



**MAYOR KRESÁNEK MEETING  
CITIZENS TO INFORM THEM ABOUT  
THE PROCEDURE OF HOUSING  
PRIVATIZATION IN BRATISLAVA  
(PRIMATE'S PALACE, 7.3.1994)**

SETKÁNÍ PRIMÁTORA KRESÁNKA  
S OBČANY S CÍLEM INFORMOVAT  
JE O POSTUPU PRIVATIZACE  
BYTOVÉHO FONDU V BRATISLAVĚ  
(PRIMACIÁLNÍ PALÁC, 7.3.1994)

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# The Anatomy of Privatization: The Genealogy and Practice of Postsocialist Housing Transformation in Bratislava

Anatomie privatizace:  
Kořeny a praxe postsocialistické  
transformace bydlení v Bratislavě

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Tato studie usiluje o historizaci radikální privatizace bydlení, jak se v Bratislavě začala odehrávat v průběhu devadesátých let 20. století. Na rozdíl od dřívějších prací sociálních vědců a vědkyň zkoumajících urbánní transformaci postsocialistických měst včetně Bratislavy nechce autor zůstat u popisu vývojových trajektorií prostoru města či vlastnických struktur. Usiluje spíše o postižení kořenů tohoto vývoje a o zachycení způsobu myšlení, jednání i vyjednávání aktérů. Ambicí autora je vrátit do příběhu o postsocialistické transformaci měst lidi, kteří jej žili a spoluutvářeli. Urbánní experty, místní politiky, podnikatele, ale také občany a obyvatele v méně exkluzivním postavení. Konkrétní podobě ideologie i systému, který ideologie zakládá a legitimizuje, se autor snaží porozumět jakožto výslednici mnoha aktivních procesů, včetně široce rozprostraněných předpolitických přesvědčení.

Studie ukazuje Bratislavu jako „terén“, v němž se privatizace bydlení odehrála poměrně důsledně (z celkového počtu přibližně 220 000 bytových jednotek jich 30 let po sametové revoluci patřily městu pouhé 2 000, tj. méně než 1 %), a proto je pro mapování příčin, průběhu, důsledků a především dobové legitimacy tohoto historického děje nanejvýš příhodná. Praxi „výprodeje“ bydlení přitom autor studuje „zdola“, díky unikátním

pramenům centrální bratislavské městské části Staré Mesto. Tato pramenná báze umožňuje rekonstruovat nejen legislativní přípravu, cenotvorbu či tempo prodeje bytů, ale i stanoviska a strategie jednotlivých aktérů, od radních a zastupitelů až po občany usilující o koupi jednotlivých bytů.

Autor na pozadí tohoto dynamického procesu převraccího vlastnické poměry a omezujícího možnosti politiky udržet si kontrolu nad bytovou politikou i dalším rozvojem města zároveň pojmenovává často neočekávané předpoklady široce rozprostraněné legitimacy „bydlení ve vlastním“ hluboko v normalizačních časech, a to v rovině žité praxe, myšlení i legislativy. Jakkoli poukazuje na ostrý zlom v porevolučním vývoji, jenž nastal kolem roku 1993 (kdy byla otevřena stavidla privatizace bydlení), ukazuje tak rovněž překvapivé kontinuity. Ty spatřuje primárně v diskurzivní rovině, tj. v propojování bydlení ve vlastním nejen s osobním benefitem a jistotou, ale také s účastí člověka na péči o hmotné statky, které jsou mu prostřednictvím vlastnění svěřeny. Studie nicméně zároveň odhaluje kontinuitu i v rovině aktérské; pravidla přednostního převodu bytů dosavadním nájemníkům totiž můžeme číst mimo jiné jako způsob konzervování osobních privilegií vydobytých v éře pozdního socialismu.

Our current understanding of the integration of Central and Eastern European metropolises into global capitalism during the 1990s relies primarily on the work of sociologists and social or urban geographers.<sup>1</sup> These analyses of transformation, usually performed on a comparative basis, respond to two urgent questions “What have been the main characteristics of the transition?” and “What position does the Central European urban network occupy in the European urban network as whole?”<sup>2</sup> For social history, this perspective is a welcome contextualisation – yet the ambition towards explaining the complex social roots of these changes often remains less than fully realised.<sup>3</sup>

The current study, in consequence, has a different goal. It hopes to contribute to a historicization that reaches beyond the description of the urban development trajectories observable, in several variations, from Prague to Moscow or Warsaw to Sofia. It works to capture the roots of historic phenomena and depict the ways in which the actors thought, behaved, and negotiated with each other. My aim is to return people to the story of postsocialist urban transformation; to trace the actions of citizens, who lived in and collectively formed these cities, including urban experts, local politicians, entrepreneurs, or even citizens and residents with less exclusive positions. (Neo)liberal

capitalism<sup>4</sup> was not an epidemic that afflicted a helpless and passive society like a medieval plague. The concrete form of ideology, and the system that creates and legitimizes the said ideology, is always the outcome of many active processes and emerges even from pre-political discourses and the convictions of many. As historical scholarship has convincingly demonstrated, this is prevalent even in such authoritarian systems as Nazism or Stalinism.<sup>5</sup>

Such a depiction of the intellectual background and social practice of “everyday transformation” only possible, within the limits of a journal article, through sharply limiting its scope – in the present case, the privatization of housing in Bratislava in the 1990s. My interests focus specifically on the actors and their decision-making, along with a questioning of the degree of consensus that prevailed within this wide-reaching transformation of ownership. To what extent was the whole process from a certain point “self-driven” and to what extent did it have to be urged forward by individual political actors with specific interests? Were there any ideas about the ideal target state or was the purpose of privatization seen more in itself? How big a role did practical reasons play (finances, urgent care for neglected housing stock) and how did ideological reasons enter the decision-making process (belief in the morally redemptive nature of private property, mistrust of the state, the city, or the public sector in general, etc.)?

My endeavour to answer these and other questions in this study is heavily based on archival research. Besides studying professional journals and other published sources from the late 1980s and 1990s, I traced the activities of the City council and city government (resp. City National Council before 1990), as well as of the council of particular city districts.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the central Municipal archive, I was lucky to discover the archive of the municipal district Bratislava – Staré Mesto [Old Town], where I could trace the political decisions and debates of local district council and parliament (or its particular members) and also, thanks to well preserved proceedings, opinions and wishes of local citizens, who often participated on the council or local district parliament sessions.<sup>7</sup>

In Bratislava, the broad “clearance sale” of housing into private ownership took place relatively consistently, hence providing a suitable terrain for mapping the causes, trajectory, consequences and, above all, the contemporary legitimacy of this historical event. Similar to Prague and other large Czechoslovak cities, the privatization of housing started in Bratislava rather late (compared, for example, to Warsaw or especially Budapest). Even in 1993, when Bratislava became the capital of independent Slovakia, the vast majority of the city’s inhabitants lived in rented accommodation – out of a total of approximately 161,000 inhabited apartment units in Bratislava, less than 18,000 were privately owned at the time (mostly family houses in outlying areas of the city). Over 80,000 housing units, i.e. approximately half of the total, were in city ownership; almost 60,000 were cooperative apartments.<sup>8</sup> With such an ownership structure, the situation in fact represented (in the view of many current urban experts) a promising mixture of communal, cooperative, and private housing, with a predominance of the first two forms. By contrast, the current statistics of apartments in Bratislava (from 2020) present us with a rather monochromatic image. Of the total number of approximately 220,000 housing units, only 2,000 belong to the city, which is less than 1% – probably the smallest share of urban housing among all EU capitals. For comparison, in near-by Vienna – cited somewhat paradoxically by many Bratislava experts and politicians as a model and inspiration<sup>9</sup> – the municipality is the owner of roughly 60% of all housing units.<sup>10</sup>

The privatization of property in Bratislava indeed warrants further investigation from a social historical perspective. Questions such as who were the sellers and who the buyers, who and what first set in motion the spiral of property transfers from city ownership to private hands, and what wider contexts assisted this process, are of urgent concern.

### **Preconditions: Housing and Ownership at the End of Socialism**

As part of the search for new ways toward greater efficiency in the construction and management of apartments and houses, alternative forms of housing ownership (from the point of view of state socialism) began to be supported in socialist Czechoslovakia, in both legislation and practice, starting in the 1960s. Socialist law, in accordance with the dominant ideology, distinguished between private ownership (i.e. the unconditional rule of a person over a thing, which can also serve to generate profit) and personal (ownership purely for personal use, i.e. ownership of a thing that cannot, or should not be used as goods or means of production). While private ownership would (or should) gradually be abolished, personal ownership (traditionally, for example, ownership of

a car or a smaller weekend house) remained a legitimate legal relationship.<sup>11</sup> In turn, the limitations and conditions on personal property were, understandably, the subject of much negotiation within the Communist Party and the state, as well as with representatives of social organisations and the citizens themselves.

Among the sensitive areas that such negotiation touched upon, housing was unquestionably present. Even at the end of the 1950s, when previous socialist housing construction had shown itself to be slow and insufficient<sup>12</sup>, the highest political bodies launched a debate on alternative forms of housing alongside the dominant construction form directed, financed, and owned by the state. The first outcome of this debate was a renewed support for cooperative methods, specifically Act no. 27/1959. As such, members of housing construction cooperatives became de facto co-owners of their residences. In the later 1960s, when this method produced more flats in Czechoslovakia than by state housing construction<sup>13</sup>, the path was also opened to legalising personal ownership of flats in residential blocks – a form that had never completely disappeared in the previous two decades, though the original intentions of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (KSČ) were for its gradual reduction or full elimination. The relevant law<sup>14</sup> was passed “in the effort to expand the possibilities of satisfying the housing needs of the citizens who wish to address them from their own funds”, defining not only the ownership of the actual unit but the co-ownership share in the building’s common spaces, owners’ decisions on building investments (in the case of a building where several units were personally owned and others state property, the same rules applied for the state as for the private owners), or contributions to the maintenance fund, all resembling the legislation enacted in the 1990s. The law covered both the purchase of flats by private individuals from the state (though under the condition that the purchaser was the resident)<sup>15</sup>, as well as the residence of persons other than the owner(s) in the flat or transfer of ownership between private individuals.

In the two decades after 1968, cooperative construction and cooperative ownership stagnated somewhat in comparison to the second half of the 1960s, though it remained an important component of housing policy in socialist Czechoslovakia. Personal ownership of apartments, however, persisted (from a statistical point of view) only as a marginal phenomenon. This can be considered as (among other things) a consequence of the thwarting of the reform efforts of the 1960s by the onset of “normalization”, i.e. the renewed ambition to maintain state control over economic life. The above-mentioned law on personal ownership of an apartment from 1966, followed by various decrees and laws from the late Seventies and Eighties, is thus more important in terms of legislative continuity than any real influence on the apartment “market” in late socialism.

However much this development might be expected in state socialist conditions, it was not a matter of absolute necessity. In neighbouring Hungary, the departure from the socialist model of housing (state or communal apartments for all, at a nominal rent) can be traced back to the housing policy reform of 1971, which allowed for (uneven) rent increases, and especially after the reform of 1981. In connection with the economic crisis and the growth of state debt, reducing the funds for construction investments and housing stock maintenance, Hungarian housing policy began a significant orientation towards market mechanisms. Housing privatization took place in Hungary during the 1980s, which culminated after the radical reform of 1989<sup>16</sup>, when – even before the change in political regimes – rents were hiked by an additional 30% and the last “socialist” principle abolished, i.e., the regulation allowing one nuclear family to own only one single flat.<sup>17</sup> Considering Budapest at the end of the 1980s, when rents were sharply rising and over half the flats were already in private hands, it is no exaggeration to speak of a kind of gentrification even in conditions of state socialism, if still under the careful supervision of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party.<sup>18</sup>

In socialist Czechoslovakia, on the other hand, personal ownership of housing remained a statistically significant factor (indeed after 1975 the dominant one) only in the case of single-family detached houses. Due to the need for decent “accommodations” for the entire population, this form was welcomed, especially if people were willing to undertake the construction themselves. The legislation of the 1970s and 1980s also supported the transfer of family homes from cooperative or other collective ownership to personal ownership, which definitively exempted the state from the costs of caring for such homes.<sup>19</sup> In fact, support for the construction of privately owned single-family dwellings in the 1970s and 1980s significantly changed the appearance of Slovakia’s landscape, not only in rural areas but even in larger cities, Bratislava included.<sup>20</sup>

At the end of the 1970s, another specific path opened to personal home ownership. It involved the transfer of dilapidated or otherwise unsatisfactory apartments, in the case that tenants (or future owners) were willing invest their own resources, with initial state support, in the units' modernization and further maintenance.<sup>21</sup> As such, the way was opened to personal ownership for the middle class, who in the meantime had begun to rediscover the charm of the picturesque old districts that had previously witnessed massive flight to prefabricated housing estates and apartments with modern infrastructure. The exchange of individual investment in repairs and maintenance for property rights, codified in this late socialist legislation, also sets a very important precedent, as we shall see later, for the beginnings of housing privatization in the 1990s.

