

New Understanding of Rural and Urban Housing Quality

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SUMMARY The article is an extract from two different sociological researches: *Social Structure and Quality of Living in the Period of Transition* (CITADA - IDIZ, 1996), *Village in Transition: Developmental Possibilities of Rural Areas* (IDIZ, 1996-1999), and many other field and action researches on different topics, housing being one of them, as the part of "quality of living" approach. The paper is, as well, the 'synthesis' of two papers from international housing conferences held in Tallinn - Estonia, 1997 and in Vilnius - Lithuania, 1999.

In the article, the author starts with analysis of the social context marked by transition on general level and specific Croatian features (in privatisation, urbanisation, ruralisation, rurbanisation) influencing housing situation and housing policy. The stress is put on similarities (convergences) and differences (divergences) in understanding of housing in villages and cities.

The main hypothesis is that in spite of huge differences in understanding of rural and urban housing, in quality of living in general, they are changing in favour of convergence. The reasons are in urbanisation of villages (differentiation of social structure and activities, increase of communal infrastructure and general social changes) as well as in ruralisation of cities (immigration of rural population with it's own values and quality of living).

Measuring the quality of housing with numerous indicators (objective and subjective ones) on the level of house/apartment, neighbourhood/quarter and on settlement level all the data show less differences on house/apartment and neighbourhood/quarter level (on elementary level) than on settlement level. Favours go for cities, and disadvantages for villages.

The conclusions are not pink. They show worse situation in villages and parish centres (dying of small settlements), while in cities problems are connected with "false standard", ruralisation of the periphery and even the very cores, and weak urban planning as their corrector.

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1. Foreword

This paper about housing is an extract from two different sociological researches done in the last few years in Croatia, especially from the projects *Social Structure and Quality of Living in the Period of Transition* (CITADA - Centre for Civil Society and Transition Research, Zagreb and IDIZ - Institute for Social Research of Zagreb, 1996), *Village in Transition: Developmental Possibilities of Rural Areas* (IDIZ - Institute for Social Research of Zagreb, 1996-2000), and a few other field and action researches with "quality of life" approach. It is also the combination of the author's two papers: "Housing Quality - Two Faces of the Same Coin" presented in the group CIB WG 69, Tallinn, Estonia, 1997, and the paper from CIB, WG 69 Housing Sociology Conference, Lithuania, Vilnius and Kaunas, 1999. It also uses some results of her recent field work and a few case studies respectively. None of them was specifically dedicated to housing, but all of them included it as one of the elements investigated. The intention of this composition is to show the results of them, taking out the housing as separate theme. The stress is put on *rural-urban differences in housing* (objective situation, subjective understanding/evaluation of various housing elements).

As usual, in the author's research she treats housing as one of the elements of "quality of life" approach. Quality of life is an old and well known approach, but quite incoherent in different theoretical and research works, using hundreds of indicators. The author's understanding of quality of life is, that it is the integrality

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¹ Correctly, this is rearranged paper from Centre international de bâtiment (CIB), Bruxelles, WG 69 (Working Group 69) Housing Sociology Conference *Taking Talk of Housing: Exploring the Limits of Divergence and Convergence in the Everchanging World*, Lithuania, Vilnius, Kaunas, 24-27 September, 1999.

of objective elements and subjective (or social) satisfaction with them. It also implies a possibility to decide about someone's life and about society in general; democracy in short.

2. The Social Context

Like in all transitional countries, social context in Croatia has changed drastically. In addition, Croatia had the Homeland War instead of velvet revolution. It, also, became the totalitarian state instead of democratic one facing new changes. At the same time it must be admitted that the last years of socialist period made it more liberal than many other socialist countries. The space for pluralistic democracy (and civil society) development was opened, but it went wrong way. The results were obvious in all fields: political, economic, social, cultural (housing included), and they will be recognisable in the future.

It is scientifically or even in common sense thinking impossible to predict the situation after the new (in year of 2000) elections. Although the new democratic political option is on the scene; economic and social situation will not be improved overnight! The changes in process are so recent that sociology needs some time to analyse and valorise them, scientifically.

