

Stanisław Wieteska[✉]

CRUCIAL SOCIAL ELEMENTS OF THE HOUSING POLICY
IN POLAND IN THE YEARS 1970-1985

1. Social and Housing Policies

By social policy we understand deliberate actions and influence of State, trade unions and other organizations on the system of social relations. These actions have to improve living and working conditions, eliminate social inequalities and raise culture of life. In socialist system it is strongly connected with all planning activities leading to the development of economy and improvement of living conditions of population.

It is a main goal of social policy to fulfil the needs of the society to such degree which is sufficient for the proper functioning of this society. Social policy formulates a set of important needs of population which should be fulfilled by the organized action of the State and social organizations. The set of such needs is very wide, however, these which are basic are: work according to qualifications, proper wages, safety and hygiene of work conditions, health care, insurance in case of inability to work, housing conditions, the possibilities of recreation and development of culture.

Each of the above needs has its own policy: employment policy, wages policy, insurance policy, health care policy, housing policy, recreation and culture policy, etc.

Housing policy is a scientific branch which investigates goals and determines methods in the field of fulfilment and improvement of housing conditions. It is involved in the above problems through investigation of their economic, social and

[✉]Dr., Lecturer, Department of Urban Development Economics, Institute of Regional Policy, University of Lodz.

technical aspects - beginning with evaluation of housing situation and needs, through planning and programming, realization of housing construction, maintenance, modernization and exchange of housing stocks, as well as distribution of apartments. By such activities housing policy creates housing conditions.

Social policy includes these elements of housing policy which refer to the formation of housing conditions and ways of fulfillment of housing needs. The level of these conditions is of great influence on the life of individuals and families.

In macro-scale an apartment is one of basic factors conditioning the proper development of population, as well as socio-economic and cultural development. It is especially so, as far as population reproduction, efficiency of work, rising of qualifications and mobility of work resources, etc. are concerned.

Housing conditions have many-sided influence on demographic, economic and social development.

2. Social Changes of Housing Conditions in the Years 1970-1985

In 1970 and 1978 Census of Population and housing stocks was done. The results which were published enable to analyze the changes of the quantitative and quality state of housing stocks. Between 1970-78 housing stocks increased (1245 thousand of apartments) and were faster than the increase of population. The increase of number of households was twice faster than the increase of population. This fact was connected with coming into adult life people from the demographic explosion, as well as with social and economic changes. Between 1970-78 the housing stocks in Poland became considerably "rejuvenated". In 1978 - 57.9% were post-war housing stocks of which 60.6% in towns and 53.6% in the villages. The degree of "rejuvenation" at that time was twice higher in towns than in the villages.

Information in table 1 shows the average increase of the usable space in m^2 both in towns and in the villages.

Table 1

Average usable space and number of rooms
in 1979 and 1978

Specification	Total	Towns	Villages
Average number of rooms in apartments			
1970	2.87	2.77	3.00
1978	3.15	3.07	3.28
Average number of m ² of usable space per apartment			
1970	50.7	46.9	58.8
1978	53.9	49.3	61.3
Average number of m ² of usable space per room			
1970	17.7	16.9	18.6
1978	17.1	16.1	18.7

Source: T. Żarski, "Changes of living conditions in the years 1970-1978 on the basis of Census of 1970 and 1978". Sprawy mieszkaniowe No 3-4/1980.

The average number of rooms in towns increased to the same degree as in the villages and was similar. However, usable space in the villages increased much more than in towns. This was caused by the differences in the building structure: in towns - where blocks prevail and in the villages - where the family houses are the most popular.

The structure of usable space was relatively high in the

villages, while in towns, the alarming decrease occurred. This was also the result of the above differences in structure.

It is worth mentioning that the structure of size of apartments increased. Also, the number of apartments consisting of 1 - 2 rooms decreased. Thus, the number of bigger apartments increased (3-4 rooms). It is observed that the number of 4 room apartments, very important in our conditions, particularly increased.

The detailed analysis shows very positive changes in equipment of apartments in basic amenities (Table 2).

T a b l e 2

Apartments equipped in various amenities
in 1970 and 1978

Specification	Apartments total in thousand	Apartments equipped (%)					
		water supply	WC	bath- room	warm water	gas	central heating
1970	8081	47.3	32.9	29.5	22.6	34.6	22.0
1978	9326	67.4	52.9	51.3	48.3	55.3	41.5

S o u r c e: as in table 1.

The number of apartments equipped with the mentioned above amenities increased more than apartments net.

The detailed studies showed that about 50% of new apartments in the villages had water supply, WC and a bathroom. In towns 97% of apartments had such equipment.

The indicator of density in apartments and indicator of density in rooms showed positive changes (Table 3).

Table 3 shows the improvement of housing conditions in the following way: in towns the number of people per 1 room and per one apartment decreases, while in the village the average usable space in m^2 per one person increases.