Less explicitly, but with a wider social reach, the privatization of housing was nevertheless being prepared long before 1989 on other levels as well. Its main prerequisites can be identified in general as normalizing individualism, demonstrated by the building of private paradises in small weekend houses, former rural dwellings, or in the gardens of family houses. In relation to urban living, it implied above all the gradual renaissance of urbanity and the positive values of the historic city, visible in Prague, Bratislava and other cities starting at the end of the 1960s.<sup>22</sup>

Paralleling the restoration of historic urban cores in the 1970s and, more significantly, the revitalization of the first apartment blocks of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century date in the 1980s, this return to the traditional city manifested itself, among other things, in the strong interest of cultural elites and a gradually expanding stratum of the educated or financially better-off urban dwellers to make their residence (by staying or moving) in the wider central zones of large cities. In the 1980s, not only artists, architects, or doctors, but equally senior officials or functionaries of the Communist Party settled in these neighbourhoods and, through decrees or other means, figuratively barricaded themselves in "their" apartments. In particular, lease agreements for an indefinite period gave tenants extensive guarantees and allowed, under certain circumstances, apartments to be inherited.<sup>23</sup> More than occasionally, these tenants were willing to invest in "their" flats and in practical terms, the difference from full ownership was essentially minimal.<sup>24</sup> As such, the result was at least a turn toward social stratification (visible, for instance, in the revitalised sections of Prague's district of Vinohrady); certain authors even speak of a (socialist) gentrification<sup>25</sup>, though of course far more moderate and gradual than in the era of post-1989 capitalism. Whatever term we may choose to mark this development, its motivating force and simultaneously its outcome was a strengthening of an ownership relation towards individual flats, even if the inhabitants themselves were still "only" renting. Yet already by the 1980s, it was evident that for a majority of these tenants, the longed-for guarantee of a strong bond between the family and the residence was the flat's being in private ownership. The demand for personally owned flats was enormous in cities, even more so in their historic sections, and represented a relatively invisible yet for that all the stronger force within the pressure-cooker that was socialist Czechoslovakia.

In Bratislava, these shifts in the perception of cities and forms of housing were manifested, among other ways, by a shift in the attention of urban experts from the construction of prefabricated housing estates to the revitalization of the inner city – the historic centre and adjacent neighbourhoods built in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, the attentive reader of the architectural journal *Projekt* and other specialised periodicals focusing on architecture, urban planning and more generally urban development could not have missed that more often than not, it was the advocates of radical modernist solutions (i.e. usually the destruction of old buildings and their replacement by large modern complexes) who came up short in the debates about the fate of these city districts, streets or individual buildings. This situation became fully apparent in the discussion on the revitalization of Obchodná Street in 1984, when the then thirty-four-year-old architect Matúš Dulla concluded in his paradigmatic article in the main Slovak architectural journal that "the means of so-called modern urbanism no longer suffice to create an environment equal in its cultural complexity to other parts of the city", and that a truly valuable urban entity "cannot be built through a single process of demolition and construction" but only "organic development of (often quite modest) values that we have previously proven capable of creating and keeping".<sup>26</sup>

This tectonic shift in thinking about the city and the overall aesthetic stance toward the human environment also fundamentally influenced the discussions about housing and individual construction, about the modernization of the older housing stock and the revitalization of residential units in Bratislava - and as a result, specifically, the form of specific revitalization projects

in central urban areas.<sup>27</sup> Urban experts of the younger generation, such as the architect Marta Kropiláková, or the art historian and preservationist (later, 1990–1994, district mayor of Bratislava-Staré Mesto) Miloslava Zemková, were increasingly listened to. One of the most important figures of this generational cohort was undoubtedly the architect Ivan Marko, probably the most prominent protagonist of postmodernism in Slovakia in the 1980s. Indeed, he was the main author of the winning proposal for the revitalization of Obchodná Street, which rejected any modernist renovations or proposals negating the existing urban structure and, on the contrary, emphasized the need to rehabilitate traditional urban elements and preserve their scale within the framework of new construction.<sup>28</sup>

These experts, along with others at the time, brought significant attention to the discussions on the reconstruction and revitalization of historical buildings. At the same time, the aim was not only to promote a new architectural opinion in the spirit of postmodern impulses or about strengthening the relationship with historical heritage. The transformation of thinking about the relationship of individuals to their dwellings also had, in some cases, explicitly practical implications, e.g. promotion of the use of attic spaces of old houses for attractive individual living, which immediately touched on the issue of the rights to the layout, if not even direct ownership rights, of people to “their” apartments.<sup>29</sup>

All these legislative adjustments to housing ownership were reflected by sociologists, urban planners, architects, and municipal administration, which gave the green light to several “unorthodox” projects in this sense. Another motivation could be the surveys carried out in the early 1980s among the city’s inhabitants, which, among other things, confirmed the considerable interest of the inhabitants in projects of apartments for personal ownership.<sup>30</sup> Such a public desire for the security that such ownership would provide, one might assume, could only be articulated under the conditions of state socialism with great caution. However, the motivations publicly mentioned by residents and experts were also relevant. In the prospect of apartments designed or rebuilt for future individual owners (and involving their participation), the citizens of Bratislava saw the promise of greater variability compared to standard typified housing units – i.e. for example, multi-storey and attic apartments, multi-generational apartments, apartments with a higher standard of conveniences, apartments allowing for variability according to the changing needs of their owners.<sup>31</sup> The head of one of the ateliers of the Bratislava state design institute Stavoprojekt and co-author of the urban plan of the famed Petržalka housing estate, Stanislav Talaš, thus reached the conclusion already by 1984, in connection with a project for low-rise buildings and flats for private ownership, that “blocks of flats with units for personal ownership imply the expansion of urbanistic elements and can bring the living environment new quality. They are an opportunity for improving the level and typological range of flats, increase the financial participation of the public in addressing the housing question, as is naturally reflected as well in the relationship of the inhabitants to the flat, the building, and the surroundings.”<sup>32</sup>

Arguments supporting the ownership of one’s own dwelling were not only publicly articulated in the Bratislava environment in the mid-1980s, but at the same time embedded in a relatively robust narrative about the social (primarily professional) differentiation of a society in which it no longer makes sense to design and organize housing for the “average user”<sup>33</sup> At the same time, it was seen as essential for individuals and families with their special needs to take an active interest in the fulfilment of their desires. Personal ownership of an apartment, associated with personal responsibility and care, i.e. implying a degree of relief for the overburdened caregiving state, was not necessarily conceptualized as a privilege, but precisely as one of the possible forms of such involvement.

Privatization of housing, which before long in Bratislava and other Slovak and Czech cities would bring about the end of the rental or cooperative basis of ties between people and “their” apartments still prevalent at that time, could thus rely not only on legal regulations from the era of post-Stalinism and late socialism, but above all on a shared desire for private property, perceived with increasing urgency as a legitimate solution to specific social problems, including housing. Among both citizens and experts, personal ownership at the end of state socialism became connected to a somewhat naive trust in the responsible relationship of owners to their property, and the related expectation of a beneficial effect from individual housing ownership not only on the future owners themselves, but on the city as a whole. It was with such a mental background that the citizens of Bratislava, on the threshold of the 1990s, set out on the path of building capitalism.

## From Humanisation to Privatisation

Despite all that has been said above, individual ownership of housing in Czechoslovakia in the 1980s remained only one of a wide range of tools occasionally discussed for addressing the limited capacity of state care for rental apartments. Even at the level of expert and political discourses (not to mention solutions applied in practice) it was never one of the central concepts. On the contrary, from the beginning of the 1980s, discussions on the greening and humanization of the city undoubtedly far outnumbered those on private ownership. The need to plan the city in a more ecological way, to improve the quality of its environment, or to humanize the alienated space of modernist housing estates and other city districts was emphasized at almost every suitable opportunity in the second half of the decade not only by experts from the Office of the Chief Architect, but also by representatives of district government bodies (MNVs).<sup>34</sup>

These universalistic notions and aspirations provided much-welcomed nourishment for the discussions arising in connection with Czechoslovakia's own, somewhat more muted version of the USSR's perestroika (*přestavba*), and it is not surprising that political actors saw a discourse suffused with ecology and urban humanization (and the construction and maintenance plans derived from it) a chance to return legitimacy to their increasingly threatened political hegemony. Within political and expert debate, these collective values in the pre-revolution atmosphere overshadowed – at least temporarily – questions of individual need, including the construction or conversion of apartments into personal ownership.

In the last two to three years before the revolution, there was another value shared and promoted by a growing number of influential actors, politically more difficult to implement but impossible to ignore: namely, citizen participation. Pressure for the participation of ordinary residents in deciding the future form of the city threatened not only the authority of the bureaucracy, accustomed to making decisions centrally and relatively authoritatively, but also the privileged position of urban experts in a system of technocratic governance. However, some of the experts, especially the critical sociologists associated with the initiative *Bratislava Na/hlas* (Bratislava Out/Loud), nevertheless perceived the demand for participation as justified and meaningful, assisting its conceptualizing as a legitimate part of ongoing, or even more so planned, changes in the methods of socialist governance.<sup>35</sup> It was, though, the professional bureaucrats, long accustomed to city planning in an exclusive conversation with approved experts and politicians, who were visibly more confused by increasing activity from the citizens. This clash was revealed openly during the discussion of Bratislava's new urban plan at the end of the 1980s, when the council of the city-wide MNV complained about the conflicts of opinion between various civic organizations and individuals during the process of commenting on the draft Bratislava Masterplan (with a proposed timeframe of up until 2010). Indeed, in several aspects, the public discussion already resembled that of liberal democratic practice, though in the last phase of Communist rule provoking aggrieved sighs from officials and supervising political bodies. Above all, it was seen as unacceptable for “the publication in the official press, before the ending of the comment process, of the biased opinions of certain individuals and groups”, which would supposedly “disorient the councillors”.<sup>36</sup> Technocratic planning and centralized urban governance found themselves sharply confronted with barriers previously unknown, indeed insurmountable in the extant system of urban discussions and planning – and rapidly hastening towards its bitter end.

It cannot be doubted that even in the last months of Czechoslovak state socialism and afterward in the wake of the Velvet Revolution, people did not forget their personal desires for better and preferably privately owned housing. All the same, this transformation of set discursive formations when confronted with radical changes somehow opened up more space for a more fundamental questioning of the existing order of things. Mainly, it was aimed at exposing the inability of centralist management to ensure the well-being of society as a whole – i.e., first of all, the necessity of improving the quality of the urban and suburban environments, the humanization and de-anonymization of public space, and the need for people's active participation in deciding the future form of the environment in the city they inhabited.<sup>37</sup>

Yet any expectation that pure capitalism would have come flooding into the streets of Bratislava immediately in the weeks following the inauguration of the Čalfa government would be wrong. Regarding the city's housing policy or more general approaches to the city's problems, we can characterize the period of 1990–1992 as a mixture of continuity, acute rescue work (an effort to prevent irreversible “degradation” concerning mainly historical buildings) and the cautious search for



**THE CEREMONIAL TOAST  
AFTER THE APPOINTMENT  
OF PETR KRESÁNEK (FIRST FROM  
LEFT) AS MAYOR OF BRATISLAVA**

SLAVNOSTNÍ PŘÍPITEK PO  
JMENOVÁNÍ PETERA KRESÁNKY  
(PRVNÍ ZLEVA) PRIMÁTOREM MĚSTA  
BRATISLAVY (25. 11. 1990)

Source Zdroj: archive of TASR,  
Photo Foto: M. Borodáčová

a model for continuing city functions. And this inertia prevailed even in the face of all the political rhetoric that tried to create the impression of a fundamental break with the past.

