

NEW FORMS OF RENTAL DWELLING IN CONTEMPORARY POLAND

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ABSRTACT

Aim. The subject of the article are types of rental dwelling in contemporary Poland. The aim of this paper is to present the forms of contemporary living in terms of age groups, way of study or work and financing possibilities of Poles compared to other countries in the world.

Methods. The authors of the article present selected new forms of rental dwelling in Poland in context of changes after the collapse of communist system in 1989. The article discusses the present situation of Polish real estate market basing on European statistics. It indicates the problem of limited availability of housing and presents solutions implemented by the government and the private sector market.

Results and conclusion. Poland is one of the European countries with the highest rate of people living in overcrowded apartments or houses. The solutions introduced by the state in order to increase the availability of housing and allowing the alternative to buying a flat, encounter difficulties with spatial planning regulations. In the absence of sufficient support of the government private sector market see its chance for profit in constructing and renting apartments.

Cognitive value. The article describes the phenomenon of a growing private rental, that could be a shift in dwelling characteristic of Poles and influence the housing market. It presents new forms of developments, showing the background of their creation.

Key words: architecture, co-living, co-housing, shared dwelling, rental dwelling



INTRODUCTION

After 1945, in post-war Poland, the state was responsible for the construction of new apartments and ensuring their availability. Therefore, large-scale housing projects, complex in terms of urban planning, were being designed. The construction was often based on modern technologies such as prefabrication, used on a large scale in the countries of the Eastern Bloc, which significantly shortened construction time compared to traditional technologies. Due to these operations, it was possible to largely ensure the availability of apartments at the time (Wierzbicki & Sieczkowski, 2013). An example of such projects are housing estates in Warsaw's Ursynów, Łódź's Retkinia designed and built in the 70s in concrete prefabricated technology.

After 1989, at the time when the communist system collapsed, there were significant changes in the housing market in Poland. Housing policy, which promoted the communal stock, was aimed at converting it into private property. Private owners were able to purchase the premises. Since then, the apartment has become a product subject to market rules (Parfianowicz, 2021), the availability of which has been limited and depends on the financial capabilities of the buyers. The changes also affected the structure and size of newly built apartments. The limitation of housing space reflects the financial resources of potential owners and their credit worthiness. According to the National Bank of Poland, the average salary is 3,432 zł and the price per square meter of an apartment varies from 5,000 to even 19,500 zł depending on the location (numbeo.com, 2021), resulting in the Polish salaries not keeping up with the rising prices of flats, making them difficult by purchase by everyone.

HOUSING MARKET IN POLAND

In the last 30 years there has been a lack of a clearly defined and consistent housing policy, which has resulted in a tendency to limit the non-owned housing stock. It was caused by two mechanisms: ownership transformations and limited public support for new construction (Żołądowski, Ołdak, & Szarfenberg, 2015).

According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland, in 2019 the housing stock consisted of approx. 14.8 million apartments (GUS, 2019). About 80% of them belonged to private owners and only 16% of all were rented. According to data published by Eurostat, in 2018, 15.8% of flats were rented – 11.8% supported by the government and 4.2% on the market rules.

Eurostat data from 2009 shows that almost 48% of the population in Poland lives in apartments. The same data also shows that 49% of Poles lived in overcrowded¹

1 "A person is considered as living in an overcrowded dwelling if the household does not have at its disposal a minimum number of rooms equal to: – one room for the household; – one room per couple in the household; – one room for each single person aged 18 or more; – one room per pair of single people of the same gender between 12 and 17 years of age; – one room for each single person between 12 and 17 years of age and not included in the previous category; – one room per pair of children under 12 years of age" (Eurostat, 2011).

apartments or houses (Eurostat, 2011). The 2020 report indicates that Poland ranks 6th in terms of owning an apartment (followed by Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Lithuania and Croatia with the largest number of owner-occupied dwellings), (Eurostat, 2020). However, the report from the same year shows that there are only 1.1 rooms per person. Romania is the last country in the ranking with the same result. In turn, in terms of the number of people living in the households, only Slovakia outstrips Poland (Poland 2.8 people, Slovakia 2.9).