Table 3

Average density in 1970 and 1978

Specification	Total	Towns	Villages
Average number of people in apartment			
1970	3.94	3.65	4.33
1978	3.66	3.37	4.12
Average number of people per 1 room			
1970	1.37	1.32	1.34
1978	1.16	1.10	1.25
Average number of m ² of usable space per 1 person			
1970	12.9	12.8	12.9
1978	14.7	14.6	14.9

Source: as in table 1.

Table 4

Average number of independent house-holds per 100 apartments

Specification	Total	Towns	Villages
1970	116.0	119.6	111.3
1978	117.4	118.3	116.0

Analysing the degree of self-dependence of house-holds (table 4) we should admit that it increased. And thus the number of independent house-holds increased 13.5%, the number of dependent house-holds increased 26.7% of which 17.8% are those which have 3 or more domestic economic units. Structure of house-holds as a whole changed for worse as the result of such a situation. Nevertheless, the picture of changes in house-hold situation is not of univocal character.

Generally, situation is better although, still, there are also some negative tendencies.

3. Housing Policy and Its Social Results in the years 1970-1980

The great need of apartments caused by the post-war demographic explosion was reflected by the changes in the housing policy. This process was begun by the perspective housing programme of 1972 whose aim was to provide, in the middle of '80, each family with its own apartment. The programme was realized through industrialization of housing construction, introduction of many systems of construction and 190 factories of prefabricated elements.

However, there was decrease of investments on housing construction in comparison to global investments (in the last 10 years it was about 16%). So, the plans could not be fully realized.

The housing programme of 1972 was characterized by different than before approach to housing problems. Its main goal was to eliminate lack of apartments and to give directions for the housing policy up to 1990. Housing was treated as a main factor conditioning socio-economic development.

The standard of houses improved and they were built quicker than before. Generally, although not all goals were realized, the situation of housing, especially in the first part of the perspective programme, improved. In the years 1971-1972 the number of apartments exceeded plans. The year 1978 was the best as

far as the number of apartments was concerned. Their total number was 283,000.

In the years 1976-1980 there were some difficulties in plan's realization. This was caused by the economic crisis. There were many difficulties of which the most important are:

1) considerable increase of construction costs caused by new technologies (excessive capital, material and energy-consuming). Important here was rise of prices and costs which entailed a great number of investments devoted to housing;

2) increase of payments for renting paid by new dwellers;

3) centralized system of housing policy of typical local character;

4) inconsistencies of so-called "second line" of housing construction;

5) concentration of building of apartments and delays in realization of social infrastructure;

6) underdevelopment of housing in the villages decreasing the standard of life caused also the decrease of agricultural production;

7) concentration on new housing stock with the negligence of maintenance of old housing;

8) toleration of differences in rents between municipal housing and cooperative housing;

9) subsidies given to maintain municipal housing and at the same time insufficient financial help for people whose wages are low;

10) unjust distribution of apartments, especially cooperative. This system of distribution restricts the independence of cooperatives. More than 20-30% of apartments were distributed by local government.

Preference given to the development of houses of prefabricated elements led in consequence, to the excessive use of materials, energy and means of transport, as well as decrease of standards of the apartments. Also, the industry of building materials was underdeveloped, therefore, development of housing to a greater degree was impossible. Development of industrialized housing created new housing districts, which became an integral part of towns.

Apart from the positive features of new districts there are also many negative ones. There is a great congestion which is the result of mechanical use of density indicators. The housing estates are monotonous, anonymous and similar to each other. Urban plans are very schematic. There is no place left for recreation and leisure. The existing green space is often devastated and there is a lack of interest to secure it. Therefore, the macro-climate of the new districts is not very good.

Also, a characteristic feature of new housing are delays in social infrastructure which is very inconvenient for the dwellers.

Thus, in '70 plans have not been fully realized although the investments were bigger and general statistic situation of housing improved. It is worth underlying that in the last decade 2.4 million of apartments equipped in technical and sanitary amenities, were built.

However, public opinion is still very pessimistic and financial means accumulated by people in form of bank savings have not been properly used.

The difficult situation in housing is the result of general economic situation and disturbances of investment activities. All the defects and incorrectness in assumptions and realization of the perspective housing programme and housing policy, have become evident.

4. Changes of Some Housing Policy Principles in the Years 1981-1985

As the housing situation in the country was unsatisfactory, the solution of this problem became one of the main goals of social policy. It was taken up by the Party, Government and Parliament and as the result in March 1981 Government made several decisions changing the principles of housing policy.

The hitherto existing system of distribution was changed. The cooperatives were now free to distribute apartments to their members. The distribution of municipal apartments became open,

with the obligatory participation of social commissions examining the situation of the applicants. Municipal-tenant houses were brought into being again.

In 1981 Parliament (Commission of Construction and Environment Protection) formulated several proposals in the field of housing policy, which were approved by the Government and taken into account while publishing the programme of housing in 1982 ("Some changes in the principles of housing policy and programmes to 1990").