The most striking continuity is that of the late-socialist postmodern impulses, influenced by discourses of ecology and humanisation leading towards an “inhabitable city”, persisting within the era’s expert communities. The slogan of the day was primarily “ecological rehabilitation”.<sup>38</sup> Even addressing the housing question, expert views initially adhered closely to the trajectory outlined in the 1980s; i.e., focusing mainly on aesthetic matters and questions of psychological formation of the home, not on ownership relations, which to urban experts probably seemed an issue outside their expertise. A kind of obligatory ritual (again, to some extent, following the previous decade, when it was already an indication of good taste among progressive architects) was distaste or even condemnation of “prefabs” and promotion of the individual character of living spaces, ideally in historic apartment blocks or detached houses.<sup>39</sup> This leitmotif of revitalization and humanization in construction and housing, often in the Bratislava context making negative reference to the massive Petržalka housing estate, set the tone for urban-expert discourse almost throughout the 1990s<sup>40</sup>, in other words well into the era when practical policy had long shifted in the housing sphere to questions of a quite different – and far more material – character. Several authors have now admitted that the “humanization of the urban environment” served as a truly empty signifier, indicating only the actors’ allegiance to a specific concept of the city and usually deployed to justify a wide variety of projects without ever making it clear what the phrase might mean. Or, for other observers, there simply was no interest in truly complex, large-scale projects for revitalising the urban fabric on the part of local government or residents, at least in the first years of the 1990s.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the expected changes in personal composition, a similar continuity prevailed in the first two post-revolutionary years regarding construction and the character of residential districts from Bratislava’s public governing body, the former District National Committee (MNV) transformed at the end of 1990 into the current Bratislava City Council – where city policies were shaped and (through the relevant departments and commissions) their realisation supervised. In 1990–1991, the process known under socialism as “complex housing construction” continued, in principle, according to the pre-1989 plans, and the maintenance of most of the apartments was undertaken (with similar difficulties as in previous years) by municipal housing companies. Even the new political elite, mainly people from the oppositional circles of Public against Violence (VPN) or the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), or a history of involvement in the Bratislava Na/Hlas initiative (such as the future long-term mayor of the city, art historian Peter Kresánek), understood housing policy at that time as a matter of state and municipal responsibility, in other words as public care for the population.<sup>42</sup> What attracted the greatest attention and most forceful engagement was the protection of built heritage, or conversely resolving the most acute problems of Bratislava’s historic centre.<sup>43</sup>



Nonetheless, below the seemingly calm surface, fundamental changes were already brewing. The new representatives of Bratislava inherited a city with extensive but largely neglected property and a population with significantly limited purchasing power. Any drastic increase in rents (especially for residential premises) or city taxes was politically impossible, yet neglected or dangerously decrepit buildings, in their view, could not wait for a distant future of prosperity. Moreover, after the revolutionary changes, there was a public expectation that their living environment, in the case of Bratislava their apartments, individual buildings, streets and public spaces, or city parks and cultural facilities, would quickly recover from the heavy hand of state socialism. This discrepancy between expectations and reality, sparking confusion in many of the new representatives and officials co-deciding on the further development of the city, was significantly expressed by Mayor Peter Kresánek in his opening speech at the February meeting of the city council in 1992: "If we state that we lack the funds to start repairing and improving this neglected heritage, very few believe us... I am thoroughly convinced that in addition to balancing our spending on the usual functions of the city, we need in these months to find a way for investing in the said infrastructure of this city, even if it means billions. On the other hand, I should recall the words of the chair of the financial commission of our council – where should we find it without having to steal?"<sup>44</sup>

The first step away from the burdensome responsibility towards this forgotten and physically decaying heritage, which for most of the socialist era had understandably belonged to the state yet generously assigned by federal Czechoslovak law to the city already by 1990<sup>45</sup>, was the strategy, largely successful, of delegating this responsibility toward the city districts. Although the greater share of material assets in the city, service organizations, services, etc. remained formally owned by the Bratislava municipality, their administration was entrusted to the individual districts. In practice, this management meant that district governments could dispose of this property as they pleased, as long as they followed the general conditions defined by the City Statute, though at the same time they bore the obligation to take care of it.<sup>46</sup> Any sale of Bratislava's municipal property required the approval of the mayor in the administration of city districts, yet in the vast majority of cases the condition was a formality; later, when buildings were sold by the dozens and apartments by the hundreds, approval was usually granted generally before any individual cases were discussed. In 1991–1992, the powers of the city districts were strengthened still further.<sup>47</sup> Decisions affecting the city as an economic and social organism, or the relations between people and the enormous quantity of material property that the city represents, were thus made to a large extent at the town halls of the individual districts, in a dialogue between newly appointed local politicians with often limited experience in city administration, and on the other hand, well-experienced civil servants from the era of late socialism, accustomed to state directivism, the leading role of the Communist Party, and the strictly limited competence of the earlier "regional national committees".

As could easily be imagined, the problem remained unaddressed. The confusion was merely distributed to the local town halls, from the Old Town and Petržalka outward to the distant suburbs of Lamač or Karlova Ves. From the point of view of their staff, deputies and councilors, the sale of municipal property, including apartments and apartment buildings, began to appear as a salutary (and at the same time the only available) solution. Especially after the parliamentary elections in the spring of 1992, in accordance with the national trend, the privatization of housing gradually became a key issue at the municipal level as well. From the point of view of the elected officials, deputies and councillors, the sale of municipal property, including apartments and apartment buildings, began to appear not only a salutary, but even the only available solution.

With this possibility, one path seemed to lead away from the implacable dilemma between the vast, mostly neglected city property and the empty municipal coffers. Whether to pursue it or not was never actually debated in the political bodies of the municipality or the major districts: only its form and scope. At the outset, though, there was a severe lack not only of experience, but even the necessary legislation. Under such conditions, whenever it was possible to sell or transfer any piece of land or real estate from city ownership to that of a private person or company, it was generally considered a success and a demonstration of the abilities and competence of those who prepared the transaction, legally justified it, and brought it to a successful conclusion. The property was seen as a burden, one that the authorities were convinced the city would be relieved to lose. Yet what other personages and actors shared this belief? To find an answer to this question, the slowly widening gyre of housing privatization provides us with excellent material.

THE BRATISLAVA MAYOR PETER KRESÁNEK CEREMONIALLY OPENING THE NEOCLASSICAL PRIMATES' PALACE IN THE OLD CITY CENTRE OF BRATISLAVA (26.9.1993). THE PALACE WAS BEING RECONSTRUCTED FOR 6 YEARS, SINCE THE LATE 1980S.

BRATISLAVSKÝ PRIMÁTOR PETER KRESÁNEK SLAVNOSTNĚ OTEVÍRÁ NEOKLASICISTNÍ PRIMACIÁLNÍ PALÁC VE STARÉM CENTRU BRATISLAVY (26.9.1993). PALÁC SE REKONSTRUOVAL 6 LET, OD KONCE 80. LET 20. STOLETÍ.

Source Zdroj: archive of TASR,  
Photo Foto: M. Borodáčová



On November 14, 1991, a public meeting of the city council of the Bratislava-Staré Mesto district (Old Town) brought up the question of allocating apartments for rent. It became clear that, despite complaints about the lack of apartments, there were approximately 650 vacant apartments in the Old Town, mostly because they were uninhabitable without necessary repairs. Mayor Zemková then invoked not only the council's agreement on the need to sell flats into private ownership, but also the great demand for the purchase of derelict flats, through private investment in their repair, from the citizens - applicants. According to her, however, the sale of apartments was not yet allowed by legislation.<sup>48</sup> And assigning these flats, whether as council rentals or with the promise of future privatisation, to prospective tenants in economic need or displaying an interest in making a personal investment, would additionally violate the obligation of the council to respect the still-active waiting lists for those applying for a flat. In a powerful address starting with the words "I'm speaking for everyone who has nowhere to live"<sup>49</sup>, one woman from Staré Mesto described not only the poor condition of several hundred flats, but also the common practice of bribery to acquire a rental contract or cooperative membership. This practice, to be sure, represented a continuation of the secret deals over long-term rental contracts and shares in cooperatives already familiar to residents of larger cities since the era of late socialism. Although those present did not yet display much room for action, the debate, among other things, voiced a plea for speeding up the preparation of the privatization of the housing stock, believed to form a transparent way to bring apartments into private ownership. From the systematic privatization of housing, the participants promised themselves, on the one hand, a reinforcement of responsible care (the new owners will now also their apartments *de jure*), but above all, an escape from the murky quagmire of waiting lists, patronage and bribery associated with the acquisition of rental apartments in a desirable part of the city.

The sale of land, commercial space, or buildings without any currently occupied units (or occupied only by the purchaser) then came into motion, increasing further during the course of 1992,<sup>50</sup> most notably under pressure from the Staré Mesto district government, which had at its disposal the greatest number of commercially appealing sites and properties.<sup>51</sup> The local deputy mayor Andrej Ďurkovský initiated in September of that year the creation of a special commission at municipal level of for "evaluating proposals for the sale or rental of real estate"<sup>52</sup> while even the handling of selected buildings in the historic centre began to acquire, put diplomatically, entrepreneurial traits, being thus entrusted to a newly formed company, Revital (jointly formed by Bratislava's municipal government, the district of Staré Mesto and several Austrian partners), with only a 25% ownership share for the city and the district, the exclusive rights to use, to rental income, the

possibility of transferring real estate to company ownership and certain unclear points regarding sales to third parties after a deadline of 10 years.<sup>53</sup>

However, the issue of selling apartments and apartment buildings was not only overshadowed by the rapidly spinning roulette wheel of municipal property privatisation but explicitly regarded as hazardous terrain, for two reasons. First, the legislative situation in this area was still extremely unclear. At the same time, it was as much about the living tenants as the dilapidated buildings, and the city representatives realized that they should not endanger the rights and homes of their constituents with a possible sale. The same stance also formed the basis for the first more systematic proposal for the method of selling residential blocks, drawn up again by the district of Staré Mesto, which emphasized that “its goal is a positive change in property relations, primarily to the benefit of the current tenants of the flats”, in the expectation of “increasing the quantity of the fund of buildings and apartments in the district of Staré Mesto, improving the stance of inhabitants toward building maintenance, along with a more goal-oriented use of the capacities and possibilities of the buildings and housing fund (additions, attic spaces ...)”<sup>54</sup> The proposal assumed the priority rights of current tenants to purchase the relevant properties, and at a discounted price. Excepted from sale would be buildings intended as social housing, recently reconstructed ones, or ones that were “profitable”. What percentage of the total number of 934 buildings held by the district would thus not be subject to privatisation was unclear. At the same time, sales to tenants would occur only in buildings where an interest in purchasing was manifested by at least 40% of them.<sup>55</sup> Otherwise, the buildings would be sold to other interested parties at market value. The resolution could not be implemented in this form due to the absence of national legislation providing a framework in which the sale of apartment buildings and apartments should take place, yet it highlights the efforts put into the search for ways to transfer apartments and apartment buildings into private hands, as well as the consensus regarding the basic philosophy of this transformation: the creation of a class of owners of apartments and apartment buildings out of current long-term tenants.

A decisive turning point in the history of the post-socialist privatization of the housing stock in Bratislava, as well as in other larger Slovak cities, occurred in 1993. Pressure from below (both from elected representatives and local residents) to solve the housing problem through individual investments, relying on the goal of private apartment ownership, culminated at that time. One official of the Staré Mesto district, herself placed in charge of investigating the housing situation, described it in April of that year in the following words: “...we have many buildings that are empty because of poor physical condition, also a quantity of buildings where there were flats but were transferred to private ownership, in this case through restitution, and further because the concept for creating conditions for new construction and preparation of new flats is still in the future or is only now being prepared. In Staré Mesto, this means on one hand a huge trade not only in flats but even in single residential spaces, it’s really an open secret that in apartment exchanges the individual tenants pay each other up to 100,000 crowns settlement for a single room and if it’s about selling flats or transferring membership rights to a cooperative flat, the sum can reach millions. And on the other, with all this going on, we see an enormous growth in demand for flats in Staré Mesto.”<sup>56</sup> With this in mind, the municipal government began speaking quite openly of various possibilities for hidden privatisation strategies (“clearly all steps are being taken for the flats to be transferred to someone or given over”)<sup>57</sup>, including the previously mentioned possibility for reconstruction of uninhabitable flats approved back in 1991 or, as a new addition, allowing construction of attic flats with the perspective of a future transfer to private ownership and construction on open sites. Privatisation of individual flats, according to the statements of municipal officials, was regarded as a done deal, even if its concrete form and guiding legal standards were still hazy. In a way, the situation resembled the impatient wait for the opening of the safety valve on an already overloaded pressure cooker.

While political consensus was emerging at the district level and practical privatization was being prepared, the expert discourse on the relationship between people and their dwellings started to move in a similar direction. A useful insight into the expert debate is provided by the June issue of *Projekt*, largely devoted to the (now somewhat traditional) topic of rehabilitation and humanization of the residential environment, but with new accents.

The discrepancy between the “dynamic” rhetoric of rehabilitation and improvement and the “static” reality (cities lacked the capacity and, in part, perhaps even the motivation for more significant projects in this direction) stimulated, even in a professional setting, expectations for legislative



**MODERNIZATION AND FACADE RENEWAL OF MUNICIPAL HOUSING IN THE HEČKOVA STREET IN 1994. MODERNIZATIONS OF HOUSING WERE REALIZED SINCE THE 1970S AND THIS PROGRAM CONTINUED INTO THE 1990S.**

MODERNIZACE A OBNOVA FASÁDY OBECNÍCH BYTOVÝCH DOMŮ V HEČKOVEJ ULICI V BRATISLAVĚ V ROCE 1994. MODERNIZACE BYTOVÉHO FONDU SE REALIZOVALA OD 70. LET 20. STOLETÍ A TENTO PROGRAM POKRAČOVAL I V 90. LETECH.

