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(RE)CREATING PUBLIC OPEN SPACES IN MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING ESTATES FROM THE SOCIALIST ERA: A SELECTED OVERVIEW FROM FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLICS

Abstract:

Inherited multi-family housing estates from the socialist period remain a major residential layer in the former Yugoslav republics, while their public open spaces (POS) often decline under post-socialist governance and market pressures. This paper provides a selective overview of three good-practice pathways for (re)creating POS: participatory upgrading in Savsko naselje (Ljubljana), municipal community gardening through City Gardens (Zagreb), and citizen participation in statutory urban planning procedures in Block 70a (New Belgrade). Based on a qualitative, document-based analysis, the paper identifies transferable mechanisms-co-production, programmatic activation, and reactive citizen engagement within planning processes-that support everyday use and long-term spatial quality.

Keywords: public open space; multi-family housing estates; former Yugoslav republics

(РЕ)КРЕИРАЊЕ ЈАВНИХ ОТВОРЕНИХ ПРОСТОРА У ВИШЕПОРОДИЧНИМ СТАМБЕНИМ НАСЕЉИМА ИЗ СОЦИЈАЛИСТИЧКОГ ПЕРИОДА: ОДАБРАНИ ПРЕГЛЕД ИЗ БИВШИХ ЈУГОСЛОВЕНСКИХ РЕПУБЛИКА

Сажетак:

Наслеђена вишепородична стамбена насеља из социјалистичког периода представљају значајан слој стамбеног фонда у бившим југословенским републикама, док њихови јавни отворени простори (ЈОП) често деградирају услед постсоцијалистичких промена управљања и тржишних притисака. Рад даје селективни преглед три путање (ре)креирања ЈОП: партиципативно унапређење у Савском насељу (Љубљана), институционализацију урбаног баштованства кроз програм City Gardens (Загреб) и учешће грађана у оквиру законских урбанистичких планских процедура у блоку 70а (Нови Београд). На основу квалитативне анализе докумената, издвајају се преносиви механизми - ко-продукција, програмска активација и реактивно грађанско ангажовање у планским процесима - који подржавају свакодневну употребу и дугорочни просторни квалитет.

Кључне речи: јавни отворени простори; вишепородична стамбена насеља; бивше југословенске републике

1. INTRODUCTION

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), commonly referred to as Yugoslavia, was established after World War II as a federal state composed of six constituent republics in Central and Southeast Europe. The breakup of Yugoslavia occurred in the early 1990s as a consequence of political instability and a series of armed conflicts known as the Yugoslav Wars, which lasted from 1991 to 2001 and resulted in the formation of six independent states: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia.

After the Second World War, all Yugoslav republics faced similar structural challenges, including the demolition and damage of housing stock due to war destruction, rapid industrialisation and dynamic urbanisation manifested through a sudden influx of population from rural to urban areas, and a constant increase in housing demand accompanied by a significant housing deficit. In response to these conditions, the construction of residential neighbourhoods in the form of collective, socially owned housing financed by the state budget became a key strategy of housing policy. These neighbourhoods, predominantly constructed between the 1960s and 1980s, still represent one of the most widespread forms of urban housing across the former Yugoslav republics [1].

Multi-family housing estates (MFHEs) were planned mainly in major urban centres and newly developed industrial cities, often located at the urban periphery. They were conceived as comprehensive neighbourhood units, intended to provide decent living conditions regardless of residents' financial status, following modernist planning principles, the ideas of Le Corbusier and the doctrines of CIAM. These estates were characterised by an almost uniform architectural style, open block structures, generous public open spaces (POS), and the integration of public and communal facilities within greenfield developments.

The collapse of Yugoslavia and the transition from a socialist planned economy to a market-oriented system led to profound political, economic and institutional changes across all former republics. The withdrawal of the state from housing provision, mass privatisation of socially owned housing and the dominance of private investors significantly altered both housing production and the treatment of POS within inherited housing estates. As a result, many MFHEs experienced neglect, physical deterioration and a gradual loss of social functions, particularly within their POS [2].