Transition, going it's way can be analysed only incrementally, step by step, and mostly after certain changes (not only political ones). The only sure thing is uncertainty on global and local level! The same applies for the very changes: step by step!

Both, the ruling party (Croatian Democratic Union) and the parliamentary opposition, have weak plans of socio-economic development. Electoral body is puzzled before the next (2000) elections. Spatial plans, and administrative space tailoring made before economic ones, instead of translating their ideas in the space, suffer from many confusions. For example, new division into regions, parishes, the capital, communes/cities and local councils made disorder in the space instead of arranging it. The economy is nowadays in total collapse. In short, economic collapse produces social problems while the politics is incapable of (to) solving them. New politics will need quite a time for serious changes (in social and economic situation, at first place).

On territorial level there are different problems, concerning different types of spaces.

Islands keep being undeveloped and abandoned by young, educated and work potential population; senilisation and feminisation goes on. *Tourism*, as the main resource of islands and the coast is worse and worse due to general uncertainty of malinformed tourists and domestic bad organisation (Ministarstvo razvitka i obnove - *Ministry of Development and Renewal*, 1996).

Small inland settlements (different definitions mainly depend on number of inhabitants, structure of economic active population, type of economy and central functions, but they are not precise), villages in the first place are also abandoned in search for better life: education, work, amusement. Such facts would be regarded as normal if they were not the results of bad planning and organisation of economy (Seferagić and Lončar Butić, 1997; Rogić and Štambuk, 1998; Seferagić, Župančić and Lončar Butić, 1998; Lončar Butić, Magdalenić, Seferagić and Župančić, 1999).

Renovation and revitalisation of war (aggressor) damaged parts is not finished yet! It mainly regards housing in narrower sense, but usually not other elements, like production, in the first place.

Yet there are quite a lot of potentially *vital settlements and spaces* where people invest, try to develop their production and stay at home, in their native rural settlements and little country towns. Such cases are not too frequent because people have a lot of problems, mainly judicial (especially returnees from foreign countries) but they give "light in the tunnel".

Two totally different processes are taking place, simultaneously.

One is dying of many small villages as agricultural zones; depopulation (the youth abandoning villages and rural areas for better urban life), very low production of agricultural goods (not competitive with cheap foreign imports), poor technical and social infrastructure. Housing, understood in its complexity, is not so bad on individual level, but it is much worse on settlement level. That goes for islands, inland villages and especially for places under process of post-war renewal.

Another one is progress of some "vital" settlements (usually parish and county centres) which have some central functions, better production, better infrastructure and are usually state's corridors for big infrastructure (receiving economic reparations for their disposition). They have the increase of population which is the best indicator of development (in the case of Croatia, the country with "white death", not because of development but because of undevelopment).

Statistical trends (in all statistical books in last decade) show that many small and dwarfish rural settlements will and must disappear. So, some local ideas about their urbanisation are neither real nor rational, because their potential progress would cost (them, or their inhabitants in the first place) too much. 10-20 households and families in these zones, usually old people, are not enough for introducing collective infrastructure, and not only from economic reasons. They should rather be connected by good communications (traffic etc.) to the closest, better developed settlements. Individual infrastructure systems (water, sewerage) would suit them much better. The only factor which makes all the difference is *production*. If any small settlement has potential capacities and perspectives, it

deserves all attention possible, from the State to all other lower organisational and developmental levels.

In “dying” situation, such rare spots should be *“negatively privileged”*, meaning that they should get more attention and money from the state than other “normal places”.

While some of these processes are global, due to urbanisation ergo inevitable, the others are caused by bad socio-economic and spacial planning (administrative and professional). In both cases, there are some important differences in villages and smaller settlements on one side and bigger towns and cities on the other, concerning housing.

In villages and parish centres, housing, in general, is more important for living, due to the lack of settlement infrastructure (either individual or collective; social or technical). What people can not do outdoors, they tend to do indoors. Housing is, also, much cheaper in small places (cheaper materials, self-help, help of neighbours and relatives, less other expences...). So, contradictory enough housing in its narrower sense is bigger and better. Real housing problems can be found in bigger cities, metropolis in the first place.

