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THE TRANSFORMATION OF HOUSING HABITS AND STANDARDS IN THE VILLAGE OF JALŠEVEC

Summary

Housing is a component part of the way of life and culture of every social community. It always forms an organic whole with the modes of production and consumption, with the level of technological development, social system and spiritual values of that particular community. In discussing housing, one may talk about the habits and standards of housing. Housing habits have to do with the totality of design of the living quarters (functions of buildings and their parts, constructional properties of buildings, interior design, etc.), while housing standard have to do with the behaviour of inhabitants and their values in the sphere of housing. Changes in housing habits and standards are most closely connected with changes in economic and social relations in a given community.

Jalševac is a village community, some 6 km. from the north-eastern rim of the city of Zagreb, situated on wine-growing southern slopes of Mount Medvednica. The history of the village can be traced back to the Middle Ages.

The present study covers housing development in Jalševac from 1862 (when the first land register and plan of the village was made) to 1977. Between 1862 and the end of the nineteenth century, natural economy prevailed in the village, with some traces of the feudal system still felt. The primary economic and social unit was the *zadruga* (an extended family group or clan). Cultural influences coming from outside the village were still rather limited. The village itself was of a scattered type, consisting of several hamlets on hills, separated from each other and distant from the main road. Each hamlet was in fact one extended family holding, and the names of these hamlets are therefore patronymic. The residential part of the hamlet consisted of the main housing building and several more single-room buildings in which married couples lived. In addition, there was a complex of farm buildings — for cattle, for fodder, for bread baking and brandy distilling, for wine making, for fruit drying, etc. Outside of the residential complex, in vineyards, there were wine cellars (or huts). A water mill served the whole village.

Most main residential buildings were one-storey houses built partly of stone and partly of wood. The ground floor served as storage space, while the first floor contained the living quarters. Most frequently it consisted of a kitchen plus one or two rooms. In the kitchen there was an open fire on which meals were prepared. The whole of the daily life routine took place in the room: eating, sleeping, family discussions, celebrations, births, daily hygiene of family members, etc. The modest housing and low hygienic standards resulted in high rates of infant and child mortality.

In the period between 1900 and the end of the Second World War, many important changes took place in the

village. Large family groupings (zadruga) disintegrated and farms became increasingly fragmented. Though farming remained the main type of activity, additional sources of income were sought — from occasional jobs in Zagreb and from the sale of farm produce on Zagreb's markets. The process of disintegration and social differentiation began at that time too. Upon leaving the large family collective (zadruga), each nuclear family tried to build a house of its own. That is why new buildings cropped up in the residential parts of hamlets, which led to greater housing density and to an enlargement of the residential area in each hamlet. The first houses began to be built along the main road. A local pub was opened and a grocery store. The actual organization of residential quarters and farm buildings did not change much, except that more buildings appeared but of a smaller size. Wood remained the chief building material. The different sizes of housing buildings reflected different wealth of their owners. For the most part, the buildings were still one-storey structures, but some two-storey houses were also built. The living quarters ranged between one and four rooms. Housing and farm buildings were often transferred from one location to another by simply taking the wooden walls apart and putting them together again on the new location. The traditional open-fire kitchens with black walls were in many cases turned into pantries, and cooking was done in one of the rooms. The main characteristics of housing organization of that period were strict functionalism, rational utilization of space, and specialization of the different parts of the interior.

Between 1946 and 1977 Jalševc lost the characteristics of a homogeneous farming community. For one third of the inhabitants agriculture shifted from a primary to a supplementary activity. Communication links with Zagreb are now good, which makes commuting possible for many people every day, thus making the influence of the global society more directly felt. The family size is considerably reduced (the average family had 3.1 members at the time of the 1971 census). The village is developing increasingly along the main road. The homogeneously indigenous population began to change also during that period: new people moved into the village, mainly non-farmers from different social strata. Still, the village remained exclusively a housing community without any distinct social centre. The changed social status of part of the population led also to a new organization of the courtyard surrounding the house. The open courtyard with a primarily economic function, which also used to serve as a place for neighbourly contacts, has now been fenced off, freed from farm buildings, and converted into an extended private area of the living quarters. Housing buildings are now constructed at a distinctly fast rate. They mark a complete departure from the building traditions of earlier times, both with respect to the materials used and to the structural and interior organization. Urban family housing buildings serve as models, and the previously harmonious blend between the buildings and the landscape is no longer there. There is a marked tendency towards large houses (for reasons of prestige), with the consequent failure to use space rationally and to organize it functionally. The art of housing has not progressed very

far. Despite the availability of several rooms, families still spend their lives mainly in kitchens, and modern furniture and appliances are not fully used. At the same time, some people in the village still live in old wooden houses with minimal improvements (electricity, furniture) and their housing standards are low.

The material collected at Jalševac has confirmed the author's thesis of the causal relationship between housing standards and socio-economic conditions. It has shown that social changes are necessarily reflected in housing. Future research will have to pay more attention to behaviour and values in housing, to questions of prestige and housing as a status symbol, to changing family patterns and housing in rural areas in comparison with urban areas, to the aesthetics of housing, and finally to our attitude to rural architecture as part of our historical heritage.

(Translated by Vladimir Ivir)