na bývanie, rast cien nehnuteľností a nájomného ukázali veľkú potrebu tejto časti bytového sektora v Maďarsku.

Cielom môjho výskumu bolo zmapovať tri dotované programy bývania, v rámci ktorých bola realizovaná väčšina súčasného sociálneho bývania. Analýza týchto programov s ich predchodcami je komplexnou ilustráciou súčasného maďarského systému sociálneho bývania.

Právo na bývanie je v moderných spoločnostiach základným právom. Úroveň podpory bývania však závisí od solidarity spoločnosti. Otázka bývania – predovšetkým mestského bývania – predstavuje už od začiatku 20. storočia neustálu výzvu. V dôsledku toho je dnes bývanie v niektorých európskych mestách organizované najmä na sociálnej báze.

Maďarská vláda za posledných 30 rokov výrazne investovala do podpory bývania. Tieto dotácie boli zamerané najmä na vlastnenie súkromného majetku, a preto nedokázali zlepšiť podmienky bývania najnižších príjmových vrstiev, predovšetkým vo veľkých mestách, kde sú ceny nehnuteľností mimoriadne vysoké.

Keď sa na situáciu v oblasti bývania v Maďarsku pozrieme bližšie, vidíme, že otázka bývania vždy zahŕňala kritické aspekty. Na sociálnej úrovni sa otázka bývania nikdy neriešila komplexne. V kritických situáciách boli najnižšie vrstvy obyvateľstva ponechané bez podpory napospas okolnostiam. V tomto kontexte je jedným z najcielenejších nástrojov riešenia otázky bývania práve rozširovanie sociálneho bytového fondu.

Sociálne bývanie v Maďarsku nie je presne definované. Je súčasťou obecného nájomného bývania. Obecný byt môže byť prenajatý trhovým, nákladovým a sociálnym spôsobom. V dôsledku toho je v Maďarsku bežné zamieňať si pojmy „obecné“ a „sociálne“ bývanie. Obecné nájomné bývanie tvorí 2,5 % celkového bytového fondu v Maďarsku a približne polovica z neho sa prenájomna na sociálnej báze, čiže ~ 60 000 bytových jednotiek, čo je pod európskym priemerom.

Prvé maďarské sociálne byty boli postavené koncom 19. storočia. Doterajší proces výstavby sa delí na tri obdobia. Prvý program komplexného bývania sa začal v roku 1909 a riadil ho budapeštiansky starosta István Bárczy. V rámci programu sa plánovalo postaviť približne 3 000 bytových jednotiek s rôznou úrovňou komfortu, veľkosti a kvality s cieľom oslovit' čo najširšie vrstvy spoločnosti. Program ukončila prvá svetová vojna, no išlo o míľnik v dejinách maďarského sociálneho bývania.

Po prvej svetovej vojne sa monarchia rozpadla. Zdevastované hospodárstvo a príchod takmer pol milióna utečencov znamenali pre maďarské mestá nové výzvy. Predtým bola bytová politika v kompetencii obcí, po vojne sa stala problémom štátu.

Podobne ako v iných krajinách východného bloku, bytová politika sa začiatkom 50. rokov úplne zmenila. Prioritami tohto

obdobia boli zlepšenie podmienok bývania robotníckej triedy, rozvoj priemyselných centier a zníženie nedostatku bytov. Skutočná zmena nastala v polovici 60. rokov s technológiou panelovej výstavby. Pokiaľ ide o politiku sociálneho bývania, bolo to zložité obdobie. Na jednej strane sú úspechy nepopierateľné. Nikdy predtým sa nepostavilo toľko bytov, nikdy predtým nemalo toľko ľudí prístup k dotovanému bývaniu. Na druhej strane je výsledky ťažké hodnotiť, pretože okrem sociálnych aspektov vládli v tomto období v bytovej politike aj politické aspekty.

Po prechode na demokraciu v roku 1990 dostali novozałożené samosprávy do vlastníctva viac ako 700 000 bytových jednotiek. Získali tak nielen obrovské majetky, ale aj množstvo povinností, preto začali bytové jednotky predávať nájomníkom. Takto sa predala väčšina obecného bytového fondu. Samosprávam zostal vo vlastníctve chudobnejší bytový fond a pamiatkovovo chránené budovy. Privatizácia bývania umožnila značnej časti mestského obyvateľstva prístup k súkromnému vlastníctvu.

Koncom 90. rokov to vyzeralo, že Maďarsko našlo svoju cestu: hospodárstvo sa integrovalo do medzinárodného obehu, do krajiny prúdili obrovské sumy zahraničných prevádzkových financií, dosiahol sa vstup do NATO a vstup do EÚ bol veľmi blízko.

Voľná ekonomika však mala mnoho nezamýšľaných vedľajších účinkov: sociálne rozdiely sa zväčšovali, nezamestnanosť sa nedarilo znižovať a značná časť obyvateľstva nedokázala držať krok so zmenami a ocitla sa na okraji spoločnosti. Zostávajúci obecný bytový fond nebol dostatočne veľký na to, aby zvládol sociálne problémy v takomto rozsahu.

Na prelome tisícročí sa vo sfére bývania vynorilo niekoľko problémových oblastí. Modernizácia privatizovaného bytového fondu sa ešte nezačala, expanzia bytového sektora bola minimálna, stavebníctvo nedržalo krok s rastom ekonomiky. Model súkromného bývania sa zdal byť prekážkou mobility. Aby štát tieto problémy riešil, spustil v roku 2001 komplexný program bývania s názvom Národný program bývania. Viac než 50 samospráv získalo dotácie na výstavbu obecných nájomných bytov v celkovom počte 7 550 bytov. Program nedokázal zastaviť znižovanie počtu obecných nájomných bytov, ale spomalil zmeny a vytvoril jadro súčasného maďarského sociálneho bývania.