Little towns (defined as urban in administrative way, usually having some central functions), with insufficient infrastructure may or may not be potential centres of development. They may be nice for living but sure enough not for quality of life in its complete sense. Some people might like them, but they are not real urban cores (“urban” understood in its usual sociological way, not necessary to define any more in urban sociology).

Medium cities (mostly defined as not big and not small) are the most interesting potential points for good living. They might be dull and plain, but they still have a lot of potentiality in many different contents of life. They are “human measured” and in accordance with their natural environment (surroundings). They also attract inhabitants from the surrounding so that they are qualitative urban centres. Housing is usually mixture of rural-urban features (Rogić and Salaj, 1999).

Big cities (defined by number of inhabitants, type of work, and central functions different in various countries) are the best on settlement level because they have almost everything necessary, in urban terms. There are four of them in Croatia: *Zagreb* (the capital) and three macroregional centres: *Osijek* in Panonic plain, *Rijeka* and *Split* on Dalmatian coast. They make a good basis for settlement network and division of labour among them. They also attract regional population to come and stay there if possible. The special case is *Zagreb, the metropolis*, the most attractive city in the country (Rogić, 1997). In data analysis collected in the research of social structure and quality of living (Hodžić, Kristofić, Seferagić et al., 1996) we will see that it has more problems than other macroregional centres, more than expected. In cities the main difference is the choice of options. The

bigger the city the more options! But also some urban restrictions! Options go from "rural" ones (big houses, gardens, animals, rural way of life...) to multi-store buildings choice: smaller apartments with whole urban equipment. *The contradiction is that: while real urban people prefer individualised spaces (each person wants his own room), at the same time having smaller apartments (in general in bigger houses), rural or small settlements' people prefer collective spaces, like kitchens to geather, having a lot of spare spaces in individual houses.* That fact is changing in both cases.

What is really happening is the "mixture" of rural and urban values in both types of settlements, we can use the term "*rurbanisation*". The literature about rural and urban values of living is so old and big that I do not feel like starting "ab ovo": what is important is that they mix, change and produce new values. Each type of settlement or their inhabitants, mix their original acquired and learned values and preferences, depending on their origins, social status, education, economic position and personal tastes, rather than depending on settlement type.

Urban planning and professional institutions help them to chose what they want. Official plannig institutions are not virgin at all. They are selling their professional status for money and political power. We can add privatisation as determining factor. So, they give permissions for whatever asked instead of protecting public and individual property and professional values. That brings cities to patchwork of individual interests, destroying public and valuable spaces. Public space became the subject of power, money and individual games, instead of beeing protected by state, and professional institutions, as well as by citizens' rights, to decide about their city on micro level and in general.

3. Research Results

In this paper I rely on research data from one "longitudinal" research (1986, 1991, 1996) done in 1996 in whole Croatia: *Social Structure and Quality of Living in the Period of Transition* (Centre for Civil Society and Transition Research, Institute for Social Research of Zagreb, and University of Indiana, Wyoming, USA, 1996), on cca 2200 respondents, and *Village in Transition: Developmental Possibilities of Rural Areas* (IDIZ - Institute for Social Research of Zagreb, 1996-2000), still going on. Housing was treated as the part of "*quality of life*" approach. I also use some results from a few case studies done in Croatia in the last few years, housing being one of the elements of quality of life. The stress in this paper is put on rural-urban differences in housing quality and its evaluation. Villages and local centres represent villages, while cities are devided in to: broader local centres, regional centres, macroregional centres and the capital (Zagreb). Few questions were dedicated to housing: tenure, quality of housing (number of rooms, equipment, week-end houses, cars...). In previous researches neighbourhood and settlement equipment was investigated as well. *Satisfaction with housing was another side of the same coin.*

Data from the sociological project *Social structure and quality of living in the period of transition* show some things. *Tenure* data show that 94,1% in villages and 89,8% in local centres are private built individual houses. In local centres one can expect a bit more differentiated social structure; state built houses for administration.