Despite these challenges, MFHEs from the socialist period continue to accommodate a large share of the urban population and represent a significant spatial and social resource. However, none of the former Yugoslav republics has adopted a comprehensive strategy for the regeneration of large housing estates, and interventions remain largely partial, focusing mainly on building maintenance and limited upgrading of POS. This context frames the need to explore concrete examples where POS within inherited housing estates have been successfully improved or reactivated.

Rather than proposing a comprehensive regeneration strategy for large housing estates, this paper addresses how POS within inherited MFHEs are (re)created and safeguarded under post-socialist conditions. The focus is on identifying transferable mechanisms-forms of citizen participation, governance arrangements and planning processes-that enable incremental improvement and long-term everyday use of public open spaces.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on a qualitative, document-based research approach, applying methods of description, analysis and comparative case review in order to examine different approaches to the (re)creation of POS within inherited MFHEs from the socialist period. The research relies on the analysis of strategic, planning and research documents, as well as published reports and studies addressing post-socialist urban development.

The empirical part of the paper is structured around a **selection of three case studies** from different former Yugoslav republics, each illustrating distinct yet complementary mechanisms for improving and safeguarding POS. The analysed cases include:

- Savsko naselje in Ljubljana (Slovenia), examined as an example of long-term, participatory and incremental POS regeneration based on co-production between residents, professionals and institutions;
- the City Gardens programme in Zagreb (Croatia), representing the institutionalisation of community-based use and management of POS through municipal support for urban gardening; and

- the Detailed Regulation Plan for Block 70a in New Belgrade (Serbia), analysed as an example of reactive citizen participation within formal urban planning procedures, aimed at protecting existing public and green spaces.

The analysis does not seek to provide a comprehensive evaluation of all inherited housing estates in post-socialist contexts, but rather to identify transferable principles and mechanisms related to participatory practices, forms of citizen engagement and institutional frameworks that support the (re)creation of POS. Methodological limitations stem from reliance on secondary sources and documented practices; therefore, the paper does not assess long-term social or environmental impacts through primary field research, but instead offers a structured overview of selected examples that may inform future research and planning approaches in similar contexts.

This framework allows for a comparative understanding of transferable mechanisms that can inform future participatory and context-sensitive interventions in inherited MFHEs.

3. HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE POST-SOCIALIST PERIOD: SETTING THE CONTEXT

MFHEs constructed during the socialist period represent one of the most important and widespread residential typologies in the constituent republics of Yugoslavia. Their emergence was closely linked to post-war reconstruction, rapid industrialisation, and accelerated urbanisation, which resulted in a sudden influx of population into urban centres and an urgent need for affordable housing solutions [2,3,4]. In this context, the construction of MFHEs was promoted as a key instrument of socialist housing policy, aimed at ensuring basic housing standards and social equality for the working population.

From the late 1950s onwards, and particularly during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, multi-family housing became the dominant housing type in urban areas across Yugoslavia. Although housing construction was largely supported by public funding, different financing mechanisms also existed, particularly after the mid-1950s MFHEs were developed primarily in larger cities and newly established industrial centres, often on previously undeveloped land at the urban periphery, where large-scale residential neighbourhoods could be constructed in a relatively short period of time [2,4]. These estates were planned as comprehensive residential environments, integrating housing with POS, green areas, and basic social infrastructure.

Urban and architectural concepts applied in MFHEs were strongly influenced by modernist planning principles, particularly those promoted by CIAM and the ideas of Le Corbusier. As a result, MFHEs were characterised by open block structures, functional zoning, separation of traffic and residential areas, and generous POS embedded within the neighbourhood fabric. POS were conceived as essential components of everyday life, enabling recreation, social interaction, and collective activities, and contributing to the formation of neighbourhood identity [4],[5].

The political, economic, and institutional transformations triggered by the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s fundamentally altered the framework within which MFHEs operate. The transition from a socialist to a market-oriented system was accompanied by the withdrawal of the state from housing provision, mass privatisation of socially owned housing, and the growing dominance of private investors in urban development [4], [6], [7], [8], [9]. These processes significantly affected not only housing production but also the governance, maintenance, and transformation of POS within inherited MFHEs.