Ďalším programom bol Program náhrady bytov v rámci projektu Corvin-Szigony. V 8. budapeštianskom obvode žili historicky chudobnejšie sociálne vrstvy. Koncom 90. rokov čelil obvod vážnym problémom: historický fond budov bol v zlom stave, šírila sa kriminalita, bezdomovecťo, prostitúcia a drogová závislosť. V tomto období bol zriadený úrad pre obnovu mesta s názvom RÉV8. Jeho prvou úlohou bola príprava projektu Corvin-Szigony, čo bol súkromný kapitálový projekt, nové veľkoplošné sídlisko so zmiešaným využitím. Príjmy z tohto projektu použilo mestské zastupiteľstvo na financovanie Programu 1 v štvrti Magdolna, čo bol program obnovy okolia. V rámci projektu bolo zbúraných 10 historických, schátraných mestských bytových domov. Zastupiteľstvo ponúklo nájomníkom a vlastníkom zbúraných bytov tri možnosti: (1) platbu v hotovosti za zmenu nájomného alebo vlastníctva; (2) výmenu za iný existujúci mestský byt; (3) alebo novopostavený nájomný byt v rovnakej veľkosti. Väčšina nájomníkov a vlastníkov si vybrala poslednú možnosť. Obvod vybudoval päť nových projektov sociálneho bývania. V súvislosti

s výstavbou niekoľkých bytových domov a prevádzkou viac ako tisíc historických mestských bytov uskutočnil úrad RĚV8 jeden z najhlbších sociologických výskumov v tejto oblasti.

Posledným programom je Koncepcia bytového hospodárstva 13. budapeštianskeho obvodu. Tento obvod je jednou z mála výnimiek, ktoré pokračovali v programe nájomného bývania aj po skončení štátom podporovaného programu nájomného bývania. V polovici nultých rokov 21. storočia sa od všetkých štátom podporovaných obecných zastupiteľstiev požadovalo vypracovanie dlhodobej stratégie správy bytov. Trinásť obvod sa zaviazal postaviť 50 bytov ročne. Táto stratégia pokračuje až do súčasnosti. Od roku 2002 obvod postavil 13 nových bytových projektov s celkovým počtom 735 bytov. Zastupiteľstvo nazbieralo dôležité skúsenosti s výstavbou nových sociálnych bytov. Prvé novopostavené sociálne bytovky nijako nevybočovali z priemeru okolitej súkromnej bytovej výstavby. Neskôr obvod zvýšil svoje očakávania a začal stavať vo vyššej kvalite. Míľnikom v tomto evolučnom procese bol rok 2014, keď uprostred hospodárskej krízy samospráva postavila najväčšie pasívne bývanie v Maďarsku so sto bytmi.

Celkovo má 13. budapeštiansky obvod jediný systém sociálneho bývania v Maďarsku, ktorý je porovnateľný s profesionálnymi európskymi modelmi, ako sú Amsterdam alebo Viedeň.

Výstavba sociálneho bývania je zložitý proces, ktorý nemožno oddeliť od existujúceho systému bývania a inštitucionálneho zázemia. Projekty sociálneho bývania nevznikli izolovane, ale ako súčasť komplexných, regulovaných programov. Úspešné zásahy si vyžadujú skúsenosti, znalosti historického pozadia a citlivosť. Tieto skúsenosti a kapacity sú sústredené na miestnej úrovni. Preto sa na prevádzkovanie systémov sociálneho bývania a budovanie projektov bývania najviac hodia samosprávy (alebo neziskové bytové združenia). Vďaka svojim skúsenostiam a presvedčovacím schopnostiam môžu dokonca ovplyvňovať ceny súkromných nájomov.

Maďarský systém sociálneho bývania sa nemôže ďalej rozvíjať bez podpory vlády a motivujúcej legislatívy, zapojenie štátu je nevyhnutné. Obnova sociálneho bývania by si vyžadovala komplexné programy podobné tým zo začiatku 21. storočia. V konečnom dôsledku je dôležité dosiahnuť čo najvyššiu úroveň verejnej podpory, pretože bez tohto sociálneho zázemia je systém slabý a jeho výsledky sa nedajú dlhodobo udržať. Širšiu podporu by bolo možné dosiahnuť, ak sa systém rozvinie do takej miery, že dostupnosť nebude výsadou, ale základnou sociálnou príležitosťou.

A housing system based on common social responsibility is currently absent in Hungary. Despite attempts to create a wider social housing framework after the 1989 democratic transition, the lack of coherent social support has prevented a comprehensive system from being established. The few new social housing projects to be completed form isolated instances and never reached a critical mass, excluding the existing outdated municipal housing stock that now fulfils this function.

Recent cases, specifically the 2008 economic crisis, the collapse of housing mortgages, and the rise of real estate prices and rents, have all demonstrated the need for this part of the housing sector in Hungary.

Research Methodology

Before researching the Hungarian social housing system, I analysed international examples. First was the notably interesting case of the works of the Chilean architects ELEMENTAL¹. Analysis of their world-famous idea of 'half-a-house' or their 'expandable house' model, revealed that the architects themselves made only a partial contribution to these unique solutions, with the remainder being rooted in Chile's unique social housing tradition. After investigating the historical background of the Chilean system, I subsequently drew upon it in my later analysis of contemporary Dutch social housing as the most widespread instance in Europe, not only through its buildings but also its history.