Private housing (houses and apartments) in cities is: 57,5% in broader centres, 39,0% in regional centres, 30,2% in macroregional centres and 47,1% in Zagreb.

The bigger the city, less individual houses, except for Zagreb. That might be because of huge social (multi-store) housing stock has been sold in last years, or is in process of selling. The other reason might be that Zagreb is invaded by people from other parts from Croatia and from Bosnia and Herzegovina, with rural housing taste and a lot of money. They have built their houses either in outskirts of Zagreb or in central parts destroying old ones. "Money makes the world go around"!

The picture is quite clear: even though partly urbanised, villages have predominantly individual housing. In towns and cities the situation is more or less half-half. Privatisation of social housing in cities changed the situation: many people were obliged to buy their apartments in big buildings for lower prices, although they did not suite them. But they were cheaper then apartments or houses on realty market. That situation is still unclear, concerning apartment - building - neighbourhood level; who is in charge of what?! So "private" in cities is more complex than in villages, meaning: individual housing, privatised social housing for inhabiting, private housing for renting, denationalised housing with tenants etc.

Number of rooms data show not only housing standard but the style of life: private space, for example. In villages most houses have 3 rooms (34,8%), 2 rooms (29,9%) or 4 rooms (17,6%). In local centres: 35,1% 3 rooms houses, 31,2% 2 rooms houses, and 14,2% 4 rooms.

Two rooms housing prevails in towns and cities.

The size of the dwelling is another indicator of housing quality. In villages and local centres houses are bigger than in towns and cities (individual houses or apartments), while the size of the buildings is, of course, quite opposite. Too big houses in villages usually belong to "status seekers", former "gastarbiters", rich farmers in general. Sometimes each member of the family (3 brothers for example) has its own house on the same plot of land! At the same time there are a lot of poor villagers with small and low quality houses. These are in principle elderly people.

Analysing *equipment* of the housing, the results (*Social structure and quality of living in the period of transition*, 1996; *Village in transition*, 1996-2000) show that many former differential factors do not play important role any more, while the

new ones arise. Running water, sewage system, electricity, TV, washing machines, bathroom etc., either in individual or collective arrangement exist everywhere and are not differential factors any more. Some individual systems are much better than collective ones for small settlements because they are cheaper and more efficient.

Differential factors are quite *elitistic* in equipment, like: central heating, telephone, PC, satellite antenna, video, library, artistic collection and similar. They go in favour of cities, especially bigger ones.

At the same time villages have almost the same number of *cars* as cities, which is quite understandable. Cars can compensate all possible needs which one can satisfy only in bigger settlements. So, the car in villages is more primary necessity than in cities, concerning usual needs. In bigger cities people use buses or tram or even go on foot because it is more convenient while in smaller settlements people need cars for whatever they need out of their village, town or city.

Another explanation deals with urban poverty which is very high: people do not have money to pay their elementary needs, not to mention cars and similar. "*False standard*" means that many people have had good housing equipment which is now very old. In one, two or three years all labour-saving devices, some of them out of order, will not be replaced by new ones, because the people have no money. The situation will, therefore, be even worse. So, the real living conditions will be obvious in a few years or even earlier. I think that no political changes, even for better, can turn economic situation towards prosperity so quickly. It goes for "entire population" (svekoliko pučanstvo), while we can expect even more opulence in already rich social strata. *Power, money and manipulation* will stay the main factors in near future.

Concerning cities, they can undergo processes that has already started; further "*ruralisation*" of urban space and housing as well as *nouveau rich style* prevailing more and more. We might expect gypsum lions on garden doors, even dwarfs in three colours, as well. Worse than that is the swallowing up of whole plots of former gardens, on which they are building huge and ugly houses which jeopardize the whole neighbourhood. Worse than that is weakness and corruptibility of urban planners, their "*ancilla politicae*" role at the same time.