The basic principle was that in order to shorten time of waiting for the apartment, the future dwellers should be engaged in construction. The Government, local authorities and enterprises should help in this process. The government should create conditions of organizational, legal and economic character, helping individual dwellers, cooperatives, enterprises, groups of young people and local authorities.

In the years 1982-1983 the activities aiming at development of all forms of housing construction were taken up. The principles of financing, crediting and financial support were established. New legal regulations referring to crediting of housing were adapted to conditions of economic reform and increase of construction costs. The increase of construction costs resulted from the increase of the supply prices, wages and remunerativeness of the enterprises. The cooperatives building blocks of houses were proposed low interest bank credit, as well as subsidy from central budget - 50% of construction costs.

The financing principles of family houses were changed as well. The preference conditions were introduced.

The above financial system which is in force from January 1983, will be evaluated, tested and modified according to current needs. Moreover, the Government ratified two very important acts - two acts have been amended - Housing Law and Cooperative Law.

In "Housing Law" the main principle is that the same person as well as married couples, can have only one apartment. This also refers to summer houses. The consequent observance of this principle will limit the cases of possessing two apartments by the same person.

"Cooperative law" describes the basic principles of cooperative system of fulfilment of housing needs. These principles were developed in the detailed acts from March and December 1983. They take into account, among other things, the assumptions of the Government housing policy.

In March 1983 the Parliament passed anti-inflation and savings programmes. The assumptions of this programme notice the importance of housing construction as stabilizing economic balance of the country. Saving programme assumes the decrease of housing construction costs - material, energy and capital consuming.

In February 1984 the Ministry of Administration and Spacial Economy published a study entitled "Housing Policy - realization and plans". In its first part the Ministry evaluates new principles of housing policy. It underlines that housing needs are still great (there is a need of about 4.5 million apartments). There is also lack of free space for building and great delays as far as modernization of old housing stocks is concerned.

The second part is devoted to current realization of housing construction, stressing the alarmingly small number of realized apartments (annually 190,000).

The third part stresses the need of the increase of number of built houses and especially underlines the necessity of building the family houses.

In the last period of time the Government took up many actions, having in mind improvement of housing situation. Local authorities were obliged to control the apartments whose assignment was different than housing. As the result of such controls many young families, having very difficult conditions, were given new apartments.

5. Summing up

From the above survey we can see that housing problems are the main problems of social policy. Described in the housing policy, they inform about their importance for the family and

national economy. The fulfilment of housing needs is very difficult and needs enormous economic, technical and social effort.

In the analysed period of time the engagement of economic potential in overcoming of housing difficulties has been noticeable. However, there still occurs lack of apartments, in many of them density is very big, and their quality is very poor.

There are also difficulties with modernization and reconstruction of old housing stocks and those built after 1950. Moreover, there still are great differences between towns and villages.

Because of the economic crisis the perspective plan of 1972 has not been fully realized and housing situation became even more difficult. However, changes introduced in 1972 and energetic activities of the Government, allow to cherish hopes for the improvement of the situation.

Stanisław Wieteska

WĘZŁOWE SPOŁECZNE ELEMENTY POLITYKI MIESZKANIOWEJ W POLSCE W LATACH 1970-1985

Przedmiotem artykułu jest ocena społecznych aspektów polityki mieszkaniowej w Polsce w latach 1970-1985. Autor wychodząc od określenia związków między polityką społeczną a polityką mieszkaniową analizuje kolejno: społeczne zmiany warunków mieszkaniowych, społeczne rezultaty polityki mieszkaniowej w latach 1970-1980 oraz zmiany ważniejszych zasad w polityce mieszkaniowej wprowadzonych w latach 1981-1985.

W podsumowaniu artykułu autor stwierdza, że w analizowanym okresie dostrzegamy duże zaangażowanie potencjału gospodarczego w pokonywaniu trudności mieszkaniowych. Pomimo tego wysiłku w dalszym ciągu występuje deficyt mieszkaniowy, wiele mieszkań jest przeludnionych, nie samodzielnych i niskiej jakości. Pogłębiły się trudności w zakresie utrzymania starej zabudowy mieszkaniowej, a także i budynków zrealizowanych po 1950 r. Ponadto utrzymują się w dalszym ciągu regionalne rozpiętości w sytuacji mieszkaniowej jak również między miastem a wsią. Na skutek pogarszania się sytuacji społeczno-ekonomicznej kraju nie został w pełni wykonany perspektywiczny program budownictwa mieszkaniowego z 1972 r. Istniejąca sytuacja kryzysowa w gospodarce pogłębia trudności mieszkaniowe. Jednakże podjęte zmiany w polityce mieszkaniowej w 1982 r. i energiczne działania rządu pozwalają żywić nadzieję na stopniową poprawę aktualnej sytuacji mieszkaniowej.