THE HOUSING MARKET, HOUSING ASPIRATIONS AND HOUSING NEEDS
IN A PERIOD OF CHANGES IN ROMANIA

THE ROMANIAN HOUSING MARKET

The economic and political system determines the structure of the housing market and the nature of the legislation dealing with housing. Romanian economic hypercentralization ended with the 1989 revolution. Economic concentration had a different effect in urban and rural areas.

There are four factors which influence the configuration of housing in Romania:

a) Material factors - the infrastructure of the society, e.g. transportation networks, location of production facilities, etc.;
b) Socio-demographic factors, such as the size and age composition of the family, family income and the like;
c) Local factors, e.g. legislation dealing directly and indirectly with housing;
d) Psycho-cultural factors that shape aspirations for housing and for the nature of housing.

Hypercentralization concerning dwelling construction was manifested in all housing-plans, economic projections and buildings, social and family life, distribution of dwellings and the property system. More specifically, hypercentralization was visible in:

1. the preparation of workers in the building trades, who were trained only in state schools;
2. the state monopoly in the market for building materials;
3. construction of urban housing using industrial methods of production by state enterprises;
4. construction of collective housing buildings, especially in towns and cities;
5. prohibition, in the last years, of private housing, especially in cities;
6. control over the distribution of housing by the state-owned places of work;
7. the construction of housing, being based on five-year and one-year plans.

The above points are more relevant to urban housing production and distribution than to rural areas. In rural areas hypercentralization resulted in increasing prohibition against building individual dwelling units. One result of the state systematization of Romanian villages is visible in newly developed communal housing around Bucharest, for example, in Otopeni. Around Bucharest 10,000 new apartment units were constructed, yet at present many, if not most, of these buildings are only partially occupied. People who were moved into these flats came from single family dwelling units. The reorganization of rural housing was part of more general social experimentation with implications for agricultural ecosystems, rural families and households.

The unique state market for building imposed itself gradually in different ways in villages, towns and cities. Legal measures restricted the private markets in housing. In towns, private markets eventually shrank. Statistical data presented below are relevant for showing these changes. Between 1980 and 1990 the stock of buildings had the forms of ownership shown in Table 1.
Table 1. Distribution of Tenure in the Housing Stock, percentages, 1980-1990.

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>-state and co-operative property</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>32.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>-private property</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>70.1</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>67.4</td>
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Between 1951 and 1988 the percentage of dwellings built for the state stock and co-operatives increased systematically and the percentage of private dwellings decreased in the same way. The political changes that began in 1989 resulted in an increase in the levels of private dwellings. The number of private dwellings in 1990 was double that of 1988 and this situation continues at present.

A relevant indicator for the quality of dwellings is the classification of housing units by the number of habitable rooms (see Table 2).

Table 2. Classification of Dwellings by number of habitable rooms, percentages, 1986-90.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-with one room</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-with two rooms</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-with three rooms and more</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>51.4</td>
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Between 1986 and 1990, the percentage of dwellings with one room and with three or more rooms increased. At the same time the percentage of two-room dwellings decreased. Small dwellings with one or two rooms built privately account for less than 20% of the total number of private dwellings. Dwellings with one or two rooms built by the state, co-operative and local organizations represent 53% of non-private dwellings.

Statistical data show that in urban areas, between 1986 and 1990, the percentage of dwellings built by the state and co-operative organizations increased, while private dwelling construction decreased. In rural areas the largest number of buildings constructed by the state and co-operative occurred in 1987. After that year, the number began to decrease. The percentage of privately built dwellings decreased between 1986 and 1988 and then it began to increase between 1989 and 1990.
The type of dwellings is another relevant indicator of housing quality. In urban areas, over 66% of the housing stock are high-rise apartment buildings. For rural areas, single-family dwelling units with one floor, predominate. They make up 86% of the rural housing stock. The structure of the building stock is shown in Table 3 for the years 1977-1991.