In our mentioned researches (*Social structure and quality of life*, 1996; *Village in transition*, 1996-2000) we also asked about *satisfaction* with housing. The data show that in villages 41,1% are satisfied, 49,3% in local centres. In cities it is: 49,5% in broader local centres, 49,1% in regional ones, 36,7% in macroregional centres and 41,3% in the capital. Rural-urban differences do not seem to play relevant role. It is rather: economic situation, social strata, cultural needs etc. If inhabitants of villages are satisfied at the same percentage as Zagreb inhabitants than it is obvious that other criteria are important. Other values in the first place. That also shows that neighbourhood and settlement level equipment plays smaller role than

expected. Rural-urban traffic connections may partly explain it. Why not to live in a nice village next to a bigger city and go there when you need something?! Our urban prejudices should be left to us, urban enamoured people, not to the others. Qualifying housing conditions are also very individual thing, what one finds beautiful or good, the other might consider ugly and bad. Individual side of quality of life is one of the most important indicators.

Each element of household equipment. was marked with 1, 2, or 3 points, taking into account the level of social development and differences between regions, cities and villages (Hodžić, Kristofić, Seferagić et al., 1996):

1 point: piped (running) water, electricity, sewage system, bath/shower, inside - WC, refrigerator, washing machine, TV.

2 points: central heating, telephone, freezer, car.

3 points: dishwasher, HI-FI, video, PC, art collection, library.

1-10 points was considered as *bad* equipment,

11-20 points: *medium-level* equipment,

21 points: and more were considered as *good* equipment.

For equipment in the neighbourhood (in 1989), we also formed three levels: bad, medium, and good equipment. Equipment of the settlement was divided into: technical, social, cultural and other, as well. Such division comes from urban planning approach, and we take it for granted in urban sociology. *Technical equipment* comprises: water, electricity, sewage system, roads, parks, parking places etc., while *social* one includes: social, cultural, educational institutions, buildings and other facilities (old people homes, cinemas, theatres, schools, etc.).

What was the level of equipment of households in 1989 and 1996?

Table 1
The level of equipment of Croatian households in 1989 and 1996

- in %

Indexes of equipment of households	1989			1996		
	total	city	village	total	city	village
1-10 (bad)	14.0	8.6	24.5	17.3	7.3	27.4
11-20 (medium)	61.2	59.1	65.9	52.2	47.9	56.8
21- (good)	24.8	32.3	9.6	30.5	44.8	15.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source:
Hodžić, Kristofić, Seferagić et al., 1996.

Bad equipment stayed rather stable in total (cities and villages) although it worsened in villages (possible consequences of the war damages). Medium-level equipment has fallen everywhere. Good equipment has risen everywhere. Good equipment, that we as sociologists know, indicates technical development, the "technical" preferences taste of the younger generations, but also there is a widening gap between richer and poorer and the middle classes. As I already mentioned, a decrease in medium-level equipment shows that many households have their labour-saving devices worn-out and that the chances of buying new ones are decreasing. Very soon we can expect a further worsening of medium-level equipment. When we checked the connection of equipment with other variables (class, strata, education, occupation, economic status, cultural patterns), they correlated, as expected, in a known way: the higher the social status, the better socio-economic situation - the better equipment!

If we remember introductory remarks about housing satisfaction, we can only partly explain our results on satisfaction (table 2).

Table 2
Housing satisfaction in Croatia in 1989 and 1996

- in %

Satisfaction	1989			1996		
	total	city	village	total	city	village
unsatisfied	20.0	21.4	17.2	20.4	20.2	21.0
yes and no	20.5	18.1	24.6	24.6	22.1	28.0
satisfied	59.5	60.5	58.2	55.0	57.7	51.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source:
Hodžić, Krištofić, Seferagić et al., 1996.

More than half of the respondents were satisfied with their housing, although the total percentage decreased. The number of those uncertain increased by a few points, while those dissatisfied increased slightly in villages only. Should we conclude that housing satisfaction has nothing to do with housing conditions (satisfactory housing)?! Or is it more complex?! (Seferagić, 1997).

On neighborhood and settlement level data (mostly from case studies) show quite clear picture. Technical and social equipment is poorer in smaller settlements while it is the best in the capital.