Four theses were established on the basis of this research: (1) Each country's current social housing is deeply rooted in its historical antecedents. (2) Without coherent and permanent state support, operating a successful social housing system is not possible. (3) Social housing can help effectively only if the system is built on a large scale. (4) Adhering to the results of the system is essential, as the outcome of a long-term and conscious strategy.

Using these theses as a basis, I undertook my analysis of Hungarian social housing, though with the restriction of applying it to the current time. Considering the chronological and historical distance, the social background and historical antecedents of the contemporary Hungarian system have yet to be sufficiently analysed and listed.

The first part of my research involved the analysis of the support programs behind the most widely known and published Hungarian examples. Most of the contemporary projects were realized through three state programs, which subsequently received specific attention: the State-Supported Rental Housing Program (7,550 apartments, 2001 – 2003), the Corvin-Szigony Project Housing Replacement Program (180 apartments, 2005 – 2007), the 13th District of Budapest Housing

Management Concept (735 apartments, 2002 –). It was from these programs that the list of analysed buildings was compiled.

A certain quantity of information about the reviewed buildings was available in the publications, but no deeper, real feedback from users was available. In the second half of the research, I collected new information through site visits and interviews with architects, municipal officials, social workers and tenants.

Housing Rights

The right to housing is considered a fundamental right in modern societies. All the same, the level of housing support provided depends on the solidarity of the community.

The issue of housing – mostly urban housing – has been a constant challenge from the early 20th century onward. In consequence, housing in several European cities is now mainly organised on a social basis. Amsterdam² and Vienna³ are the two most prominent European examples where nearly half of the housing stock is owned by local authorities or non-profit housing associations.

Housing in Hungary

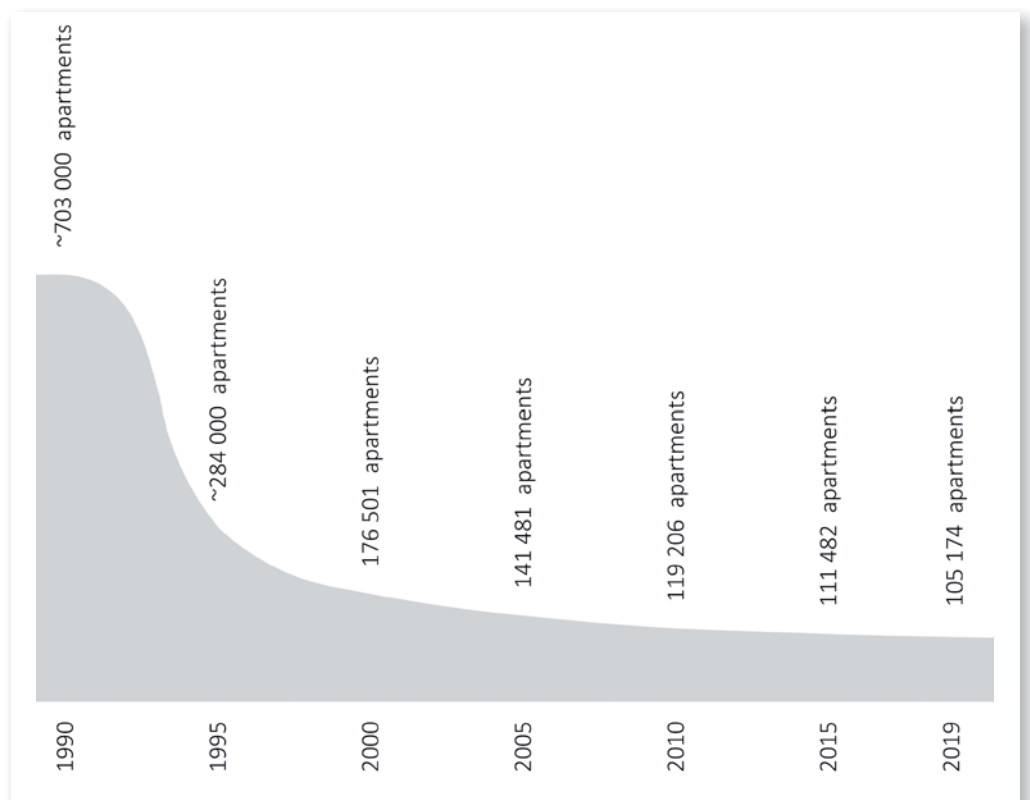
While many forms of government support have been created in Hungary for housing (Social Policy Support/SzocPol, Family Housing Allowance Program/CSOK, subsidized loans, VAT reduction for new built houses, etc...) in the last 30 years, the primary aim of these subsidies has been support or relief for the ownership of private property. As a result, these financial subventions have remained incapable of improving the housing conditions of the lowest income classes, especially in large cities, where real estate prices are extremely high.

If we take a closer look at the housing situation in Hungary, we can see the housing issue has always been critical, yet never once has it been handled in a complex way at the social level.

At times of economic or social crisis, the lowest classes have been left vulnerable. Without access to privatized housing, they could not take advantage of financial subsidies; or at best were forced to take out mortgages beyond their own resources. Against this background, one of the most targeted housing support tools to address the issue of housing should be the enlargement of the social housing stock; consequently, the idea has been the focus of my research.