Although the post-socialist transition followed similar general patterns across the former Yugoslav republics, its consequences varied depending on national contexts, levels of economic development, and the impact of armed conflicts. In several countries, war-related destruction, displacement, and post-war reconstruction priorities further delayed the development of coherent housing and urban regeneration policies. As a result, MFHEs increasingly faced physical ageing of the housing stock, degradation of POS, insufficient maintenance systems, and growing pressure for densification and infill development [2], [6], [7], [10], [11].

In this post-socialist context, POS within MFHEs have become particularly vulnerable. Originally planned as shared neighbourhood resources, these spaces are frequently perceived as underused or vacant land, making them attractive targets for new construction, traffic infrastructure, or parking areas. At the same time, institutional mechanisms for their protection and regeneration remain limited, and citizen participation in planning processes is often confined to formal and consultative procedures [5], [6].

Despite these challenges, MFHEs continue to accommodate a large share of the urban population and remain a significant spatial and social resource. Residents often express strong attachment to their neighbourhoods and POS, which continue to play a key role in social interaction, recreation,

and the construction of collective identity [2], [7], [12]. This duality-between spatial degradation and social attachment-highlights the importance of examining different approaches to the (re)creation and protection of POS within inherited MFHEs.

Against this background, the following subsections provide a closer look at the post-socialist trajectories of MFHEs in Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia, highlighting national-specific transformations, current tendencies, and future challenges in the governance and use of POS.

3.1. SLOVENIA

In Slovenia, the transition from a planned to a market economy occurred relatively smoothly compared to other republics, supported by greater institutional stability and economic resources [13]. Nevertheless, post-socialist transformation presented significant challenges in political, social, and economic spheres, including housing provision and urban development.

The deregulation of state housing provision and the mass privatisation of public housing stock resulted in a dominant share of private ownership, particularly within MFHEs. While new housing policies promoted rational land use and diversification of housing types [5], **comprehensive regeneration of socialist-era large housing estates has not been systematically implemented due to the absence of a national renewal strategy**. Consequently, many Slovenian housing estates face gradual physical deterioration, inadequate maintenance systems, parking shortages, and degradation of POS. These conditions have negatively affected everyday use of POS and weakened social interaction and neighbourhood identity, despite the original spatial potential of open block structures and generous green spaces.

3.2. CROATIA

In Croatia, the post-socialist transformation of housing and urban development was strongly shaped by the war period (1991–1995), which resulted in the destruction of a significant part of the housing stock and stagnation of housing construction throughout the 1990s. Post-war housing programmes primarily focused on providing accommodation for war victims, while the broader population was left to the free housing market.

The transition from a socialist to a market-based housing system led to the withdrawal of the state from housing provision and the dominance of private investment, redefining housing from a social right to an economic asset [14]. In urban terms, this resulted in increased development pressure, frequent changes to planning documents, and conflicts between public and private interests, particularly in large cities such as Zagreb.

These processes had a direct impact on inherited housing estates, often leading to uncontrolled densification, reduction of POS, and weakening of long-term spatial planning capacities. As a result, POS in socialist-era estates frequently remain under-maintained and exposed to competing uses, despite their importance for everyday social life and neighbourhood cohesion.

3.3. SERBIA

In Serbia, post-socialist transformation has been characterised by strong continuity of centralised, top-down planning practices inherited from the socialist period, combined with market-driven development pressures and limited institutional reform [15], [16]. Privatization, economic constraints, and fragmented urban governance have contributed to neglect, informal use, and functional degradation of POS within MFHEs [4,16].

The current planning framework in Serbia has limited capacity to accommodate more inclusive and participatory concepts of POS. Institutional resistance to change, rigid planning standards, and insufficient mechanisms for citizen engagement have constrained the implementation of social and cultural solutions in urban practice [17]. Consequently, POS in inherited housing estates are often prioritised for functional uses such as parking, rather than being adapted to evolving social needs.