For many people, younger generations in the first place, in connection with weak working conditions, it means leaving smaller settlements and searching "luck" in bigger ones. Preferably Zagreb! *That means that bettering housing conditions in smaller places without complete urbanisation of the way of life can not help them*

from slow decadence. If villages or small cities are dull for living, everybody in the best age will try to leave them and go to more interesting places. For education, for job, for amusement, etc.

In addition to normal urbanisation processes, the transitional ones, the war and its damages helped deagrarianisation and urbanisation in the same time. Who would want to come to “noplace” to start from the very beginning if he or she has already settled elsewhere and started a new life. No politics whatsoever can bring those people back to their destroyed homes and settlements. Especially if they are only partly renewed!

4. Conclusions

It is more than very hard, brave and uncertain to make scientific conclusions about recent housing situation, not to mention its future. I have “burned my fingers” so many times on predictions! But, it must be done, at least in quite a simple way. And with no obligations!

The future of housing in Croatia described in this paper depends, no doubt on general and local social context un the first place political, economical, social in the country and on foreign factors. (For example, one American decision can make as much damage or good, as domestic one).

Some things are, in spite of all, quite clear:

- political changes, will not change economic, social and housing situation as quickly as necessary;
- impoverishment of the entire population will go on, effecting housing conditions;
- spatial planning will depend on political and money factors rather than on professional ones, or it will take long time to change it;
- social inequalities will increase and produce even more differences in housing standard;
- false standard of housing conditions will decline in the next few years or sooner in most of housing in all settlements;
- ruralisation and nouveau rich style will change historical and cultural faces of cities and villages in an irreparable way due to transitional processes, and the type of renewal process;
- in transitional situation we can expect some good and qualitative changes in all social fields, housing included (due to realty market, international interventions, domestic initiatives and similar);
- if urbanisation of vital villages goes on, we might expect less differences in housing quality and its understanding;
- sociological production, untill last elections devided upon criteria of political fitness, harmed or maybe helped housing solutions.

It is to wait for and see the future. In socialist period I used to predict future in scientific way, because of the stability of the system, being more or less predictable. In transition, and after brand new political changes, it would not be scientifically correct to do that. Therefore, I hope to have more researches in order to predict, describe and, preferably, explain the whole social scene, housing included.

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Novo shvaćanje kvalitete ruralnoga i urbanog stanovanja

Sažetak

Autorica u članku analizira rezultate socioloških projekata Socijalna struktura i kvaliteta življenja u periodu tranzicije (CITADA - Centar za istraživanje civilnog društva i tranzicije, Zagreb i IDIZ - Institut za društvena istraživanja u Zagrebu, 1996.) i *Selo u tranziciji: mogućnosti razvoja seoskih područja* (IDIZ, 1996.-1999.) te brojnih manjih terenskih i akcijskih istraživanja u kojima je stanovanje imalo značajnu ulogu kao dio koncepta kvalitete življenja. Rad je nastao objedinjavanjem i preradom dvaju referata podnijetih na međunarodnim konferencijama o stanovanju (Tallinn, Estonija, 1997. i Vilnius, Litva, 1999.).

Autorica polazi od analize socijalnog konteksta obilježenog tranzicijom na općoj razini, te specifičnosti hrvatskih promjena (u privatizaciji, urbanizaciji, ruralizaciji, rurbanizaciji), koje utječu na stambenu situaciju i politiku. Naglasak je na razlikama ili pak sličnostima (konvergenciji i divergenciji) u shvaćanju stanovanja u selu i gradu. Osnovna hipoteza jest da se velike razlike u poimanju/vrednovanju kvalitete življenja u selu i gradu općenito mijenjaju, a zbog toga i shvaćanja i prosudbe kakvoće življenja ustanovljeni ispitivanjem stanovnika seoskih i gradskih naselja, uvjetno rečeno, konvergiraju. Tome su dva međusobno uvjetovana razloga: urbanizacija sela (usložavanje socijalne strukture i djelatnosti, razvoja komunalne infrastrukture i općih društvenih promjena u rurusu) i ruralizacija grada (imigracija seoskog stanovništva u gradove sa svojim vrijednostima i načinom života, a bez prilagodbe).