CHANGES IN THE HUNGARIAN MUNICIPAL HOUSING STOCK ZMENY V MAĎARSKOM OBECNOM BYTOVOM FONDE

Source Zdroj: Habitat for Humanity Hungary, edited by Dávid Szabó





BUDAPEST, THE ZITA EMERGENCY HOUSING SETTLEMENT BUILT AFTER WORLD WAR I

BUDAPEŠŤ, NÚDZOVÉ SÍDLISKO ZITA POSTAVENÉ PO PRVEJ SVETOVEJ VOJNE

Photo Foto: FORTEPAN/ Local History Collection of Ferencváros

BUDAPEST, HOUSING IN KÁLMÁN TISZA SQUARE – A PROJECT BUILT BY THE NATIONAL SOCIAL INSURANCE INSTITUTE IN 1934 (OTI)

BUDAPEŠŤ, BYTOVKY NA NÁMESTÍ KÁLMÁNA TISZU – PROJEKT POSTAVENÝ NÁRODNOU SOCIÁLNOU POISŤOVŇNOU V ROKU 1934 (OTI)

Photo Foto: FORTEPAN/ Preisich



Hungary has yet to determine any fixed definition of social housing. As a legal category, it is regarded as a part of the municipal rental housing, whereby a residential unit can be rented in three ways: market-based, cost-price, or with social subsidies⁴. As a consequence, confusion of the two definitions of ‘municipal’ and ‘social’ housing is usual in Hungary.

Municipal rental housing provides 2.5% of the total housing stock in Hungary, approximately half of which is rented on social terms (~60,000 units, i.e., 1.3% of the total housing stock)⁵. Needless to say, this figure is far below the European average⁶.

Historical Antecedents

The first Hungarian social housing units were built in the late 19th century, as in other European countries. As a process over 100 years long, it can most effectively be divided into three periods.

The first period started after the Austro-Hungarian Compromise in 1867, which launched far-reaching social and economic changes in the wake of increased political autonomy. One visible result was the rapid growth in the population of industrial cities, reaching its peak at the end of the 19th century, when in only one decade Budapest’s population increased nearly 30%⁷.

Before this period, no independent social and housing policy can be said to have existed. And even though the first socially-based houses were built in 1886⁸, these efforts can not truly be considered social housing, as they were instead emergency housing, with the explicit purpose of isolating infected populations during epidemics.

As now understood, the first true social housing program was started in 1909, under the direction of Budapest’s then mayor, István Bárczy. The program envisaged around 3,000 units of different comfort levels, sizes, qualities to reach as wide a section of society as it is possible⁹.

The program was stopped by World War I, but remains a milestone in the history of Hungarian social housing because of its scale and complexity. Moreover, it foresaw that social housing could only be effectively pursued in a programmatic, contextual and social way.

After World War I, the Habsburg monarchy collapsed, with Hungary losing a significant share of its previous territory. Not only the devastated economy but the arrival of nearly half a million

**NEW RESIDENTIAL SETTLEMENTS
IN SZÉKESFEHÉRVÁR: TYPICAL
HOUSING OF THE 1980S**

NOVÉ REZIDENČNÉ SÍDLISKÁ
SZÉKESFEHÉRVÁR, TYPICKÉ BYTOVÉ
DOMY Z 80. ROKOV

Photo Foto: FORTEPAN / VÁTI



refugees from the successor states provided new challenges for Hungarian cities. While previously housing policy had been a municipal responsibility, the interwar era saw it raised to the level of a state problem.

Communist Housing Construction

In parallel with other countries of the Eastern Bloc, housing policy changed radically starting in the early 1950s. The priorities of this period were to improve the housing conditions of the working class, develop industrial centres and reduce the housing shortage¹⁰.

The most significant change arrived in the mid-1960s with the introduction of prefabricated construction technology, which led to the construction by the state of more than half a million prefabricated apartments.

During the period of state socialism from 1949 to 1990, social housing policy was a complex matter. On one hand, the quantitative material achievement is undeniable: never before had so many housing units been built, nor had so many people been granted access to subsidized housing. On the other hand, evaluation of the results is difficult, since in addition to the social aspects, political ones also dominated housing policy in this period.

