



Call for Papers
International Conference

What Type of Housing Did Our Workers Want to Live in?

Sociological Expertise and Housing Construction 1945–1989

Organizers	Institute for Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences – Faculty of Architecture, Czech Technical University in Prague
Location	Prague
Date	9 October 2020
Deadline for submissions	31 July 2020
Length of paper presentations	20 minutes
Conference languages	Czech and English
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The application of sociological knowledge to the planning of housing construction in post-war Europe is being viewed more and more as a specific manifestation of expertocracy or social engineering. In this respect, historians, sociologists and historians of architecture have formulated a number of research subtopics. They have described the international transfer of sociological-architectural discourse. They have enquired about the impact of sociological expertise on the practice of housing policies in the *welfare states* or – if we use János Kornai's term – in East European *premature welfare states*. They have analysed to what extent the new forms of interdisciplinary cooperation encouraged processes of architectural participation and how they contributed to the redefinition of the architectural profession itself. Fundamental political-ideological differences between popular and western democracies, as well as different trajectories of creating a “society of knowledge” on both sides of the Iron Curtain, seem to have receded into the background in these views. Nevertheless, the issue of the (non)existence of public opinion in state-socialist countries, and consequently the relevance of state-supported sociological-architectural expertise, have not been overlooked by researchers.

In the early 20th century, as the instrumentarium of the field became enriched with the knowledge adopted from the areas of demography and hygiene, the architect-creator was gradually replaced by the architect-expert. After 1945, we may observe the advent of sociological-architectural teams which resolved to define empirically based criteria for the construction of housing on a human scale. Drawing mainly on statistically determined anthropological constants, these teams set out to establish prosperous neighbourhood or town communities. Their expertise often provided legitimacy to the decisions adopted by the political powers and held the promise of an efficient housing policy and housing construction system. However, basing architectural design on a knowledge of social sciences often remained just a power strategy and, especially in Eastern Europe, only rarely left an imprint on the shape of the built-up environment.

The conference aims to bring together scholars who deal with the history of sociological research in the architecture of the state-socialist period and confront their findings with the research results of their West European colleagues. Its goal is to outline current methodological approaches and formulate directions for future research in the area. We welcome contributions reflecting completed, ongoing or planned research on, inter alia, the following issues:

- How was sociological research in architecture conducted and what did it focus on?
- Can we talk, in this respect, about broader cooperation with the representatives of other fields, such as social geography, demography, psychology and health sciences?
- What impact did the transfer of ideas and concepts across the Iron Curtain have on national sociological-architectural debates?
- Were there any semi-official or alternative attempts at sociological research on housing or architecture in state-socialist countries?
- To what extent did public opinion influence the shape of residential architecture, and to what extent was public opinion itself influenced by the sociological-architectural discourse?
- What was the character of relations between sociologists, architects and state power?
- What was the impact of sociological-architectural research on design practice and the real shape of housing policy?
- Did “socialist housing” even exist?

Please submit abstracts of contributions (up to 350 words) together with a short biography (up to 150 words) to hubert.guzik@fa.cvut.cz by 31 July 2020.

Active participants who are not able to secure funding for their travel and accommodation costs may apply for financial support.

Scientific Board:
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