Source Zdroj: archive of TASR

and economic changes to set in motion housing construction and, even more urgently, the revitalization of existing residential areas.<sup>58</sup> Primarily, the authors stressed the inseparability of the free market and the new arrangement of property rights from the potential to improve urban housing. The prevailing expert consensus adhered to the key role of emerging legislation that would enable the transfer of a large part of the housing stock into private hands. Private flat ownership was expected to become an accelerator of rehabilitation of the residential environment, both because it would strengthen the responsibility of residents for the condition of their housing (and therefore also the willingness to invest in apartments), and equally because “through market relations there would emerge housing differentiation to match individual possibilities and needs”<sup>59</sup>

The long-awaited act addressing the transfer of flats to private ownership and all related matters concerned with flat ownership was approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic as of 8 July 1993.<sup>60</sup> The law was based on a basic premise of the sale or transfer of individual apartments to private ownership. It did not issue any mandate municipalities, leaving the extent of housing-stock privatization to local adjustment (stipulating only the obligation of municipalities to keep a certain number of apartments as municipal property to provide housing for socially disadvantaged groups). As its essential right, the act established that “for a flat for which the tenant is a private individual, the ownership can be transferred by the building owner exclusively to the said tenant”<sup>61</sup> and that “the owner of the flat and any non-residential space in the building has the right to transfer his or her property to another party.”<sup>62</sup> For the price of flats, the act stated only general rules; alongside significant advantages granted to current tenants (including a ban on auctioning in the event of transferring the flat to them) and a ten-percent discount for those who paid 70% of the sale price without delay, the decisive factor was a 2% reduction in the purchase price for each year of the building’s age (maximally up to 80%).<sup>63</sup> This stipulation enshrining a far cheaper price for flats in older buildings seems surprising when considering the previous years of increased popularity for historic city centres and rejection of modern prefabricated construction. In any event, the legislators opened the way for creating a relatively broad class of “small-scale” apartment owners, as well as a free market in urban housing.

The impatience of Bratislava’s elected representatives (and part of the population) with transfer of apartments to private ownership was reflected, among other things, in the receipt by city districts, led by Staré Mesto, of requests for the transfer of apartments to private ownership several months before the approval of the above-mentioned law<sup>64</sup> or the vote on local regulations for their transfer. And indeed, in Staré Mesto it was largely prepared and formulated even before the definitive vote on the framework law (though of course with information on what it would contain). This

vote was made at the council meeting on 16 June 1993. In addition to approving the sale of open lots along Obchodná St., the placement of the building at Gunduličova 8 in non-financial escrow with Istrobanka on behalf of the district, and several additional sales of land, single-family dwellings, or constructions on open sites, this council meeting for Bratislava's most central district discussed, for the first time in detail, preparation of the "Principles for Sale of Residential Buildings in the Ownership of the City of Bratislava, Administered by the District of Bratislava-Staré Mesto". By the early summer of 1993, the district representatives formulated their proposals far more radically than the national law under preparation, advocating permission for the sale of entire apartment buildings to those interested in them. The previous consensus on the sale of apartments to tenants, the basis of the approved law, appeared to them at that moment insufficient, because of a purported "threat" that the city district would be forced to keep some apartments (without purchaser interest) and would thus have the obligation to take care of the respective properties in the future. As approved on the level of this one district even before the existence of the corresponding national legislation, these principles lay at its very edge: while favouring existing tenants, they allowed the sale of entire apartment buildings, preferably to legal entities consisting of at least 40% of current residents (or in cases without interest from the tenants, even to other legal and natural persons).<sup>65</sup> In parallel, the council tabled and approved a list of 45 apartment blocks recommended for sale as per the "Principles" (under the condition of the need for legislative treatment once the national law assumed effect).<sup>66</sup> Then, during autumn 1993, the Principles were further amended, with the sale of buildings and separate flats now proceeding in a system of "learning by doing" (as the reality was clearly in advance of the legislation). Indeed, starting in the summer of 1993 this agenda formed the overwhelming content of the council meetings for Bratislava-Staré Mesto, as such indicating and forging the path for other Bratislava districts or even the city as a whole.

While the law established no rights for the tenant to transfer the apartment from municipal to private ownership, this right was de facto established in local Bratislava directives, with only a few specific exceptions. Against the right of tenants to purchase an apartment owned by the city (and the administration of the city district), the municipality's right to exclude a group of apartments or houses for social purposes from such privatized housing areas, however, did not give any applicable criteria as to how and at what stage of the privatization process such apartments should be set aside.<sup>67</sup> Regarding the necessity to maintain equal conditions for all those current tenants interested in buying a municipal apartment, such a step (i.e. preventing sales) became over time morally problematic, to say the least. The same explanation also holds for why the ideas about the minimum number of non-privatized apartments (in the city-wide level, the original regulation from 1993 set a minimum of 5%, but in individual city districts around 20% was considered in some cases), gradually sank to completely negligible values and practically speaking, by the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the number of council or municipal apartments fell below 1%.

Hence, the political decisions made by the city council and a number of city districts in the summer and autumn of 1993 can be characterized quite succinctly. In those months, Bratislava voluntarily decided to follow the path of the near-complete selloff of its housing. The sale of apartments, together with the sale of other real estate and land, became the main program, content and a kind of *raison d'être* of local and metropolitan politics in Bratislava – and remained so throughout the rest of the last decade of the 20th century.

## Casino Royal

"One of the great aims of our term in office is correcting the property relations after 40 years of communism, in our country as well as our district."

Deputy to the district council of Bratislava-Staré Mesto Sven Šovčík, February 1997

In October 1993, the Bratislava-Staré Mesto district council discussed one of several plans to relieve itself of the burden of property entrusted to it and at the same time transform this transaction into a promising business deal. The historic "Old Malthouse" (Stará sladovňa) from 1872, in an attractive location near the romantic St. Andrew's Cemetery (Ondrejský cintorín), would be transformed into a large-scale casino operated by the company Casino Royal. This corporation would have consisted primarily of the private entity CBG, but for the casino's legal operation under current legislation, the participation of the municipality (or the state) was also necessary. A 30% share in Casino Royal would thus belong to the Staré Mesto district, which would have invested 675,000 SKK in the

company in addition to providing the historical brewery building. For this, the municipality would receive a share of the income from the casino's future profit.<sup>68</sup>

As it happened, this plan to dispose of a protected landmark in the city centre and transform a quiet nook by the cemetery wall into a huge gambling enterprise (possibly) generating revenue for the city was never realised. Though to be sure, the plan was approved as favourable by the business and financial commissions of the district<sup>69</sup>, right before it was to be approved by the council it became clear that the company CBG “was owned by that same entrepreneur who in 1991 was operating 40 slot machines illegally and was issued for it a fine of 4 million crowns.”<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, the project tellingly illustrates the prevailing atmosphere in local and metropolitan Bratislava politics at least since the privatization spiral took off in 1992/93. This wild privatization frenzy, marked by many instances of corruption yet equally attracting and inspiring a considerably larger number of actors with expectations of dynamic city development, formed the setting for the privatization of the city's housing stock, a key part of Bratislava's transformation in both rhetoric in practice for the rest of the 1990s.

Keeping in mind the many similar projects of wild privatization that only brought the city the distant promise of an uncertain profit, it is easy to assume that the entire process of privatization of city buildings and land was driven by personal interests and structures of “mafia capitalism”. However, such an interpretation would be highly simplistic, even misleading. The prevailing consensus viewed the transfer of city property, including apartments, to private owners as the path toward qualitative improvement of the city and, above all, the encouragement of responsible care for the hitherto neglected material heritage. This belief encouraged the representatives not only to start privatization, primarily of the housing stock, in the next few years, but to accelerate it still further. In this last part of the present study, the aim is to map and understand this acceleration and the various forms of housing privatization in Bratislava in the period 1993-1998, i.e. at the end of the first and during the second post-revolutionary electoral term of the city and local councils.

The not always successful attempts by the Bratislava City Council and various political actors around Mayor Kresánek to prepare the sale of city property, including apartments and apartment buildings, systematically led to the delay of city-wide legislation in comparison to the hastily drawn regulations and privatization practices in some city districts, with Staré Mesto at the forefront. Hence, certain amendments to the municipal regulations for the transfer and sale of apartments from city ownership to other parties were discussed and repeatedly approved several times throughout the first half of 1994. At that time, surprising clashes arose between the uniform discourse and the practice of the city's care and responsibility for citizens' housing, manifested mainly in the continuation of the pre-1989 “complex housing construction” on the Dlhé Diely housing estate, but also on Drotárska cesta, in parallel with a rejection of similar housing, evidenced by the emphasis on the necessity of selling off individual apartments and entire buildings or, for example, the definitive cancellation of the public housing enterprise (*Bytový podnik*).<sup>71</sup>

The intentions of the mayor and city council were to prepare a systematic basis for the sale of city property, including the commissioning and approval of a complex pricing map of Bratislava from which the values of the properties would be derived.<sup>72</sup> By the mid-1990s, the prevailing opinion held that the basic method for urban development should be the market and its key actors private owners, from major investors and developers down to the level of individual house or flat owners. Capital, in the form of the will and initiative of investors and owners, was supposed to replace centralized planning as generated through interaction between experts and officials. The task of the city, as understood by the key actors, was viewed, in addition to the necessary agendas of transport, safety, etc., as simply the formulation, enforcement and control of the rules by which the city-market should be governed.

Indeed, the then mayor of Bratislava at the time, Peter Kresánek, still adheres to this concept of the functioning of urban space, i.e. the concept of a “small city”, even a quarter of a century later.<sup>73</sup> In addition to the rapid sale of city property, other steps aimed at weakening the city's role in spatial planning closely followed this belief. The abolition of the Office of the Chief Architect in 1996 became a symbol of this policy: while the step had been prepared since 1994 and was justified by the mayor himself on the grounds that the institution did not provide sufficiently fast and flexible service to investors (“We're under pressure from the investors, and there are thousands of them”<sup>74</sup>).<sup>75</sup> In addition to the retreat of the city from an active role in spatial planning, another significant

**TOMÁŠ BAŤA TOGETHER WITH CITY MAYOR KRESÁNEK AND MAYOR OF THE DISTRICT BRATISLAVA-OLD TOWN ANDREJ ĎURKOVSKÝ OPENING THE NEW BAŤA SHOE SUPERMARKET AT THE SNP SQUARE IN THE CENTRE OF BRATISLAVA (19.10.1996).**

TOMÁŠ BAŤA SPOLU S PRIMÁTOREM MĚSTA KRESÁNKEM A STAROSTOU MĚSTSKÉ ČÁSTI BRATISLAVA-STARÉ MĚSTO ANDREJEM ĎURKOVSKÝM OTEVÍRAJÍ NOVÝ SUPERMARKET S OBUVÍ BAŤA NA NÁMĚSTÍ SNP V CENTRU BRATISLAVY (19.10.1996).

Source Zdroj: archive of TASR,

Photo Foto: P. Funtál



manifestation of this approach was the constant postponement of further housing construction (after the end of the KBV following the plans from the 1980s).

Essentially, Bratislava's housing policy program in the mid-1990s was not to build, but to sell. The Act on the Ownership of Apartments and Non-Residential Premises was interpreted by city politicians as the *de facto* right of tenants to transfer apartments into their private ownership (although the law explicitly stated that no such right exists) and was applied as such through city-wide regulations and principles for flat transfer in individual city districts, whether involving historic centre-city blocks or the final housing estate built by the city as complex housing construction, such as, for example, the Dlhé Diely estate – though here the city retained 222 apartments for social purposes in the first phase of privatising housing stock in newly completed buildings.<sup>76</sup>

The everyday practices, dynamics, and dimensions of housing privatization, under the complete hegemony of discourse and policy regarding the market and private property as the desired cure for the city's problems, can again be tellingly documented by events at the level of a key city district.

The consensually accepted starting point for the district councillors and deputies was a program of “selling the flats to those who want to buy them and have an interest in caring for them”<sup>77</sup>.

Discussions between elected district officials, civil servants, and the public mostly revolved around the pricing of apartments and houses (or ownership shares in them), or in specific cases where individual interested parties were in competition, especially between beneficiaries of property restitution and existing long-term tenants. And the interests of both groups were what district officials felt they had a duty to represent. To varying degrees, they tried to accommodate both, relying not only legislation, invoked especially in the transferral of apartments to tenants at discounted prices, but also a kind of moral economy. Tenants were entitled to “their” apartments; a shared belief prevailed that long-term residents would already have invested much in their flats in good faith, and thus were likely to become responsible stewards of their property once in private ownership. Not only the individual flats would be cared for, but equally the building's common areas, subsequently to be reflected in exemplary maintenance for which the city had neither the resources nor the competence. In the case of restitutors, arguments were repeatedly made for the discounted sale of those parts of their real estate that were not returned to them for various historical and legal reasons, with reference to the moral obligation of the city to come to the aid of people whose families had been robbed of their property by the Communist state.