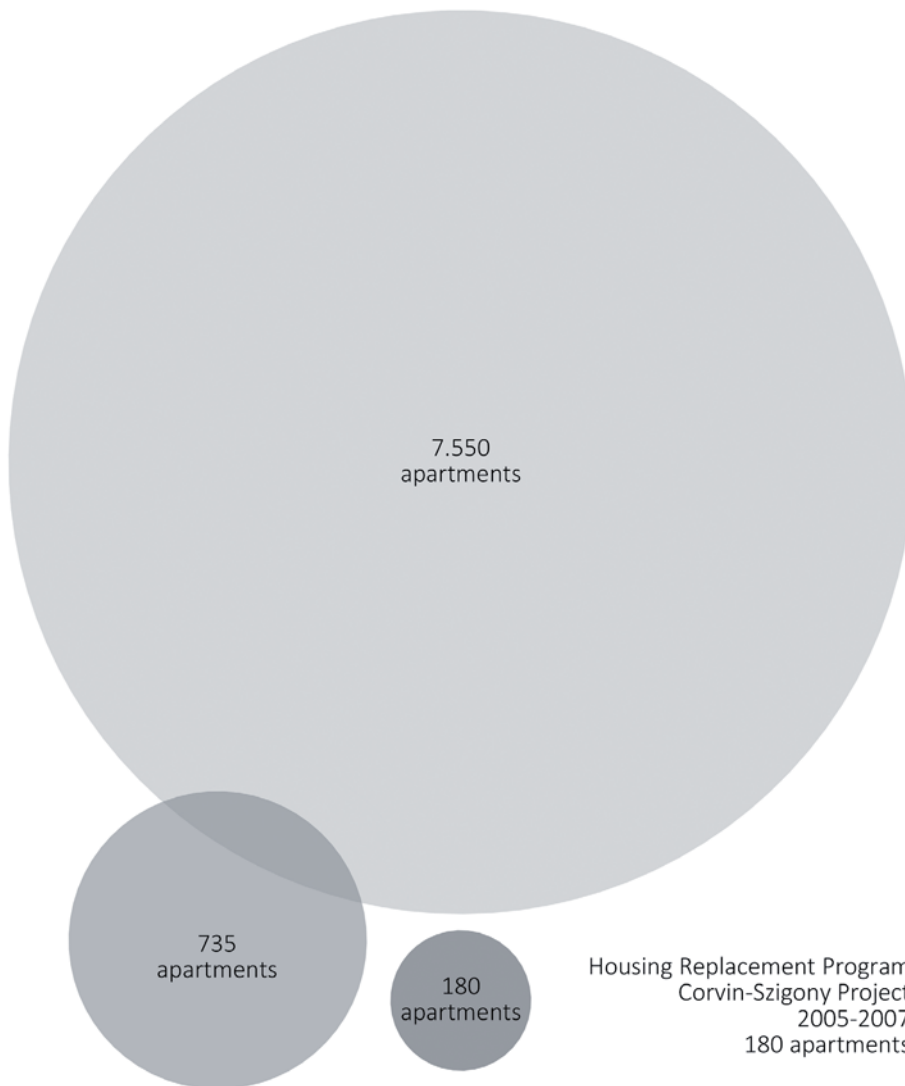
Housing Privatization

In 1990, after the political transition to multiparty democracy, the newly established municipalities were assigned the ownership of more than 700,000¹¹ housing units. As this policy transferred not only a huge amount of property but also an equally large share of responsibilities to Hungary's municipal authorities, it was not surprising that they began to sell the housing units to the tenants. In fact, the greatest portion of the community housing stock was sold in this way, with municipalities retaining ownership only of the poorer housing stock and heritage-listed buildings. Housing privatization allowed a significant proportion of the urban population access to private real estate ownership, creating an impression that already by the mid-1990s, the housing issue had been solved.

With the benefit of hindsight, the most interesting aspect of Hungary's housing privatization is how easily the results of the previous period could be reversed. No interest existed in keeping the huge public housing stock together and preserving its accumulated values, nor did anyone worry about the social housing of the future.

Furthermore, a serious problem of the remaining municipal housing stock was its fragmented status; its maintenance costs multiplied, making it unsustainable in the long term. As such, the situation prefigured the further privatization and reorganization of the remaining housing stock.

State Supported Rental Housing Program
2001-2003
7.550 apartments



Housing Management Concept
of 13th District of Budapest
2002-
735 apartments

Housing Replacement Program
Corvin-Szigony Project
2005-2007
180 apartments

NEW MUNICIPAL HOUSING BUILT IN THE THREE INVESTIGATED PROGRAMS

NOVÉ OBECNÉ BÝVANIE
POSTAVENÉ V RÁMCI TROCH
SKÚMANÝCH PROGRAMOV

Author Autor: Dávid Szabó

The State-supported Rental Housing Program

By the start of the new millenium, most evidence suggested that Hungary had found its way: the economy was integrated into international capital circulation, huge amounts of foreign operating finance were injected into the country, NATO accession was achieved, and EU accession was very close.

However, the market economy had many unintended side effects: social differences increased, unemployment remained stubbornly high, and a significant part of the population could not keep up with the changes, becoming pushed to the edge of society. A parallel tendency was also visible in the area of housing, where the remaining municipal housing stock was far too limited to handle social problems on such a scale.

Several housing problems came to the surface in the new millennium. Modernization of the privatized housing stock was halted due to fragmented ownership and limited financial



MUNICIPAL HOUSING WITH 120 APARTMENTS IN PÉCS DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT MIKLÓS RÁTH IN 2006

OBEČNÉ BYTOVÉ DOMY SO 120 BYTMI V PÉCSI, KTORÉ NAVRHOL ARCHITEKT MIKLÓS RÁTH V ROKU 2006

Photo Foto: Dávid Szabó

opportunities for owners. Another difficulty was the minimal expansion of the private housing sector, along with the inability of the construction industry to keep pace with the growth of the economy.

The private housing model now appeared more of a barrier to population mobility, as labor shortages began to emerge in the western part of the country, in the cities and new industrial regions, while unemployment soared in the eastern regions and most rural municipalities.

To address these problems, the state launched a complex housing program in 2001, called the National Housing Program¹², which had a strong influence on the entire housing sector. The aim of the Program was multifold: to support the expansion of the housing stock, the construction of new and modern housing, the realization of large-scale housing projects, the modernization of the existing stock, energy-conservation investments, or rehabilitation of existing prefabricated housing; to help increase housing mortgage lending through state-subsidized loans, and to increase the share of the rental housing sector by constructing municipal rental housing¹³.

This program did not primarily address social housing directly. Nonetheless, more than 50 municipalities won subsidies for the construction of municipal rental housing, with a total of 7,550 units built, most of which offered social housing, and nearly 25,000 people were provided with access to subsidized housing.

Under the program, the quantity of housing built was large (70-120 apartments), presumably in the interest of maximizing state support. Despite the impressive scale, though, the projects were not well prepared due to a lack of experience and, more significantly, the absence of real examples. The other weakness was the failure of the municipalities to make any preliminary sociological assessment. The mix of the apartments was somewhat random, and their additional social services were completely lacking. Further, the size of the apartments tended to be minimal, between 30 and 40 square meters.