Table 3. Dwelling units in the Housing Stock, percentages, 1977, 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of / building (%)</th>
<th>1977 census</th>
<th>1991 estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-individual dwellings</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-dwellings in buildings with 5 floors</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-dwellings in buildings with more than 5 floors</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>13.7</td>
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</table>

The increase in the percentage of high-rise dwellings is typical for the urban areas in Romania. Between 1977 and 1991, more than 96% of the collective dwellings were built in urban areas. The structural distribution of dwelling types is as follows:

1. in Bucharest, Dobrogea and Transylvania detached, single-storey houses are a small percentage of the total housing stock;
2. in Muntenia and Banat detached, single-storey houses are more common than in other regions;
3. in Transylvania, Crișana, Maramureș and Bucharest, detached houses with 2-3 floors are twice as common as in the other regions.

The undeclared goal of housing policy before 1989 was to have control over population movement within Romania. There also was the objective of strengthening the ties of the population to state structures. Finally, another goal was to hyper-valorize the role of communist law and ideology.

ASPIRATIONS AND HOUSING NEEDS

We understand by "aspirations" the conscious desires activated by images oriented toward certain objectives or goal-states. The achievement of the objectives determines the appearance of needs-obligations. Continually satisfying needs-obligations leads to needs-aspirations. In Parson’s terms, this is a "consumatory goal gratification" process. The study of such aspirations can prefigure, in general, the dwelling of the future, being relevant in a certain measure for comprehending latent housing needs in the general, and in specific populations.

A recent housing survey conducted by the Center for Urban and Regional Sociology, Bucharest, has given a number of important indications regarding the distribution of housing aspirations in the population, and the nature of these aspirations.
Most of the options for larger dwellings, i.e. 4 rooms or more, were in rural areas. In urban areas the choices are divided equally between dwellings with 3 or 4 rooms. Correlating the real situation with housing needs, the results were:

1. Persons who live in one-room dwellings generally want dwellings with three rooms;
2. Persons who live in two or three rooms want three or four rooms;
3. Persons who live in dwellings with four or more rooms want to retain dwellings of this size;

Approximately 12% of the investigated persons in the study claimed that they want to move from their building to another one. The structure of housing demand for different types of buildings was as follows:

1. House with yard: 65.9% overall and 53.5% in urban areas and 80.1% in rural areas;
2. Villas: 22.4% overall and 27.8% in urban and 16.2% in rural;
3. Medium-rise apartment buildings (no more than 5 floors): 10.3% overall and 16.4% in urban areas and 3.4% in rural;
4. High-rise apartment buildings (6 or more floors): 1.4% overall and 2.3% in urban and 0.3% in rural.

The placement of the dwelling in a particular locality is one indicator of the quality of the ambiance of life. Options concerning dwelling placement have the following distribution:

1. Central place: 39.6% overall and 36.4% in urban areas and 43.1% in rural;
2. The border of the locality: 27.3% overall and 31.7% in urban and 28.2% in rural;
3. Isolated: 7.7% overall and 8.9% in urban and 6.3% in rural areas;
4. Placement not important: 25.4% overall and 23% in urban and 28.2% in rural.

The form of tenancy is another indicator of housing quality. The survey also showed that approximately 97% of the interviewed persons wanted to own a dwelling. Housing needs can be estimated on the basis of three indicators: number of young families formed in one year, the tendency amongst young people to move out of their parents household, and the nature of housing used by the older people. We might also add the increased demand for housing resulting from divorces and separation of married couples. Approximately 75% of the interviewed persons opted for the separation of a young family from the extended family. 33% appreciated that older people should live alone in their own household or in a nursing-home. The number of marriages between 1970 and 1990 was as follows: 145,531 in 1970, 182,671 in 1980, 161,094 in 1985, 177,943 in 1989 and 192,652 in 1990.

These three factors, plus the growing divorce rate, are essential in shaping the demand for housing in Romania. Another factor in shaping housing demands, which seems rather less important at present, is spatial mobility. Spatial mobility creates the problem of imbalances in the supply and demand for housing in different regions and sub-regions of the country. If, or almost certainly, when migration streams are focused on many localities they will increase the housing demand.

The housing market in Romania is deeply influenced by infrastructure and superstructure in transition. Forthcoming legislation concerning the property of the land and dwellings and the financial sources will in future have a marked influence on the new housing construction market.

References