In addition to transferring flats to tenants (usually for several tens of thousands of crowns<sup>78</sup>) and returning properties or selling shares in them at reduced price to restitution beneficiaries,

another method in the 1990s “clearance sale” of the housing stock included sale of entire buildings to corporate entities, usually for several million crowns. These sales usually affected buildings completely (or largely) uninhabited, often uninhabitable, or ones where current tenants showed no interest in purchasing. Of course, such deals were the most lucrative for the city though and the choice of buyers was the most difficult: in many cases, even with the transaction underway, questions were posed whether the sale price truly matched the market value, whether the city would lose on the deal and, later, whether the city lost a property that it should have kept. However, more common were doubts that opened later discussions of suspected corruption for sales of non-residential rather than residential buildings. Yet all the same, for the transfer of flats, a similarly dubious area could emerge in various murky constellations of several individuals at once claiming the right to preferential acquisition of the flat for a variety of reasons (conflicts between long-term and temporary tenants, or even tenants and restitutors of a share in the building).<sup>79</sup> Since the legislation provided no clear solutions for such complex cases, the decision was often left up to the council representatives, hence the crucial role was the presentation of the given case at the right time and the right narrative framework. Most participants (and by extension the decision-makers) often lacked the competence and above all the time to study individual cases and cases. Attesting to the impossibility of a thorough study and assessment of individual cases is their sheer number, which in the election period of 1994-1998 grew to hundreds of sales approved during a single council meeting.

Social housing was the only significant category of apartments “protected” from being sold into private ownership. At the end of 1993, the Staré Mesto district approved as the binding minimum a 15% share of social flats, and only in buildings owned by the city itself but entrusted to the district council. Among discussions by local representatives, there was even talk of retaining 25% of the housing fund for these purposes. In addition to other residential buildings (with specific purposes, historic value, etc.), these apartments should understandably remain municipal property<sup>80</sup> – in correspondence with how at the time (from a later perspective with notable restraint) discussions on privatisation focused on around 70% of the housing fund.<sup>81</sup> However, all this proved to be unsustainable already in the spring of the following year, during the term in office of Mayor Zemková. Not only was there no clear definition of a social apartment, but the very idea of a predetermined selection of apartments that tenants could not buy ran against the basic political strategy of most city districts, including Staré Mesto. During the winter of 1993/94 alone, interested parties (tenants) also applied for the transfer of approximately 6,000 out of a total of 12,000 apartments administered by the district of Bratislava-Staré Mesto<sup>82</sup>, and it was clear that the trend would only continue. The number of apartments that could theoretically remain in the city’s ownership was rapidly shrinking. Moreover, any halt to this process would put later applicants at a disadvantage compared to those who applied more quickly. The political will for such a step was zero: after all, the municipal elections were approaching, and such a decision would certainly not meet a positive response and understanding by the citizens – especially those who would be left out.

Moreover, in Staré Mesto itself, the inability to satisfy the interest in flats (mostly for sale, but also extending to tenancy in council flats<sup>83</sup>) was seen as one of the most severe problems right before the local elections in autumn 1994. Though the district had approved basic principles for transferring flats to private ownership even before the passing of a national law addressing this form of privatisation – and the council itself made no secret of this in its report from the end of its term in office – the gap between the number of requests for flat transfers to private ownership (by October 1994 reaching 8000, i.e., around two-thirds of the entire housing fund in the Staré Mesto district) and the number of cases where the transfer had been completed (at the same point in time, a mere 46 flats in seven buildings!)<sup>84</sup> only continued to grow.

It was taken as an indisputable fact that municipal bodies lacked the financial means to build new publicly owned apartments or care properly for the existing ones. In addition to the sale of the majority of city flats, after the definitive end of complex housing construction in Bratislava, the housing policy program for the following years consisted of selling land to private individuals for the construction of apartment blocks and detached houses (Staré Mesto had already in 1993–1994 commissioned urban studies for the zones Myjavská–Holubyho, Machnáč–blok 7 and Kráľovské údolie–Bôrik), infills of vacant lots, or attic developments (all to be financed and subsequently owned by private-sector parties<sup>85</sup>).

After the elections at the end of 1994, the previously somewhat amateurish privatization, marked by chaos, legal uncertainty, influence from various random factors and, above all,



THE MAYOR OF THE DISTRICT BRATISLAVA-OLD TOWN ANDREJ ĎURKOVSKÝ ACCOMPANYING THE CZECH PRESIDENT VÁCLAV HAVEL AND HIS WIFE DAGMAR BY THEIR VISIT IN BRATISLAVA (VENTŮRSKÁ STREET, 7.11.1997).

STAROSTA MĚSTSKÉ ČÁSTI BRATISLAVA-STARÉ MĚSTO ANDREJ ĎURKOVSKÝ DOPROVÁZÍ ČESKÉHO PREZIDENTA VÁCLAVA HAVLA A JEHO MANŽELKU DAGMAR PŘI JEJICH NÁVŠTĚVĚ V BRATISLAVĚ (VENTŮRSKÁ ULICE, 7.11.1997).

Source Zdroj: archive of TASR,

Photo Foto: P. Neubauer



decision-making processes that increasingly fell far short of the demands of greedy private and legal entities, gradually became systematized and thus more rapid. We can observe this trend at the city-wide level as well as at the level of the observed central-city district. On both levels, the background of political continuity (i.e. conservative or market-liberal dominance, which contrasted with the ideologically ambivalent Slovak economic policy at national level under the prime minister Vladimír Mečiar<sup>86</sup>) is a parallel, although in the Old Town, unlike the municipality, there is a change of mayor (after Mayor Zemková, the office was assumed by Andrej Ďurkovský, a major driving force for privatisation). The acceleration of the privatization fund can itself be described quantitatively through its systematic tools.

Above all, an increasing number of private companies began to operate in the privatization of apartments and residential buildings – whether directly interested in buying entire buildings (if, for various reasons, not enough tenants wanted to buy their apartments, or the building was uninhabited, it would be officially listed as functional, etc.) or intending to mediate these transactions, in accordance with the demand of the city or district for this type of externalization of privatization preparation. An example of the first type can be the private companies M.T.K., Istros, auction company Trading Consulting or K.U.K.S., some involving a foreign investor, others representing purely Slovak capital. The prominent case of the sale to the last-mentioned company of the historic “Alžbetka” building of mid-18<sup>th</sup> century date, located at the corner of Kollárovo námestie and Mickiewiczova Street (i.e. the highly desirable area near Obchodná Street), can serve as an example. The structure, whose market price at the time was estimated to be at least SK 60 million and whose annual rent income exceeded SK 5 million, was bought from the city in 1997 for SK 10 million. The argument that the price was advantageous for the city because K.U.K.S. as the tenant already invested 26 million in the reconstruction of the building was enough to convince 27 representatives of the Staré Mesto district council to agree to the transaction, with only 2 against.<sup>87</sup> While this untenanted building was formally registered as functional, for other residential blocks sold in entirety to legal entities, disputes sometimes flared within the district council over the fate of the tenants. Mayor Ďurkovský and other drivers of the privatization ‘machine’ usually took a reassuring tack, pointing to the owner’s obligation to keep the tenants or, in the case of reconstruction and emptying of the building, to provide them with replacement housing at the same level, yet there were many cases where the new owners treated former tenants quite indifferently.<sup>88</sup>

The founding and operation of companies to mediate the sale (or even rental) of flats and other real estate usually had a direct link to the decision-making of municipal politicians, visible as well in the likelihood of district governments holding a stake in these companies or the presence of

individual politicians and civil servants in their leading positions. In the Staré Mesto district, the privatization of housing through joint-stock companies with shares held by the district itself was preceded by a specific phase in which the city entrusted heritage-protected buildings planned for reconstruction to the previously mentioned companies Revital and R.B.I., closely linked to certain representatives. Under the pressure to transfer apartments to tenant ownership more quickly, or to sell them to other individuals and legal entities, companies were successively founded such as Mesim (the St. Mesto Development Company) of Ivan Čarnogurský and Kurt Rossmüller, the company Istroholdin, Mesfeld, Forte Extra s.r.o., ŤEOS Komerčia a.s. and above all Prebyt (or H-Probyt), all supposedly engaged in the services of the city and (if they started operating) acting in real life in the sale of city-owned apartments.

Under Ďurkovský's term in office (1994–1998), the key role in the Staré Mesto district was played by Prebyt, founded in autumn 1995 in part under pressure from the amendment to Act 182/93 (on the transfer of flats and non-residential spaces) mandating that municipal entities complete all requests for the transfer of flats to private ownership within two years after their submission.<sup>89</sup> Prebyt was presented as a district-owned company, yet Staré Mesto only held a minority share – with the majority shareholders being three employees of the district office, among them JUDr. Lucia Krmíčková, the long-serving head of the property administration department and a close collaborator of Ďurkovský.<sup>90</sup> At the same time, the company operated in a dual role, simultaneously coordinating the selection process for outside companies evaluating real estate and preparing their sale or transfer to private ownership, yet also allowed apply for these services on its own behalf. Surprisingly, the situation where the senior official responsible for managing district property was both the main shareholder and the manager of the company that appraised and mediated the sale of the district's property did not attract attention or significant negative feedback: indeed, since the externalization of this agenda furthered the transfer of usually more than 400 apartments and the sale of dozens of other buildings during each council meeting (i.e. usually every one to two months), it was presented as a positive example of effective municipal housing policy.

By this point, housing privatization had already become a complex mechanism, starting from the citizens' demand for private ownership and a set of regulations obliging the city to sell apartments and apartment buildings, especially if the existing tenants showed interest in them; at the other end of it, the actors could observe a continuous decline in the number of apartments owned by the city. The process that many public figures worked with great effort to set in motion in 1993 was now self-propelled, practically unstoppable until the final transfer request for the last apartment was satisfied. The original plans for a social housing share of 15% or more soon faded into the background, and the municipality and city districts had repeatedly to revise their resolutions regarding social housing. In the end, as for what received the title of social apartments, though often falling short of any purposes normally associated with the social welfare agenda, Bratislava as a whole was left with a few hundred apartments, mainly from complex housing construction completed in 1993–1994 (somehow 'reclaimed' in time from sale, which otherwise counted as city-funded construction and for which, as newly built apartments, no tenants could of course apply) along with those apartments in which, for various reasons (disrepair, bad environmental conditions, elderly or impoverished tenants, etc.) no one showed interest. With these roughly 2,000 flats (out of a total number of more than 160,000), the city and the individual districts were able to carry out something resembling the usual definitions of housing policy even after 2000.

### **From Egalitarian to Neoliberal Capitalism?**

Housing privatization in Bratislava was a complex, multi-layered process full of chaos and confusion. Moreover, the way it took place was not determined by the incursion of global capital, neoliberal ideology, or even domestic political conditions, although all these factors played a significant role. Although neither its specific path nor its final extent were decided in advance, it was anything but a random event, rather the result of quite understandable factors that initiated, propelled, and legitimated it.

The original idea of privatizing the housing stock grew out of an understanding of capitalism that could be dated back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century instead of the final years of the 20<sup>th</sup>. It drew on a shared belief, indeed revived and nurtured in the era of late socialism, that in opposition to a situation where everything belongs to everyone (and therefore de facto nothing to anyone) and the state is unable to take care of property, the only guarantee of good care is the principle of a specific

responsible owner – the householder to whom the property belongs and who also has a personal relationship. The spiralling of privatization in the 1990s – and the privatization of urban housing in particular – was thus driven by a shared conviction between politicians and citizens that private housing ownership provided a guarantee of responsible use of their apartments, and therefore also the decent condition of the housing stock. Understandably, the actors to profit from privatization drove this process much further. Nevertheless, after careful study and abundant documentation, the widespread perception of the legitimacy of this process appears to have been more influential than the desire for personal gain.

Additionally, not only the correspondence with the general belief of responsibility arising from individual ownership, but the actual ownership of an apartment, as regarded in the first months to years after the start of massive housing privatization in Bratislava, was intended primarily to provide legal certainty to those who lived in the apartments. The immediate residents' highly targeted responsibility for the state of the apartments and their willingness to invest in them should by rights be initiated and motivated by the indisputable legal guarantee of ownership of the apartment not only for themselves, but also for their descendants. In practice, moreover, owning an apartment could help with the possibility of taking out a loan, since only in private ownership could the apartment serve as collateral for the bank. At the same time, the transfer of the apartment from municipal ownership to the private property of the former tenants was expected to be a financial relief to the city, without the means to take care of the extensive and neglected properties.