Without proper examples to follow, most of the housing that resulted from the program resembled more an average apartment building than social housing. A major finding in the wake of the program was not only the significant size of the investment costs, but equally the later expenses of the operation and maintenance costs. Thanks to this experience, later projects were built in a more focused way. Furthermore, the program required municipalities to prepare a housing management concept in which they had to summarise their medium-term housing strategy, providing a genuinely helpful tool for the future.

If the program was not able to stop the reduction of the quantity of municipal housing stock all the same, it slowed down the speed of change and created the core of contemporary Hungarian social housing.

**MUNICIPAL HOUSING WITH
44 APARTMENTS ON PRÁTER
STREET, BUDAPEST, DESIGNED BY
ARCHITECTS PÉTER KIS AND CSABA
VALKAI IN 2007**

OBECNÉ BÝVANIE SO 44 BYTMI NA
ULICI PRÁTER V BUDAPEŠTI, KTORÉ
NAVRHLI ARCHITEKTI PÉTER KIS
A CSABA VALKAI V ROKU 2007

Photo Foto: Dávid Szabó



The Corvin-Szigony Project Housing Replacement Program

The 8th District of Budapest, called Józsefváros, has historically been the home of the poorer social classes and, unlike other districts, did not experience positive development after the democratic transition. By the end of the 1990s, the District faced serious challenges: its historic building stock was in bad condition, and its citizens threatened by crime, homelessness, prostitution, and drugs. It was during this period that the Józsefváros Rehabilitation and Urban Development Office (RÉV8¹⁴) was established under the leadership of architect György Alföldi¹⁵ (currently dean of Budapest University of Technology and Economics – Faculty of Architecture), a public agency set up by the municipality to address the urban problems of the area. The office's first task was to prepare the Corvin-Szigony Project, which was a private capital development that took the form of a new large-scale mixed-use settlement. In turn, the municipality used the revenue from the first project to finance the Magdolna Quarter Program 1, a rehabilitation program of the surrounding area.

Józsefváros was one of the few exceptions during the housing privatization of the 1990s, hence a significant part of the public housing stock had not been sold. From these structures, ten historic,

**MUNICIPAL HOUSING WITH
30 APARTMENTS ON ORCZY
ROAD, BUDAPEST, DESIGNED BY
ARCHITECTS PÉTER BACH AND
CSABA MOLNÁR IN 2007**

OBECNÉ BÝVANIE S 30 BYTMI NA
ORCZYHO CESTE V BUDAPEŠTI,
KTORÉ NAVRHLI ARCHITEKTI PÉTER
BACH A CSABA MOLNÁR V ROKU
2007

Photo Foto: Dávid Szabó



MUNICIPAL HOUSING WITH 43 APARTMENTS IN JÓZSEF STREET, BUDAPEST, BUILT BY DESIGNED ZOLTÁN SZÉCSI AND LÁSZLÓ VÁNCZA IN 2007

OBECNÝ BYTOVÝ DOM SO 43 BYTMI NA JÓZSEFSKEJ ULICI V BUDAPEŠTI, KTORÝ NAVRHLI ARCHITEKTI ZOLTÁN SZÉCSI A LÁSZLÓ VÁNCZA V ROKU 2007

Photo Foto: Dávid Szabó



run-down buildings with a total of 1,000 apartments¹⁶ were demolished as part of the Corvin-Szigony Project. The municipality offered three options to the tenants and owners of the demolished apartments. (1) cash payment for the change of tenancy or ownership; (2) replacement of another existing municipal apartment; or (3) a newly built rental apartment of the same size. Most tenants and owners chose the last option.

The RÉV8 office then launched architectural competitions for five social housing projects in 2005. The call for applications set out precise expectations, using criteria based on the operational experience of two social housing structures built in the district a few years earlier under the previously discussed State-Supported Rental Housing Program.

The most salient problem with the competition was the size of the apartments, which was far smaller than the tenants' needs. However, the sociological studies showed that such apartment dimensions implied that the units could be afforded by the tenants; similarly, the set principle during the planning program was that every tenant would receive a flat of the same size as the original ones.