Overcrowded apartments, according to European polls, combined with the lack of access to new housing resources, arising from their slow growth as well as the price dictatorship of developers, resulted in a significant reduction in the availability of apartments (Parfianowicz 2021). This situation, combined with insufficient urban planning, hard-to-reach land and lack of supported rental programs results in a pathological situation on the housing market, where many cannot afford to buy an apartment. Recently, the government intended to solve this problem with programmes such as “Mieszkanie dla Młodych” or “Mieszkanie Plus.” Housing estates were to be created on land owned by the state treasury or local governments. The programme is based on a supported tenancy scheme, where the rent for the apartment is partially paid by the state according to the programme “Mieszkanie na start” (BGK, 2021). It should be emphasised that some of the designs chosen for implementation were selected in the architectural competition procedure (competitions in Warsaw, Katowice, Krakow and many others). The “Mieszkanie Plus” programme also promotes prefabrication technology, which would significantly shorten the construction time of new buildings and reduce construction costs (Giecwicz, 2017). However, the programmes introduced by the government did not significantly improve the availability of apartments. The limitation turned out to be the actual availability of land on which new buildings could be built. Another factor were planning constraints: the lack of local zoning plans or inability to issue a decision on development conditions that would allow construction to begin on state-owned land. Due to the limited possibilities and actions of the government, Poland is still waiting for a consistently implemented policy that would make housing more accessible and significantly improve the availability of apartments.

NEW FORMS OF SHARED DWELLING

Housing market is also influenced by cultural changes. The increasing spatial mobility of people, the evolution of the labour market, changes in attitudes and models of family life increase the need for access to the rented housing market (Muzioł-Węclawowicz, 2019).

In response to these changes, bottom-up co-living and co-housing initiatives are emerging, taking various forms. The prefix *co-* in English indicates the performance of a work or task together, originally derived from Latin means „together,” „with” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English,

2021). New forms of shared dwelling take various forms depending on the target group, location or even the form of work and are constantly being modified and improved in order to meet the needs of tenants in the best possible way.

Co-housing is a term illustrating life in a community, while maintaining a balance between what is private and what is common, referring to utility and recreational spaces, but also referring to mutual neighborhood relations (Meltzer, 2005). Co-housing initiatives takes various forms. In some of them future residents – members of the community – have an impact on shaping the space, shared rooms and participate in the design of the estate. In other communities residents contribute to the costs of building a new housing estate or even help to create it (Meltzer 2005). There are encountered housing estates in the traditionally understood housing development, as well as estates of single-family houses. In both cases, occur common rooms which residents can use and strengthen neighbourhood ties. There are playrooms, laundries, shared kitchens, dining rooms and gardens, including cultivated ones. However, with the whole assumption of sharing, residents have their own private space – an apartment or a house (Idem, 2007). Crucial examples of such estates are the Danish estates of Saettedammen and Skraplanet, initiated in the 1970s by the architects Jan Gudmand-Hoyer and Bodil Graae, thanks to which the co-housing initiative in general was created (Sargisson, 2012). It later moved to other countries and continents, taking on its individual forms adapting to the time of its establishing and to its residents.



Fig. 1. Skraplanet Estate, Denmark.

Source: www.microubania.com

Another type of shared dwelling is co-living, which mainly takes the form of sharing multi-room flats to reduce rental costs and in contrast to co-housing is limited in time (Osborne, 2018). Co-living way of dwelling characterises separated private bedroom in some cases with a bathroom, while the remaining space of the apartment is shared: kitchens, dining rooms and bathrooms. The shared co-living space often includes also co-working rooms, gyms and green spaces in the building. The stock of this type of premises is addressed to young people, students, people entering the labour market who cannot afford to rent a premises on their own yet and decide to share same life experiences. Co-living apartments are fully furnished and often provide a cleaning service (e.g Colivia in Poland).

In other countries people sharing co-living apartments often also share same beliefs, values, interests, ways of work or fields of study (Provan, 2014), e.g. Nest in Copenhagen. Whole co-living buildings divided into studios are also appearing on the world market, providing full housing facilities, complemented by extensive common spaces of various nature (Ollie in New York, The Collective in London). The integration and creating bonds is supported by common kitchens, living rooms, recreational area and also events organised specially for a specific groups.

Another distinctive form of premises rented to young people are student houses. It should also be mentioned that the stock of premises for students (dormitories) is limited and has slightly improved since 1989 today. Poland, with the number of students around 900,000, provides only 71,200 beds in public students houses (GUS, 2019).

In the absence of support of the state on the subject, private construction companies saw their chance for profit in renting flats and premises for students. Hence, from around 2015, so with the first designs and constructions, the Private Rented Sector (PRS) and Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) started to develop in Poland. These sectors specialise in providing and renting student facilities, yet not only for students.



Fig. 2. The winning design of Projekt Praga architecture office for Warsaw University.

Source: www.projektpraga.pl

ThinkCo, a think tank concerning real estate market analyses, indicate that by 2025 the number of beds in private dormitories will have increased from a few to several thousand (ThinkCo, 2020). It is also worth mentioning that public universities noticed the lack of sufficient dormitories. Therefore, in the past few years were organised architectural competitions for new student houses for Warsaw University (Warsaw University, 2018) and University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznań (University of Adam Mickiewicz, 2019).