If privatization can appear as the most striking act of discontinuity in economic life between late socialism and post-socialism, the central principle of housing privatization in post-socialist Slovakia (as well as in the Czech Republic), i.e. the preferential sale of apartments to their tenants, is paradoxically more expressive of continuity. Not only is it a process starting out of the legislative framework for the transfer of flats into personal ownership set down in the 1970s and 1980s, as shown above, it was moreover based on an idea of ownership limited to the flat occupied by the owner or his family: as such, the association of people with the given apartment building form a "community of owners", essentially rooted in the principle of housing cooperatives. Continuity can also be observed when it comes to social dynamics, i.e. the gradual stratification of society, which even in late socialism had begun to consist of differently situated and privileged social groups.

Pre-1989 elites (higher bureaucrats and political functionaries, but also officially favoured employee and professional groups such as doctors, architects, lawyers, etc., or those with higher cultural capital from the ranks of artists and other creative professions) held the advantage in apartment waiting lists, in the 1970s and 1980s acquired desirable flats (and in the last two decades of state socialism, even apartments in historic parts of the city began to be considered as such). Hence, thanks to the design of the housing privatization process in the 1990s, when the preferential purchase of an apartment was derived primarily from long-term rent contracts, these social strata were granted the opportunity to transform previous political and social capital into the economic version. And the vast majority took advantage of it, evidenced by the enormous interest documented in the present study for purchasing apartments in the central parts of the city. In addition to individuals who occupied strategic positions in local authorities after 1989 or quickly grasped many of the still-unrecognized possibilities of the developing real estate market, it was in fact the pre-revolutionary elites who best profited from the logic of the privatization of housing in Slovakia (as in the Czech Republic) after 1993.

Not merely in the legal framework and the reproduction of pre-revolutionary capital, striking elements of continuity can also be found in the dominant way of thinking about ownership and responsibility. For most of the first post-revolutionary decade, the process of housing privatization was not perceived through a neoliberal lens. The idea that an apartment is or should be a commodity like any other, and the order of things implies profiting from flat ownership on a large scale, is not to be found in the first privatization years either in Bratislava's political debates or the design of the legislative framework. Understandably, it cannot be ruled out that even if such thoughts were not openly articulated, they could have been present in the minds of the actors and those who later profited from flat purchases. In such a case, however, we could expect the criticism of municipal property sales to become the seed of a more significant political opposition or a more fundamental stream of expert debates – neither of which happen, at least until 1998, in the context of Bratislava's local politics or urban debate. At all levels, we are far more likely to encounter a kind of ideal

type of old-fashioned liberal capitalism, with local property owners and a very specific relationship between the owner and the flat inhabited or the building cared for.

And yet, as was often the case in other spheres of city development even under state socialism, intentions and practice can easily formulate two completely different stories. Regardless of how the decisions of individuals were motivated, or how the dominant discourse was based on any specific idea of the correct relationship between people, their city, and its houses and flats, the city divested itself within only a few years of the vast bulk of real estate entrusted to it after 1989. In the logic of neoliberal capitalism, where most originally non-economic spheres of human life and society are subject to market logic (such as finding and creating a home in big cities), the city shorn of its property becomes an actor with very limited influence. This was precisely the case in Bratislava, which recognized only social housing as an alternative to private housing ownership. And by this term, it meant housing offered only to specific “clients”, not forming, let alone intended to form, an alternative for all those who want to live in Bratislava but without the opportunity or desire for personal ownership of real estate.

How much the city – and thus also its inhabitants (at least the less financially secured ones) – deprived itself, along with its property, of any influence over the provision of elementary justice in the distribution of housing, the provision of a pluralistic social profile in its individual districts, and thus also the form of further urban development, became more clear in outline at the end of the 1990s (although fully manifested only in the next decade during the gradual deregulation of rents). At the time, it was only a marginal contribution to the political debate, for example, in new discussions of dissatisfaction with the constantly delayed construction of new flats.<sup>91</sup> To be sure, sociologists and other urban experts began to notice the problem after its emergence in the first half of the 1990s. However, even at the decade’s end, they too largely adhered to the specific concept that primarily units “for the needy” should remain in the hands of the city. Municipal and social flats were merged in this perspective, even if it has now grown far more critical, into essentially a unified category of housing for marginalized groups who, for various reasons, do not have the opportunity to live in their own property. While owning one’s own dwelling has become a set standard even in Slovak planning and social-science discussions, occupying a municipal or council flat has acquired the character of little more than an emergency solution.<sup>92</sup>

Attention began to be drawn to the problem of the retreat of larger Slovak towns and cities from housing policy most consistently in the later 1990s, at least in the expert community, by architect and urban planner Elena Szolgayová. “In the moments of euphoria that the dictate of crane lines and the numbingly endless repetition of mass-produced apartment blocks was behind us”, she wrote in trenchant critique of Slovakia’s architects, planners, or urban sociologists already in 1997, “very few of us were aware that there were worse possibilities. For example, no construction at all.”<sup>93</sup> Even with the continued sway of the crudely oversimplified dichotomy between individualised (i.e., for the prosperous classes) and social housing construction, several other Slovak architects began at the decade’s end to point out not only the social dimensions, but the urban and architectural ones of the retreat of the state, and even more so larger Slovak towns with Bratislava first among them, from the construction of municipal or social housing. In their views, the abandonment of constructing larger residential complexes meant a state where “there arose individual objects somehow accidentally inserted into the (possibly in the future coherent and cohesive) urban organism, or in the worst case the appearance on the city’s edge of uninspired, extremely expensive, and often deeply monotonous single-family houses with no ties to the urban organism.”<sup>94</sup> Yet the discussions on the topic were, they added, still burdened by the negative connotations from the experience of extensive construction “of settlements in the form of residential, sometimes manufacturing zones with a minimal transport network, underdeveloped facilities”<sup>95</sup>, the leading symbol of which was still Bratislava’s stigmatised prefab estate Petržalka.

## Conclusion

Turning our attention to Central and Eastern Europe in the 1990s, it might well seem that the pressure of global capitalism on housing privatization resembled a runaway locomotive storming through cities at ever more dizzying speed, turning housing into goods and urban space into opportunity for capital accumulation.

Yet this metaphor, evoking an image of powerlessness in the face of an inevitable historical process, must be confronted with an increasingly nuanced and critical view of that same era. In

fact, it would be a deviation from the reality of the situation to explain the acceleration of this trend in the environment of the post-socialist cities of Central Eastern Europe as a pre-planned hijacking of these urban settlements and their defenceless inhabitants by deliberately plotting actors, international or local, whose only motivation was the accumulation of capital. It would be misleading to reduce those who assisted in creating the system, or indeed many of those who profited from it, to the unscrupulous Farmer Jones of Orwell's *Animal Farm*. And it would be an error to interpret the path of Central European metropolises to the current housing crisis through the standard image of the profit-seeking villain of the 1990s.

The key assumption that legitimized and accelerated the gradual process of housing privatization was trust in the beneficial implications of "living in one's own home". This idea had both individual and social ramifications. On an individual level, it was the moral claim to an irrevocable relationship with the apartment, the living space where the citizen had long invested time, energy and money, and provided a sense of home. On the social level, it was a matter of belief in the connection between the individual ownership of an object and the obligation to take responsibility for it. In this study, I have attempted to document the renaissance of this belief, linked for more than two centuries to liberal capitalism, which emerged and flourished at least in the last two decades of state socialism, in reaction to the general decline and decay of state-owned (and partly expropriated) material heritage.

At the point when state socialism ended and the following years shaped by the experience of revolution, i.e. roughly until the division of Czechoslovakia, this trust in the responsibility of individual owners and a market solution for late-socialist malaise existed as an integral part of a more complex discourse of the humanization, revitalization, rehabilitation, and ecological healing of the urban environment, along with citizen participation in urban policy decision-making. However, after the Czechoslovak parliamentary elections of 1992, the vision and practice of the transformation of the city quickly became reduced to the narrowly focused transformation of ownership relations, i.e. the sale of most neglected and neglectable municipal (formerly state) property into private hands. In terms of reflections about the environment of urban residents and its practical transformation, this change implied at least as fundamental a shift as the political turning point of autumn 1989.

Setting a course of radical privatization, from the middle of 1993 at the latest, can therefore appear a kind of "second revolution". This metaphor mainly applies to the gradual marginalization of the earlier "collective" values, whose brief career culminated at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s. Viewing the development in the longer term, though, it should be added that the second revolution also bore within itself elements of return and continuity. The return was visible on at least two levels. First, the discursive one: the narrative emphasizing the beneficence of living in one's own home had been established deep in the post-1968 normalization era, though of course with ownership linked not only to personal benefit and security, but also the apolitical involvement of individuals in the care of the material goods thus entrusted to them. Second, a continuity in terms of preservation and reproduction of privileges won in the conditions of late socialism.

The moral justification of ownership and the benefits of private property for the urban organism as a whole became, around the mid-1990s, a universally accepted article of faith in the correct arrangement of the world – in the discourse of experts yet also the agents who promoted and enacted the most far-reaching privatization of housing imaginable. And, perhaps most importantly, the bearers of this belief in the future were primarily the new owners of housing units who profited from the sale of municipal property: over a hundred thousand of them in Bratislava alone.

Where the late-normalization and the "Nineties" discourses of careful householders turned into the neoliberal concept of the individual flat as commodity or means toward capital accumulation is a conjecture beyond the limits of this current study. However, it seems evident that the practice of the "clearance sale", in which the city deprived itself of real influence on housing policy, was not primarily legitimized by an ideology imported from the West, but by thought patterns generated from within late socialist Czechoslovak society. The tools that shaped the new situation where the city emerged as a textbook case of the Chicago School were, in fact, forged back in the days when the land supposedly belonged to the peasants and the factories to the workers.

