**Pre-Commodification in the Hungarian Housing System Before State-Socialism: New Perspectives for Housing Analysis**

**Keywords**: housing system, rural housing, pre-commodification, Central and Eastern Europe, East European Housing Model

There is significant uncertainty regarding the conceptualisation of Central and Eastern European (CEE) housing in contemporary housing theory. Variegated theoretical literature on the region[[1]](#footnote-1) seems to agree in one point: the unquestionable start of the region’s housing system formation is the establishment of the state-socialist system as put forward by Hegedüs and Tosics in their oft-quoted ’East European Housing Model’ concept[[2]](#footnote-2).

Following authors in (Western) comparative housing theory[[3]](#footnote-3), current paper argues that pre-WWII developments of housing systems worldwide had a significant impact on their later development, and four decades of post-war state-socialist development does not make CEE an exception. Integrating pre-state-socialist developments in housing analysis can help us more precisely define the region’s contemporary housing system(s) and understand its (their) change amidst the increasing pressure of global forces.

The paper, drawing evidence from the Hungarian housing system’s pre-Second World War development, is based on the premise that capitalist transformation of semi-peripheral Hungary took place with a delay and first national housing policies were introduced in a semi-feudal context. In contrast with Western Europe where decommodification of urban housing was central to the development of the housing system, in Hungary, housing policy served to delay industrialisation and urbanisation and preserve the rural and agricultural character of the country by strengthening pre-commodification of housing and labour: supporting landless agricultural workers in acquiring owner-occupied housing with allotment gardens in rural areas.

The housing system emerging in pre-Second World War Hungary is essentially different from Western European (both corporatist and liberal) housing systems in that it is based on traditional conservative ideology aiming to delay capitalist transformation rather than, as pursued in corporatist countries, facilitate it in line with pre-capitalist traditions. In Hungary, housing policies aiming for the decommodification of urban housing, characteristic of early Western European housing systems, were less supported by the central government, were smaller in scope and were largely financed by municipalities. Nevertheless, state support for rural housing construction not only remained significant throughout the era, but continued to impact housing policies during state-socialism and even today.

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