Despite these constraints, planning and research documents emphasise that reclaiming POS in MFHEs represents a critical opportunity to improve quality of life, promote social inclusion, and strengthen community cohesion. Addressing systemic barriers-such as weak institutional frameworks, limited citizen participation, and insufficient safety measures - requires integrated approaches that combine policy reform, participatory planning, and context-sensitive design solutions.

4. SELECTED GOOD-PRACTICE EXAMPLES OF PUBLIC OPEN SPACE (RE)CREATION

The previously outlined post-socialist housing and urban development trajectories in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia reveal a shared legacy of large housing estates shaped by socialist planning principles, but also distinct national pathways of transition, governance capacity and institutional change. Despite common challenges—such as privatisation, fragmented management and deterioration of POS—these differences have produced **varied responses** to the regeneration of POS in inherited MFHEs.

Against this background, the following section presents **three selected good-practice examples** from Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade. The cases are chosen to **reflect different yet complementary approaches** to the (re)creation of POS under post-socialist conditions: participatory and incremental neighbourhood renewal (Ljubljana), institutionalisation of community-based use of POS (Zagreb), and reactive citizen participation within statutory urban planning procedures (Belgrade). Together, these examples illustrate how context-specific social, institutional and spatial mechanisms can contribute to improving everyday use, social cohesion and environmental quality of POS in inherited housing estates.

4.1. LJUBLJANA (SLOVENIA): SAVSKO NASELJE-INTEGRATED RENEWAL OF POS THROUGH LONG-TERM PARTICIPATORY CO-PRODUCTION

Savsko naselje in Ljubljana is the oldest post-second-world-war residential working-class settlement [18] and represents one of the most illustrative examples of participatory and incremental regeneration of POS within an inherited MFHE from the socialist period. Originally planned according to modernist principles, the neighbourhood is characterised by open block structures, generous green areas and a clear separation of pedestrian and vehicular movement. However, over time, POS within Savsko naselje were exposed to gradual physical degradation, functional ambiguity and competing everyday uses, particularly related to parking and maintenance issues.

The regeneration process in Savsko naselje is distinguished by the development of a bottom-up, community-driven vision for POS, initiated through collaboration between residents, spatial-planning experts and students of architecture. A dedicated working group for POS was established, enabling a structured participatory process that resulted in a shared “Vision for Public Open Spaces” [19]. This vision served as a strategic framework for translating residents’ needs and priorities into feasible spatial and programmatic interventions.

What makes Savsko naselje a relevant good-practice example is the implementation of a series of small-scale, yet tangible projects, rather than reliance on comprehensive redevelopment. Interventions included the revitalisation of inner courtyards, creation of an urban orchard combined with the renovation of children’s playgrounds, establishment of informal gathering spaces, and enhancement of pedestrian paths and recreational areas. These small-scale interventions, implemented between 2014 and 2017, provided immediate spatial improvements while the long-term vision was being developed (Figure 1).

An important component of the process was the active involvement of young residents and local schools, achieved through workshops and participatory design activities. This approach strengthened local ownership, increased awareness of the value of POS and contributed to long-term stewardship. Additionally, projects such as the “Library of Things” transformed a modest community facility into a multifunctional neighbourhood hub [20], linking POS regeneration with social infrastructure and shared-use practices.



Figure 1. Activities during realization of project of integrated renewal of POS in LHE Savsko naselje in Ljubljana [21].

Overall, the Savsko naselje case demonstrates how incremental regeneration, grounded in participation and supported by institutional cooperation, can effectively (re)create POS in inherited housing estates, preserving their original spatial identity while adapting them to contemporary social needs.

4.2. ZAGREB (CROATIA): CITY GARDENS-TURNING INFORMAL “WILD GARDENS” INTO AN INSTITUTIONALISED COMMUNITY POS PROGRAMME

In Zagreb, the City Gardens programme represents a distinct approach to reclaiming and improving POS within inherited MFHEs. Unlike design-led regeneration projects, this example focuses primarily on institutionalising community-based practices that had emerged informally in socialist-era housing estates.