- 1 The first works of this type tended to be produced by Hungarian sociologists and sociologically minded economists of two generations, among whom should be mentioned primarily István Szélenyi and György Enyedi, József Hegedűs and Iván Tosics. Viz e.g. ENYEDI, György (ed.). 1998. *Social Change and Urban Restructuring in Central Europe*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 350 p. One of the chapters in this publication is a study of housing policies, presenting important comparative findings for this theme in the context of the Visegrád states. Viz HEGEDŰS, József and TOSICS, Iván. 1998. Towards new models of the housing system. In: Enyedi, G., 1998, pp. 137–167. With the deepening processes of privatisation and the connection of postsocialist cities into the processes of global capitalism, there have also emerged since the mid-1990s experts focusing on individual sections of urban economics, societies, and spaces in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The primary author describing the spatial and economic transformation of large Czech cities, primarily Prague, since the 1990s is unquestionably urban geographer Luďek Šýkora. For Slovakia since 1993, the major analyses are those of Pavol Šuška. For a thorough and complex sociological analysis of the development of cities in both countries starting in the 1980s, credit is due to Slavomíra Ferencuhová.
- 2 Enyedi, G., 1998, p. 9.
- 3 The historical treatments currently available tend to describe postsocialism more at the margin of extant interests in contemporary history for the various countries, usually the historical treatment of (late) state socialism. The same holds true, to an extent, even in publications examining the “long transformation” in Czechoslovakia in which the present author participated, i.e., *Architekti dlouhé změny* (KOPEČEK, Michal (ed.). 2019. *Architekti dlouhé změny. Expertní kořeny postsocialismu v Československu*. Praha: Argo). There however are important exceptions to that rule in Czech and Slovak historiography, esp. concerning the issues of ideology (resp. economic and political thought), political culture and memory politics. In the context of this current article, especially the work of Václav Rameš (RAMEŠ, Václav. 2021. *Trh bez přivlastků, nebo ekonomickou demokracií? Spory o podobu vlastnické transformace v porevolučním Československu*. Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny) and, concerning the memory of economic transformation in Slovakia, the study of Matěj Ivančík (IVANČÍK, Matěj. 2023. A recurring bone of contention: the memory politics of Slovakia’s economic transformation. In: Wawrzyniak, J. and Pehe, V. (eds.). 2023. *Remembering the Neoliberal Turn. Economic Change and Collective Memory in Eastern Europe after 1989*. London: Routledge) should be mentioned. Perhaps the most important comparative work historicizing early postsocialism in the region is the work by German historian Philip Ther (THER, Philip. 2014. *Die neue Ordnung auf dem alten Kontinent. Eine Geschichte des neoliberalen Europa*, Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag), comparing the socioeconomic developments of Prague, Warsaw, and Berlin in the 1990s. The macro-perspective and comparative ambitions of Ther, however, result in more of a general description of the discernible trends using the established language of “transitology” taken from previous analyses within sociology and related fields. Even in this valuable comparative study, the collective and individual actors do not speak in their language: the language of the sources, along with the desires and negotiations of the people then active remain overshadowed by present-day categories existing in the framework of analysing neoliberalism.
- 4 Trying to summarize and discuss the broad scholarly literature about neoliberalism is impossible here. It would make this article to a book. Nevertheless, while researching the late socialist roots of neoliberalism (in the particular case of Czechoslovakia/Slovakia), at least J. Bockmans famous book should be mentioned at this spot: BOCKMAN, Johana. 2011. *Markets in the Name of Socialism. The Left-Wing Origins of Neoliberalism*. Redwood City CA: Stanford University Press.
- 5 Among the key texts addressing this nexus of questions are the studies by Alf Lüdtke, viz LÜDTKE, Alf. 1991. *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis, Historische und sozial-anthropologische Studien*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. For research on Czech and Slovak contemporary history, these points of departure are addressed in a special issue of the journal *Soudobé dějiny* [Contemporary History] on the theme “Socialism as an Intellectual World”: *Soudobé dějiny*, 19(2), 2012.
- 6 Hereby I would like to thank the colleagues, who helped me with this archival research, esp. Petra Švardová and Monika Bočková.
- 7 I would like to express my thanks to Katarína Nádaská, the administrator of this particular city district archive, for her helpfulness and support.
- 8 Fund MsZ, Zápisnica no. 40, Mimoriadne zasadnutie MsZ 11.5.1994 (material), Bod 15: zdravotný stav obyvateľstva, „Základné štatistické údaje o stave bytového fondu a potrebe bytov“, table no. 5. Bratislava City Archives (hereinafter AHMB).
- 9 Viz e.g. the interview with Peter Kresánek, mayor of Bratislava in the years 1990–1998. Interview with Henrieta Moravčíková, Matěj Spurný and Peter Szalay, 6 April 2023, private archive of the research team for the grant project “In Search of the Post-modern City” [Hledání postmoderního města].
- 10 Even in Prague, where housing privatisation in the 1990s followed a similar pattern to Bratislava, around 5% of flats remain in city ownership; the city of Brno owns around 15% of all flats. Source: MEDKOVÁ, Alžběta, RYCHLÍKOVÁ, Apolena and NAKLÁDAL, Jakub. 2020. *Bydlení je nad zlato*. Prague: Azlarm, pp. 24–37.
- 11 A certain variability of ownership forms (state, cooperative, individual, resp. personal) was allowed even by socialist theory; assuming the lack of a dichotomy between ownership and non-ownership (i.e., the state of affairs in which each member of society is a co-owner of the means of production), these various forms could exist alongside each other and not be regarded as a source of social discrepancies or inequalities. Viz further RŮŽIČKA, Richard. 1989. *Společenské vlastnictví, způsob života a zájmy. Sociologický časopis*, 23(6), 1987, pp. 545–561, here p. 546.
- 12 RÁKOSNÍK, Jakub and TOMEŠ, Igor (eds.). *Sociální stát v Československu. Právně-institucionální vývoj v letech 1918–1992*. Prague: Auditorium, pp. 298–299.
- 13 Viz further HOLEČKOVÁ, Marta Edit. 2022. On Cooperative Housing in Socialist Czechoslovakia 1959–1970. *Architektúra & urbanizmus*, 56(3–4), pp. 186–195.
- 14 Act no. 52 from 30 June 1966 on personal ownership of flats. Available at: [https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/1966/52/vyhlasene\\_znenie.html](https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/1966/52/vyhlasene_znenie.html)
- 15 The sale of a state flat to a private individual is addressed in detail in the later directive from 1978, regulating the variable state subsidy (from 30 to 50% of the entire price, per the flat category) in cases where the flat was purchased by the current tenant; however, the tenant was also obligated to reside in the flat for the next ten years, or at least have it be occupied by a close relative. This directive also sets the specific number of payments by flat owners for building maintenance, again per category (I–IV). Regarding the changes in legal language, it is worth noting that the 1978 directive replaces the term “socialist organisation” with that of “legal entity”. Viz “Directive of the Federal Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Finance of the Czech Socialist Republic, Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Socialist Republic, the Czech Pricing Office and the Slovak Pricing Office from 4 May 1978 on the sale of flats from national ownership to citizens, and on financial assistance in modernising the purchase flats.”
- 16 On this topic viz JELINEK, Csaba. 2017. *Uneven Development, Urban Policy Making and Brokerage: Urban Rehabilitation Policies in Hungary since the 1970s*. PhD thesis. Central European University in Budapest, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, pp. 101–121.
- 17 By the year 1990, in Hungary 77.5% of residential units (flats and single-family houses) belonged to their inhabitants (and 0.5% to other private owners who rented these units). Viz Hegedűs, J. and Tosics, I., 1998, p. 145.
- 18 For the context of housing construction and more generally housing in Budapest at the end of socialism viz. additionally LOSONCZY, Anna Kornélia, BALLA, Regina, ANTYPENKO, Hlib and BENKŐ, Melinda. 2020. *Re-Shaping Budapest: Large Housing Estates and their (Un)Planned Centers. Architektúra & urbanizmus*, 54(1–2), pp. 44–56.
- 19 Viz e.g. Directive of the Federal Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Finance of the Czech Socialist Republic and Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Socialist Republic from 6 August 1980 on financial assistance in the transfer of grouped single-family houses from cooperative to private ownership. For more on support for construction of housing planned for transfer to private ownership in the 1970s and 1980s viz JANEČKOVÁ, Michaela. 2021. *Cooperative Building to Personal Ownership. The Activities of Apartment Construction Cooperatives and Cooperatives for Single-Family Houses*. In: Rollová, V. and Jirkalová, K. (eds.); *The Future Is Hidden in the Present*. Prague: Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design, pp. 360–400.
- 20 Financial support and designs for single-family houses in Slovakia were the subject of an entire issue of *Projekt* in 1980. One of the texts also discussed an exhibition on the construction of detached houses in Bratislava – viz HOJSÍK, Ivan. 1980. *Obytná skupina sústredenej výstavby rodinných domov v Bratislave. Projekt*, 22(2), pp. 34–39.
- 21 Viz “Directive of the Federal Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Finance of the Czech Socialist Republic, Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Socialist Republic, the Czech Pricing Office and the Slovak Pricing Office from 4 May 1978 on the sale of flats from national ownership to citizens, and on financial assistance in modernising the purchase flats.”
- 22 Viz in this respect SPURNÝ, Matěj, LADD, Brian. 2021. *The Stifled Renaissance of Urbanity: Urban Preservation and the Collapse of Czechoslovak and East German Socialism. Journal of Urban History*, 47(3), pp. 478–494.
- 23 In this respect viz JIRKALOVÁ, Karolína. 2022. *Česká architektura*

v medziase - od perestrojky k novým porádkám. Bydlení jako průsečík zájmů v období transformace. PhD thesis Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design, Prague, pp. 74–77.

24 ŠMÍDOVÁ, Olga. 1996. Vlastnictví a kvazi-vlastnictví bytů za socialismu a jejich postsocialistická mutace. In: Olivier, A. (ed.). *Cahiers du CEFRES* N° 11. *Původní a noví vlastníci*. Prague: CEFRES, pp. 116–124.

25 Viz e.g. GUZIK, Hubert, JIRKALOVÁ, Karolina and ULLMANOVÁ, Klára. 2022. V rázovitých kulisách, v dobré společnosti. In: Vorlík, P. and Guzik, H. (eds.). *Ambice. Architektura osmdesátých let. Ambitions. Architecture of the Eighties*. Prague: ČVUT, pp. 216–249.

26 DULLA, Matúš. 1984. Obchodná ulica v Bratislave (štúdie a projekty). *Projekt*, 26(4–5), pp. 10–13, here p. 12. For more on the discussion on Obchodná viz MORAVČÍKOVÁ, Henrieta et al. 2020. *Bratislava (ne) plánované mesto. Bratislava (un)planned city*. Bratislava: Slovart, pp. 179–207 or SPURNÝ, Matěj. 2021. Vědět a stavět. Kontinuity urbánny expertízy na příkladu Bratislavy v „krátkém“ dvacátém století [To Know and to Build. Continuities of urban expertise illustrated by the case of Bratislava in the “short” twentieth century]. *Soudobé dějiny* 28(2), pp. 315–352, on the competition for Obchodná St., viz pp. 347–348.

27 Here viz. e.g. the entire issue of *Projekt* from 1982 discussing the modernisation of older buildings and the links between modernised and heritage-protected areas of the city, with a particular focus on the problems of Bratislava's inner core (*Projekt*, 24(4–5), 1982)

28 Viz Moravčíková, H. et al., 2020, pp. 200–205.

29 Viz e.g. ZEMKOVÁ, Miloslava. 1987. Využitie podkrovi v historických objektoch. *Projekt*, 29(7), p. 35.

30 TALAŠ, Stanislav. 1984. Nizkopodlažné obytné domy s bytmi v osobnom vlastníctve. *Projekt*, 26(4–5), pp. 54–56, here p. 54.

31 Talaš, S., 1984, p. 54.

32 Talaš, S., 1984, p. 56.

33 PAŠIAK, Ján. 1985. Architektonické a urbanistické predpoklady vytvárania domova človeka. *Projekt*, 27(4–5), pp. 4–7, here p. 7. These general points were matched to specific examples of actually realised flats, for instance the creation of two attic flats with studios for an artist and the architect P. Peressényi, documented in *Projekt* in 1984. Viz OHRABLO, František. 1984. Skúsenosti z podkrovia. *Projekt*, 26(4–5), pp. 51–53.

34 Even at the meetings of the Bratislava City National Committee (MNV), the highest municipal body, the theme of improving the living environment (in general or in specific parts of the city, especially Petržalka) formed in 1987–1989 a specific point for discussion over ten times, and the same was true with care for built heritage in the city centre. Viz Fond 2a/a, Zápisnice ze zasedání Rady MNV, box 655–703. AHMB.

35 The thesis on the co-responsibility for city residents with their living environment developed sporadically in Slovak discussions on urban development, mostly in sociological writings where it regularly appeared through the entire 1980s. For example, Ján Pašiak mentioned in his 1985 essay in *Projekt* that “the citizen – or flat-inhabitant – is the greatest expert on how the dwelling and its surrounding should look”, viz Pašiak, J., 1985, p. 7. More significant, though, is the principle of participation conceptualised in the circle of sociologists around Fedor Gál and Pavol Frič. The concept of “expertise from below”, which Gál investigated in cooperation with e.g. Ivan Kusý or Martin Bútorá, became a key point of the initiative Bratislava/Nahlas and its publication of the same name (viz SOMMER, Vitězslav et al. (eds.). 2019. *Rídit socializmus jako firmu. Technokratické vládnutí v socialistickém Československu*, Prague: Institute for Contemporary History AV ČR, pp. 80–81).

36 Fond 2a/a, Zápisnice Rady MNV, box 694/1989, no. 97, document Vyhodnotenie a závery z pripomienkového konania ku Konceptu územného plánu /ÚPN/ hlavného mesta SSR Bratislavy, pp. 81–88, here p. 83. AHMB.

37 These ideas also form the dominant narrative of the famed publication BUDAJ, Ján, HUBA, Mikuláš, FLAMÍK, Juraj et al. 1987. *Bratislava/nahlas*. Bratislava: SZOPK, the co-authors of which included some of the voices that later saw the solution to the city's problems in the sale of housing to private ownership. Several pages of this critical expert report concern urban vegetation, an entire section addresses neglect of architectural heritage and demolition of landmarks (pp. 20–24), while in the section on the city centre the authors take as their focus the need “for people to belong to the space” of the city (p. 27), of reviving the values, scales, and intimacy of urban space (pp. 29–30). “It is impossible”, state the authors, “that for decades we see anachronistic tendencies in the creation of the urban environment that negate the cultural anchoring of the residents in the historic structure and strive to force on them an environment purely utilitarian or at most created on the basis of the lifeless ideas of ‘paper’ urbanism.” (p. 30). In the section “Construction”, the critique is aimed at the stress on quantitative factors and the

need for attention to qualitative ones; criticising the anonymity of housing estates and the rootlessness of their inhabitants, demanding a liveable city where people will truly feel at home (pp. 39–41). Questions of ownership (including individual flat ownership) however remain avoided, even though several years before the publication of BN they formed part of expert discussions within legally published journals.

38 Viz e.g. ŠPAČEK, Róbert. 1991. Program ekologickej rehabilitácie. *Projekt*, 33(4), pp. 12–13.

39 For example, the elderly professor Eugen Kramár, a political prisoner in the 1950s and then (in the 1970s and 1980s) a longtime designer in the State Design and Standardisation Institute in Bratislava, stressed in his article on beautiful housing that “unlike prefab buildings, which do not humanize the tenant, a single-family house must provide the most effective beautification of life, with great creative sensitivity for sculptural articulation and the picturesque.” KRAMÁR, Eugen. 1992. Za krásne bývanie. *Projekt*, 34(2), p. 6.

40 Viz e.g. STCUHL, Antonín. 1995. Humanizácia mestskej výstavby. *Projekt*, 37(4), p. 2 or MÓRICOVÁ, Marta. 1997. Projekt humanizácie Petržalky. *Projekt*, 39(3), pp. 8.