DWELLING FOR RENT VS PLANNING REGULATIONS

According to the analysis of the tenants who are shaping the contemporary market of apartments for rent in Poland, the offer is addressed to specific several social groups:

- students;
- people entering the labour market, freelancers;
- families with or without children (REAS, 2018).

It influences the shape, size and even the location of the housing for rent. Apartments for the first two groups are much smaller in square meters. They characterise with extensive common spaces, enabling co-working, study and entertaining together. On the other hand, housing intended for families are larger and are a reflection of classic residential buildings. Such an apartment consists of bedrooms, a separate living room, kitchen and bathrooms, the number of which depends on the area and assumed size of the family. Apartments addressed to families also have more parking spaces, storage rooms, loggias or balconies.

A characteristic feature of buildings for long-term rental is that they are not reflected in Polish planning regulations (Marzyński, 2020). Student houses usually planned as linked to universities, are very rarely provided in local spatial development plans. Hence, in practice, the facilities of private student houses are often implemented as hotel facilities. The same is the case with buildings with apartments for rent. It would seem that the best solution is to implement these types of housing in areas intended for multifamily housing development. However, these locations are usually the most difficult to obtain due to its general attractiveness. Therefore, this type of architecture is often performed as hotel facility, with all technical and legislative consequences.

The planning issue as well as technical and construction regulations, which do not separately define the forms of long-term lease (ISAP, 2002) result that implemented facilities have diverse approaches to the issue of insulation of the premises, the distance of parking spaces from windows or evacuation requirements.

One of the examples of housing for rent from the PRS sector is the building at Suwak street in Warsaw built by the R4R platform, designed by 22Architekci. The building was created in the form of a hotel facility. It offers 227 apartments for rent: one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments (Resi 4 Rent). Due to its location, the main group of clients to which the rental is addressed, are the employ-

ees of the corporation of the neighbouring office buildings. Therefore, there are no co-working or recreational spaces on the ground floors. These functions are intended to be implemented in the neighborhood facilities. The only common function are laundries and a common green space on the ground floor.

Foxtrot Warsaw – Student Depot, designed by 22Architekci, is a private student house that neighbours the previously mentioned building with apartments for rent. It is equally implemented as a hotel facility. There are 486 rooms for rent in the building. The facility provides mainly single units and 24 double rooms. There are common spaces for recreation and learning on the ground floor (Student Depot Warsaw). However their sizes are modest in the scale of the facility. Apart from living units, there are shared laundry rooms on the floors. There is also a space for recreation in the inner, semi-open courtyard.



Fig. 3. The main lobby of Foxtrot Warsaw

Source: www.22architekci.pl

Another example of private student dormitory is BaseCamp in Łódź at ul. Rembielińskiego, designed by Grupa5 Architekci. The building was designed as a service facility intended for a student house. It has single and double living units. Its characteristic feature is a large common space for recreation on the ground floor. On the floors, adjacent to the rooms, there are shared kitchens, which favour integration. In addition, the building has a gym on the ground floor, which is accessible to the public. The inner courtyard with small architecture and greenery allows to spend time outside (Base Camp). However only some part of the offered rooms is being rented comparing to other Base Camp student dormitory located in the city center with the same sort of facilities (Base Camp).



Fig. 4. The main lobby of BaseCamp Łódź

Source: www.grupa5.com.pl

Selected examples show the variety of forms of institutional rental, which as a model will certainly gain importance in Poland. However, in the context of the availability of housing the decisive factor in the success of a given investment, still remains the price. As a part of the business model of the investment, the price influences the size of housing units, the size of common spaces or other additional functions in the facility. Currently, houses offering a higher standard can count on tenants only in larger urban centers. Therefore, buildings designed in Poland are mostly incomparable to their Western ancestors in terms of furnishing quality, common space variety and organisation of additional events.

It seems that the assessment of each case should be approached individually due to the urban context such as neighboring buildings, access to public transport, facilities and due to the size of housing unit itself. It should be remembered that often local spatial development plans and regulations were created in different social and economic realities and did not provide commercial long-term rental.

CONCLUSIONS

Summing up, Poland is one of the European countries with one of the lowest shares of apartments in the entire housing market, so any phenomenon that increases this share allows an alternative to buying a flat or living in an overcrowded apartment.

In addition, institutional rental is favored by the transparency of concluded contracts, balancing the interests of tenants and landlords. It should be also remembered that a feature of this type of rental is its commercial nature, which makes this offer not available to everyone. Institutional lease will therefore not solve the housing problems of Poles. A conscious and consistent housing policy pursued by the state, which is lacking today, might be one of the solutions.

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