Podaci, dobiveni mjerenjem kvalitete stanovanja pomoću niza objektivnih i subjektivnih indikatora na razini kuće/stana, susjedstva/kvarta i naselja, pokazuju da su razlike manje na nivou kuće/stana i njihove elementarne opreme, veće na razini susjedstva/kvarta, a najveće su na razini naselja. Razlike idu u korist grada a na štetu sela. Autorica posebice upozorava na značaj opremljenosti, te životni standard, faktičnu uporabnu vrijednost i simbolički značaj predmeta i objekata.

Zaključci nisu ružičasti: situacija u selima i općinskim centrima mnogo je gora (opasnost odumiranja malih naselja ili pak njihov civilizacijski usud), dok su u gradovima problemi

vezani uz lažni standard, ruralizaciju periferije gradova pa i centralnih dijelova, te uz slabo prostorno planiranje kao njihov korektiv.

O kakvoći življenja u selu autorica na hrvatskom jeziku objavljuje rad u *Sociologiji sela* broj 1-2/2000.

Ključne riječi: ruralno, urbano, kvaliteta življenja, kvaliteta stanovanja, društveni kontekst-tranzicija, odumiranje naselja, vitalna naselja, rurbanizacija.

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Une nouvelle compréhension de la qualité de l'habitat rural et de l'habitat urbain

Résumé

Dans son article l'auteur analyse les résultats de quelques recherches sociologiques: *La structure sociale et la qualité de la vie en période de transition* (CITADA et IDIZ, 1996), *Le milieu rural en période de transition : possibilités de développement des régions rurales* (IDIZ, 1996-1999) et de nombreuses recherches sur le terrain et au cours d'actions, de moindre envergure, dans lesquelles l'habitat avait un rôle important en tant que partie du concept de la qualité de la vie. L'article est le résultat de la réunion et du remaniement de deux rapports présentés à des conférences internationales sur l'habitat (Tallinn, Estonie, 1997 et Vilnius, Lituanie, 1999).

L'auteur part d'une analyse du contexte social marqué par la transition au niveau général et par les spécificités des changements en Croatie (dans la privatisation, l'urbanisation, la ruralisation, la rurbanisation), qui ont une influence sur la situation en matière d'habitat et sur la politique. L'accent porte sur les différences ou encore sur les analogies (convergence et divergence) de la compréhension de l'habitat en milieu rural et en ville. L'hypothèse fondamentale est que les grandes différences dans la compréhension/valorisation, en milieu rural et en ville, dans la qualité de la vie en général, changent et, en parlant conditionnellement, convergent en raison de l'urbanisation du milieu rural (formation de la structure sociale et des activités, du développement de l'infrastructure communale et des changements sociaux généraux) et en raison de la ruralisation de la ville (immigration de la population rurale avec ses valeurs et son mode de vie).

Les données obtenues en évaluant la qualité de l'habitat à l'aide de plusieurs indices objectifs et subjectifs au niveau de la maison/logement, du voisinage/quartier et de la localité, montrent que les différences sont moindres au niveau de la maison/logement et de leur équipement élémentaire, plus grandes au niveau du voisinage/quartier, et les plus grandes au niveau de la localité. Les différences vont en faveur de la ville et au détriment du milieu rural. L'auteur signale tout particulièrement l'importance de l'équipement, le niveau de vie, la valeur de l'usage de fait et l'importance symbolique des objets et des bâtiments.

Les conclusions ne sont pas optimistes. Elles indiquent une situation bien pire dans les villages et les centres communaux (danger de dépérissement de petites localités ou encore leur sort en matière de civilisation), alors que dans les villes les problèmes sont liés au faux standard, à la ruralisation de la périphérie des villes et même des parties centrales, et à la faible planification de l'espace en tant que leur correctif.

L'auteur publie son article sur la qualité de la vie (en Croate) dans le numéro 1-2/2000. de la revue *Sociologija sela* (*Sociologie rurale*).

Mots-clés: rural, urbain, qualité de la vie, qualité de l'habitat, contexte social, transition, dépérissement, localités vitales, rurbanisation.

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