Contemporary Challenges of Croatian Housing Policies in the Context of Post-Socialist Urban Development

Gojko Bežovan
Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, Croatia
gojko.bezovan@pravo.hr

Josip Pandžić
Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb, Croatia
josippandzic1989@gmail.com

Abstract

Political and economic transformations of early 1990s in post-socialist countries of Europe had long-term impacts on housing policies and urban development, mostly through housing policy retrenchment and the dissolution of socialist urban planning. Reformed state and local institutional capacities in Croatia soon after 1990 became obsolete due to privatization, marketization and fiscal austerity measures implemented. Separate part of that development was restitution of housing stock and land inside cities.

Instead of modernisation, actors of a newly formed private sector – mostly speculators and members of the new entrepreneurial class – acquired power in housing policy through lobbying, corruption and clientelist relationships with political elites during prolonged transition. Financial crisis of 2008 and collapse of housing market made long-lasting negative impact to economic and social development. Victims of crisis are large number of families with housing loans recalculated to CHF. For post-socialist countries, EU accession represented an unique chance in the 2000s when it came to general improvement of housing policy instruments by aligning them with EU development goals via Europeanization processes notwithstanding compliance with subsidiarity principle in the housing area. Concrete effects of Europeanization processes and mechanisms are yet to be seen in Croatian housing policy because of a rather late EU accession. Goal of this paper is to critically analyse main housing policy problems and challenges of Croatian cities in pre-crisis and post-crisis periods, with a special focus on prevalent quantitative and qualitative housing issues in the post-socialist urban development context.

Key words: urban development, housing policy, Croatia, post-socialism, EU.