41 ŽBIRKA, Jaroslav. 1993. Rehabilitácia obytného prostredia. *Projekt*, 35(6), p. 2.

42 Evidence – AMB, Rada 1990, box 704 (Plán hlavných úloh bytového odboru na rok 1990, pp. 176–180), Plán hlavných úloh odboru výstavby na I. polrok 1990, pp. 183–184; box 710, Správa o výkone štátnej bytovej politiky na území Bratislavy, pp. 197–207; Mag. 9, III / 1992, Návrh realizácie bytovej výstavby za rok 1992, pp. 204–209. AMB.

43 Evidence – AMB, Rada 1990, box 714, Správa o obnove objektov v historickom jadre Bratislavy za polrok 1990, pp. 154–163. AMB

44 Fond MsZ, Zápisnica z 8. zas. MsZ, 19.2.1992, “Úvodné vytúpenie primátora k stratégii hospodarenia hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy”, p. 25. AMB.

45 Act of the Slovak National Council on the Capitol City of Bratislava 377/1990 (Available at: 377/1990 Zb. - Zákon Slovenskej národnej rady o hl... - SLOV-LEX), Statue of the Capitol of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava (District archive of Bratislava-Staré Mesto – hereinafter AB-SM, uncategorized fund of the District Assembly of Staré Mesto – hereinafter f. MZ m.č. B-SM, vol. 4/1991, study materials), along with many other partial regulations that essentially transferred to the city state property which was previously granted to the MNV and individual district/local national committees in the city – from apartment blocks

through service facilities, shops, hotels, up to governing bodies created or until 1990 directed by state enterprises and organisations.

46 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, 1991, study materials, Štatút hlavného mesta Slovenskej republiky Bratislavy, Část V, čl. 35–37 (Majetok hlavného mesta a majetok mestských častí) and VI, čl. 38–42 (Zásady hospodarenia s majetkom hlavného mesta a majetkom mestských častí), pp. 53–62. AB-SM.

47 Mag. a12, VII/1992, Návrh na prenesenie niektorých úloh výkonu štátnej správy z hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy na mestské časti, pp. 37–45, 63–70.

48 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic materials from session MZ 1991, 6th meeting, 14.11.1991, pp. 52–54. AB-SM. As the readers of this article (unlike Mayor Zemková) should be aware, the legislation existed de facto since the 1970s; however, it is true that in the meantime the status of the seller had changed (not the state but the district) along with other bodies (district committees into district offices...) and the overall legal situation was unclear.

49 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic materials from session MZ 1991, 6th meeting, 14.11.1991, p. 65. AB-SM.

50 Viz f. Zápisnice z jednání městské rada hl. m. Bratislava, Mag. a12, IX/1992, Komisie na predaj a prenájom nehnuteľností, p. 111. AMB.

51 Viz f. Zápisnice z jednání městské rady hl. m. Bratislava, Mag. a13, IX/1992, Správa o spôsobe privatizácie nehnuteľností na území mestskej časti Bratislava Staré Mesto, pp. 164–170, Mag. a14, IX/1992, Predaj nehnuteľností vo vlastníctve hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy (Staré Mesto). AMB; as well as f. MsZ, k. Zápisnice MsZ 13 z dňa 9. a 10.9.1992 B (material), bod 22 “Návrh na odpredaj nehnuteľností zverených do správy mestskej časti Bratislava – Staré Mesto”. AMB; and other archival documents from AB-SM for the year 1992.

52 F. MsZ, k. Zápisnice MsZ 13, Zápisnica z druhého dňa rokovania 10. zasad. MsZ hl.m. Bratislava dňa 24.6.1992 (stenographic minutes), p. 264. AMB.

53 F. MsZ, k. Zápisnice MsZ 13 z dňa 9. a 10.9.1992 B (materiál), bod 51 “Informácia o spoločnosti Revital”. AMB; and F. MsZ, k. Zápisnice MsZ 13, Zápisnica z druhého dňa rokovania 10. zasad. MsZ hl.m. Bratislava dňa 24.6.1992 (stenographic minutes), pp. 172–219. AMB.

54 F. MsZ, k. Zápisnice MsZ 14, Slož. Materiál na mimor. zasad. MsZ hl.m. Bratislava dňa 29. a 30.9.1992, bod 6 “Návrh na spôsob odpredaja obytných domov na území mestskej časti Bratislava-Staré Mesto”, justification report to the draft resolution. AMB.

- 55 F. MsZ, k. Zápisnice MsZ 14, Slož. Materiál na mimor. zasad. MsZ hl.m. Bratislava dňa 29. a 30.9.1992, bod 6 "Návrh na spôsob odpredaja obytných domov na území mestskej časti Bratislava-Staré Mesto", draft resolution. AMB.
- 56 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic minutes from council session MZ 1993, 17th meeting., 22.4.1993, pp. 64–65. AB-SM.
- 57 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic minutes from council session MZ 1993, 17th meeting., 22.4.1993, p. 65. AB-SM.
- 58 "Achieving a higher standard for the living environment will depend on ... the speed and success of transforming ownership relations", ANTALÍKOVÁ, Magdaléna. 1993. Základné vzťahy v obytnom prostredí. *Projekt*, 35(6), pp. 4–6, here p. 4.
- 59 Antalíková, H., 1993, p. 4.
- 60 Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, 8 July 1993, on the ownership of flats and non-residential spaces.
- 61 Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, 8 July 1993, on the ownership of flats and non-residential spaces, § 16.
- 62 Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, 8 July 1993, on the ownership of flats and non-residential spaces, § 17 and § 18.
- 63 Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, 8 July 1993, on the ownership of flats and non-residential spaces, § 20.
- 64 Viz f. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials and stenographic minutes from meetings 18, 19, and 20 of MZ 1993 (15.6.–1.9.1993). AB-SM.
- 65 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials from the 18th meeting of MZ, 15.6.1993, Zásady predaja obytných domov vo vlastníctve hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy, v správe mestskej časti Bratislava Staré Mesto (Uznesenie č. 36/1993 z 15.6.1993). AB-SM.
- 66 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials from 18th meeting of MZ, 15.6.1993, Návrh na predaj nehnuteľností vo vlastníctve hlavného mesta SR Bratislavy, zverených do správy mestskej časti Bratislava Staré Mesto. AB-SM.
- 67 Viz VZN no. 1/1994 hl.m.SR Bratislavy, 17.2.1994 "o prevode bytov a nebytových priestor z vlastníctva mesta do vlastníctva iných osôb." F. MsZ, box 34. AMB. This generally binding resolution was discussed during the summer of 1993, but further refined in a few details before definite approval at the first council meeting in 1994.
- 68 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials from 21st meeting MZ, 14.10.1993, "Informácia o možnosti vstupu Miestneho úradu mestskej časti Bratislava Staré Mesto do firmy CASINO ROYAL spol. s r. o.". AB-SM.
- 69 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials from 21st meeting, 14.10.1993, "Informácia o možnosti vstupu Miestneho úradu mestskej časti Bratislava Staré Mesto do firmy CASINO ROYAL spol. s r. o.". AB-SM.
- 70 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials from 22nd meeting, 15.12.1993, "Dopis starostky Zemkové poslanci Stolárovi (dat. 10.12.1993)". AB-SM.
- 71 Viz f. MsZ, k. Zápisnice MsZ 31, exceptional meeting 30.11.1993 (materials), 17, "Informácie o likvidácii Bytového podniku". AMB.
- 72 F. MsZ, k. Zápisnice MsZ 34, 26th meeting 17.2.1994 (materiály), no. 8 "Grafický priemet cien predaja a nájomu mestského majetku", for the debate on this point viz f. MsZ, Zápisnice MsZ 35 (minutes), pp. 101–122. AMB.
- 73 Interview with Peter Kresánek, mayor of Bratislava in the years 1990–1998. Interview with Henrieta Moravčíková, Matěj Spurný and Peter Szalay, 6 April 2023, private archive of the research team for the grant project "In Search of the Postmodern City" [Hľadání postmoderního města].
- 74 F. MsZ, k. (box) Zápisnice 60/1996, meeting of the municipal parliament on the 29.2.1996, pp. 63–64. AMB.
- 75 Of course, full agreement among all representatives was lacking, e.g., deputy mayor, architect Peter Beňuška, spoke against the abolition of the ÚHA and proposed (unsuccessfully) that the city retain authority and initiative in matters of urban planning. Viz f. MsZ, k. (box) Zápisnice 60/1996, meeting of the municipal parliament on the 29.2.1996, pp. 63–64. After the end of the ÚHA, he explicitly called the step a mistake – viz f. MsZ, k. Zápisnice MsZ 41, 29th meeting of MsZ, 26.5.1996 (stenographic minutes). AMB.
- 76 F. MsZ, k. Zápisnice MsZ 41, 29th meeting of MsZ, 26.5.1994 (stenographic minutes), no. 8, pp. 155–190. AMB.
- 77 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic minutes from MZ meetings, 1994, 25th session., 22.3.1994, p. 106 (speech by Mayor Zemková on the sale of shares in properties held by the district to restitutes of other parts of the building). AB-SM.
- 78 Assessment of the flats for purchase by current tenants was made from the purchase value reduced by the coefficient of the building's age.
- 79 Questions of "access money" under the term of Mayor Ďurkowský (1994–1998) were voiced, e.g., in connection with permission for construction and adaptation of attic spaces. Viz the debate from the council meeting on 12 March 1996 – f. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic minutes MZ 1996, 13th meeting, 12.3.1996, pp. 75–79. AB-SM.
- 80 Generally binding directive no. 5/1993 of the district Bratislava-Staré Mesto, 15 December 1993, on determination of the share of flats for securing housing for socially disadvantaged residents of the district, viz f. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials from the 22nd meeting of MZ, 15.12.1993, no 2. AB-SM.
- 81 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic minutes from MZ 1993, 22nd meeting, 15.12.1993, pp. 28–34. AB-SM.
- 82 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic minutes from MZ 1994, 25th meeting, 22.3.1994, pp. 85–131. AB-SM.
- 83 At the end of 1994, the district of Staré Mesto registered 2595 rejected applicants for lease of a council flat, viz f. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials from the 31st meeting of MZ, 18.10.1993, "Hodnotenie činnosti samosprávy m.č. Staré Mesto v období 1991–1994", p. 4. AB-SM.
- 84 f. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials from the 31st meeting of MZ, 18.10.1994, "Hodnotenie činnosti samosprávy m.č. Staré Mesto v období 1991–1994", pp. 4–6. AB-SM.
- 85 By October 1994, interest was manifested by 133 individual applicants and 40 firms, viz ibid.
- 86 For more on this, see BAŤO, Rado. 2020. *Ako skapal tatranský tiger. Ekonomické dejiny ponovembrového Slovenska*. Bratislava: Premedia.
- 87 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic minutes from MZ 1997, 25th meeting, 22.3.1994, pp. 88–90. AB-SM.
- 88 Here viz. e.g. the discussion around the sale of the apartment block at Poštová 3 to the company Delta D (with reference to the results of the sale of "Luxorka" in 1995). F. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic minutes from MZ 1997, 29th meeting, 4.11.1997, pp. 96–105. AB-SM.
- 89 Viz f. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials from 10th meeting of MZ, 15.11.1995, no. 2 "Systém realizácie prevodu bytov". AB-SM.
- 90 F. MZ m.č. B-SM, materials from 9th meeting of MZ, 24.10.1995, no. 12 "Založenie spol. PREBYT pre prevod vlastníctva bytov" and materials from 10th meeting of MZ, 15.11.1995, no. 2 "Systém realizácie prevodu bytov", document "Návrh systému odpredaja bytov zverených do správy mestskej časti Bratislava – Staré Mesto". AB-SM.
- 91 After the definitive end of the KBV in the mid-1990s, Bratislava for several years essentially ceased planning and constructing council flats. Architect Petrek commented on that: "Certainly, we will not be starting any construction of municipal flats in this year from the district budget". In: f. MZ m.č. B-SM, stenographic minutes from MZ 1997, 23rd meeting, 29.4.1997, pp. 40–41. AB-SM.
- 92 As such, discussions primarily revolved around the question of whether social housing was intended primarily for "asocial" elements and thus a threat for the city (giving as an example the majority-Roma Košice estate Luník; the racist element was evident if not explicit) or whether the state should (again) assume responsibility for housing certain "regular" citizens like families with young children or the elderly. Viz e.g. the thematic issue of *Projekt* from 1997: "Sociálne bývanie – výzva alebo hrozba?" [Social Housing – a Challenge or a Threat?]. *Projekt*, 39(6), pp. 39–41.
- 93 *Projekt*, 39(2), 1997, p. 19.
- 94 *Projekt*, 41(5), 1999, p. 44.
- 95 ŽALMAN, Peter. 1999. Bývanie – dynamizujúci prvok urbánnej štruktúry. *Projekt*, 41(5), pp. 76–77.