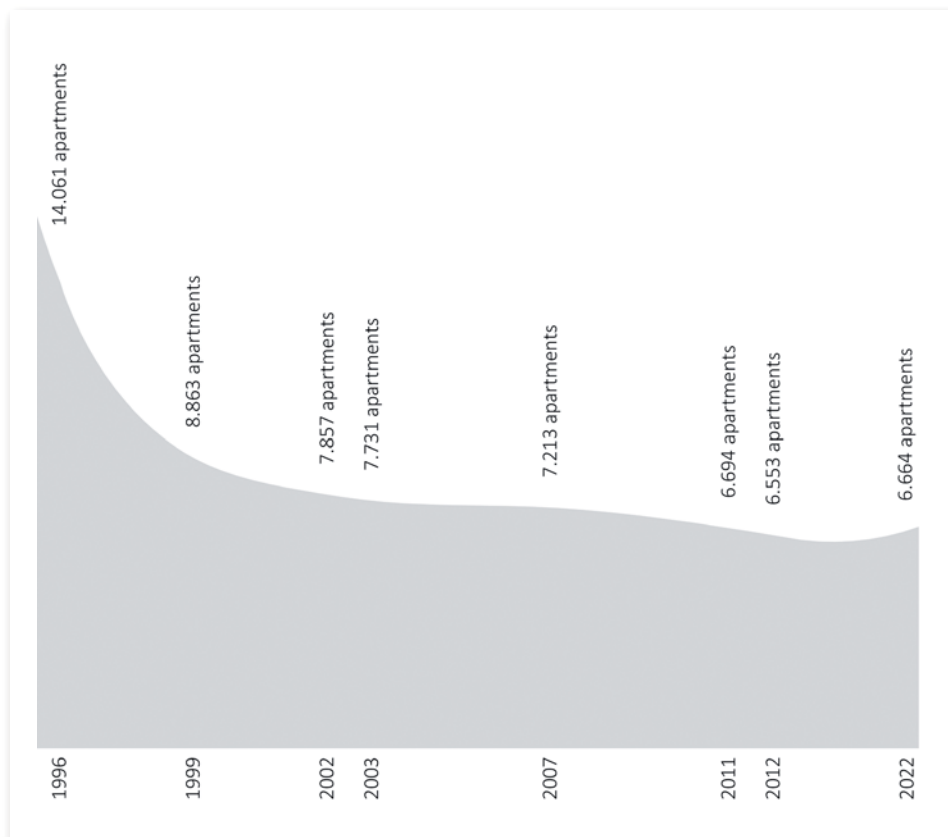
The competitions were successful. Almost 50 competition entries were submitted, and the plans awarded first place were built soon after. The outcome of the five housing projects consisted of buildings constructed to a standard of good architectural quality, yet the social character of the designs was less noticeable. Revealing the disjunction between production of social housing and the system of design competitions, the result makes it evident that while the first aim requires the use of understated, pure architectural and technical solutions, the second, due to its nature, calls for solutions that stand out from the crowd, unfamiliar to social housing.

Also worth noting is that RÉV8 carried out some of the most in-depth sociological research in this area, even beyond the construction of several housing structures and the current management of more than one thousand historic municipal apartments.

The Housing Management Concept of the 13th District of Budapest

Budapest's 13th District is the only place in Hungary where the social housing construction system has registered constant expansion. Its system emerged out of the State-Supported Rental Housing Program: after it ended, District 13 was one of the very few exceptions that continued to build rental units. When, in the mid-2000s, all state-subsidized municipalities were required to prepare a long-term housing management strategy, District 13 pledged to build 50 apartments per year. This strategy has continued to the present day.

Though the outskirts of the district were among the most run-down parts of Budapest, the real estate market, in contrast to Józsefváros, discovered the area in the mid-1990s, noting the appeal of its good infrastructure connections, large vacant plots, and brownfield sites. As a result of this



CHANGES IN THE MUNICIPAL HOUSING STOCK OF DISTRICT 13, BUDAPEST

ZMENY V OBECNOM BYTOVOM FONDĚ 13. OBVODU V BUDAPEŠTI.

Source Zdroj: 13th District of Budapest, edited by Dávid Szabó

process, the value of the land owned by the municipality increased. As demolition of low-rise, low-quality municipal housing accelerated, the income from the land was used to build social housing projects in line with the Housing Act. Since 2002, the district has built 13 new housing projects with a total of 735 apartments¹⁷ and plans to continue the process.

During this time, the municipality has accumulated significant experience in the facility management of historic housing stock and especially the construction of new rental buildings. If the earliest newly built social housing in the district did not surpass the average of the surrounding private housing constructions, the district authorities later raised their expectations, building in to a standard of ever-increasing quality. A milestone in this evolutionary process was reached in 2010, when in the middle of the economic crisis, the municipality decided to plan the largest passive housing complex in Hungary with one hundred apartments¹⁸. As the district became aware more than ten years ago, social housing can be truly effective if the cost of facility management is minimal. To achieve this aim, it has targeted higher energy-efficiency requirements than the current EU or national standards, calculating that the increased technical requirements do not increase the cost of construction – if completed on a large scale – in proportion to how they increase the efficiency of the finished building. Considering the current level of energy costs, the district's strategy has been amply proven correct; already thirteen years ago, three more passive houses were in turn built to these parameters.

Overall, Budapest's 13th District has the only social housing system in Hungary that is constantly expanding and bears comparison with state-of-the-art European models like the cited examples of Amsterdam or Vienna.

Facility Management

Regardless of the level of benefits that social housing brings to society, it is complicated to operate and puts heavy pressure on the local authorities responsible for it.

In this aspect, the most problematic part is the historical housing stock, which has been significantly dispersed since housing privatization. As the maintenance and operation costs of these apartments are much higher than new constructions, the situation predicts the need for



PASSIVE MUNICIPAL HOUSING WITH 100 APARTMENTS ON JÁSZ STREET, BUDAPEST, DESIGNED BY ARCHIKON ARCHITECTS IN 2014

OBEČNÉ PASÍVNE BÝVANIE SO 100 BYTMI NA JÁSZOVEJ ULICI V BUDAPEŠTI, KTORÉ NAVRHOLO ATELIÉR ARCHIKON ARCHITECTS V ROKU 2014

Photo Foto: Dávid Szabó

privatization of earlier buildings and prioritization for new construction. In this context, keeping newly built stock unified under public ownership for the long term is of key importance.

From a financial point of view, building social housing is an investment that will never pay off. With this in mind, the real aim of a social housing system is to be self-financing after the construction, so that the rents and operational costs are generated to finance the maintenance of the apartments.

It is important to understand how social housing works from the perspective of society. The social housing system is not just about offering a place to live, but moreover keeping balance in society. Social housing does not serve individual purposes but instead community ones; it is less the provision of property than the provision of a service. Social housing, in such an understanding, should be viewed as more similar in nature to a public facility than to a traditional residential building.

Tenants

In my research, I conducted extensive interviews with the tenants of social housing units. In general, the results of these interviews confirmed the satisfaction of a majority of tenants with the Hungarian social housing system, especially with the newly built apartments. The main reason cited is the provision of good living conditions for an affordable rental fee. Other important aspects mentioned were the legal security, which is much stronger than in private rentals, and the optional social support from the municipality. As a result, tenants feel their rented social apartments to be their true homes.

As noted previously, the Hungarian social housing system is severely limited, at approximately 60,000 units, providing ~1.3% of the total housing stock. Consequently, entry into the social housing system is genuinely difficult. Acceptance involves gaining not just a place to live, but indeed full tenant rights, which bring you other social benefits as well, and thus guarantees predictability and stability. If tenants comply with the essential payment and living conditions, there is a good chance to get lifelong housing opportunities. Although it is difficult to get into the system, it is also difficult to be excluded from it.

However, even as this regulated legal framework offers many benefits, it also has constraining effects. The strength of the legal guarantees does not motivate tenants to move on to private or market-rented housing. A side effect of the system for the tenants is that social housing is treated as a final destination, not merely as an interim stage in housing. Furthermore, this situation



**SOCIAL SETTLEMENT WITH 80
SMALL HOUSES IN ÓCSA, DESIGNED
BY KVADRUM ARCHITECTS IN 2013**

SOCIÁLNA OSADA S 80 MALÝMI
DOMAMI V ÓCSE, KTORÚ NAVRHOL
ATELIÉR KVADRUM ARCHITECTS
V ROKU 2013

Photo Foto: Dávid Szabó

highlights the inequality of the system: due to the small scope of the social housing stock in the Hungarian system, there are a few lucky tenants who acquire a social rental unit, and in this way solving their personal housing problem, while the majority, who do not succeed at entering the system, are left in doubtful housing conditions on the private market.

Having visited a significant part of the new social housing stock and interviewed tenants, builders, facility managers, or architects, I can assert the existence of the Hungarian model as a small-scale but socially sustainable one. Further expansion of the system, in my view, would offer countless benefits. It could provide targeted support to the less privileged strata of urban dwellers; it would not expose the most defenseless families to market processes, and its social services (education, family care, social work) could handle a major part of social problems in the short term.

Further Housing Subsidies

As mentioned above, a wide range of housing subsidies have become available in Hungary in recent years - yet almost entirely for purchasing new or for refurbishing existing property. Although these do not always reach the lowest income class, these are important supports for housing.

The most important subsidy is the Family Housing Allowance Program (CSOK), which provides direct financial subsidies and preferential mortgages for families with children to buy a new or pre-owned home. This program is a real help in those areas where housing is relatively affordable. Temporary support can also be awarded for building refurbishing, especially for the energy renovation of prefabricated blocks.

It is also worth mentioning specific isolated projects, such as one government pilot project in the early 2010s. Since many people lost their homes in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, the government built for some of them a social housing built a social housing settlement of 80 small houses, similar in concept and character to the small flats built in the early 1900s. This completely new suburban settlement is located in Ócsa, 35 kilometers south from Budapest. Yet the achievements of the project have turned out to be controversial. On one hand, it was the first project built by the state for many years, and supplies secure homes for 80 families. On the other, the project was costly; though originally planned for 500 houses, it was realized as only a fraction of what was intended. Moreover, the social, service functions and infrastructural connections of the area remain deficient. Overall, it is not an efficient investment, especially when recalling that the passive-housing projects with 100 apartments in the 13th District were built at the same time with very similar parameters.

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Summary

Examining the history of social housing in Hungary, it becomes evident that for a long time, it developed in parallel with the housing systems of Western European countries. Though there have always been differences in scale and complexity, the development trajectory has been similar, even excluding the divergences between the political and economic order after World War II.

From the 1950s to the 1980s, the trends and the tools, even the mistakes, were similar. At the same time, in most Western European countries, social housing succeeded in becoming a fundamental social value, where it has been able to develop as a result of social support, becoming a real help and an autonomous system.

By contrast, what was implemented in Hungary was a controlled structure: though the Hungarian system had itself expanded to provide realistic large-scale support by the 1970s, there had been no parallel evolution of social solidarity. As a result, the achievements of a system built up over many decades could rapidly disappear with the collapse of the earlier political structure in the early 1990s. And at this time, the parallel nature of evolution ended. While currently in some European countries the aim is the continuous renewal and expansion of the system, in Hungary - with only a few exceptions like the 13th District of Budapest - the continued maintenance and slow privatization of the fragmented stock is the only goal. Meanwhile, as in most other countries, the social needs only continue to expand.

Construction of social housing is a complex process that cannot be separated from the existing housing system and the institutional background. Social housing projects were not created in isolation, but instead as part of complex, regulated programs. Successful interventions require experience, background knowledge and sensitivity. As such expertise and capacity are concentrated locally, municipalities (or non-profit housing associations) are thus the entities most appropriate to run social housing systems and housing projects. With their experience and advocacy skills, they can even exert an influence on private rental prices.

The Hungarian social housing system cannot be developed further without government support and encouraging legislation: the involvement of the state is unavoidable. Renewal of social housing would require complex programs similar to those of the early 2000s. Finally, it is important to achieve the highest level of public support, as without this social background the system is weak and unable to produce results sustainable for the long term. Wider support can, in turn, only be achieved if the system develops to a scale in which accessibility is no longer a privilege but rather a basic social opportunity.

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