During the socialist period and the early years of post-socialist transition, residents of large housing estates frequently appropriated vacant or underused open spaces for urban gardening, creating so-called “wild gardens” [22]. These practices reflected both the availability of open land within housing estates and residents’ need for productive and socially meaningful POS. While often tolerated, such gardens remained legally and institutionally unregulated, making them vulnerable to removal under development pressure (Figure 2).

The City Gardens programme was introduced as a municipal response to these challenges, aiming to transform informal gardening practices into a legitimate and supported form of POS use [23]. Through this programme, the city allocated land for community gardens and provided garden plots to residents free of charge, supported by basic organisational and management structures at the level

of local self-government. Since its official launch in 2011, the programme has successfully formalised numerous informal sites, showing continuous community management and municipal support throughout the 2013–2021 period (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Transformation of informal gardens into a legitimate and supported form of POS (Photo documentation, 2013–2021) [24], [25].

From the perspective of POS (re)creation, City Gardens contributes to regeneration in several ways [26,27]. First, it reinforces everyday use and care of POS, reducing neglect and misuse. Second, it supports social inclusion and intergenerational interaction, as garden users often include elderly residents, families and socially vulnerable groups. Third, it strengthens the perception of POS as shared community resources rather than residual or leftover land.

Although the programme has limitations-most notably the absence of formal recognition of community gardens within statutory planning documents-it nonetheless illustrates how policy instruments and municipal programmes can play a crucial role in upgrading POS in inherited housing estates. The Zagreb example highlights the importance of governance and institutional support in sustaining socially driven forms of public open space regeneration.

4.3. BELGRADE (SERBIA): RESIDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN DETAILED URBAN PLANNING FOR INHERITED NEIGHBOURHOODS – THE CASE OF THE DETAILED REGULATION PLAN FOR BLOCK 70A

In Belgrade, within inherited MFHEs, two dominant forms of residents' engagement in the process of (re)affirming POS can be identified: proactive and reactive participation. Proactive engagement refers to initiatives initiated by residents themselves, aimed at improving everyday spatial conditions as well as the quality and functionality of neighbourhood open spaces.

Reactive engagement, by contrast, emerges in response to planned interventions perceived as threatening existing public or green areas [28]. It includes not only formal participation through written objections within legally prescribed planning procedures, but also collective actions such as community mobilisation and public protests, aimed at making residents' positions more visible within the planning process. Such forms of engagement have been particularly evident in several New Belgrade neighbourhoods, including Blocks 70a and 44 within the Sava blocks. In the following section, citizen participation in the preparation of the Detailed Regulation Plan for Block 70a (2017) is examined.

The decision on the development of the detailed regulation plan for Block 70a was made by the Belgrade City Assembly (2016), and the development of this plan was entrusted to the Urban Institute of Belgrade (Figure 3). According to the extract from the plan during the early public inspection, which took place in April 2017, the plan proposed solutions that confirmed the land use concept from the previous DUP Block 70a, including the construction of a combined children's institution on the green area between residential buildings. Commercial activities were planned at existing locations on the site of the local community centre. Residents raised objections not to the planned content, but to the concept, location, and enlargement of traffic areas, which would significantly reduce the quantity and quality of green areas within the residential block [29].



Figure 3. Detailed regulation plan for Block 70a (Planning process, 2017) [29].

Additionally, new housing (eight-story buildings) was planned on undeveloped green areas and parking zones located between the commercial zone and the newly planned housing. This triggered strong protests by residents in May 2017, who defended the public green space as an integral factor in the quality of life in Block 70a [30]. Approximately 500 residents gathered to oppose the proposed changes (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Protest in Block 70a against PDR Block 70a planning solutions (May 2017) [31].

The submission of objections and public action led to the political decision to halt the plan until it was harmonised with residents' views [32]. Furthermore, this mobilisation had long-term effects: the initial citizen association to protect the neighbourhood strengthened community ties and led to the formation of the citizens' association "Joint Action Block 70 and 70a", which continues to actively monitor and respond to activities related to the preservation and improvement of quality of life in the Sava blocks [30, 31, 32] (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Residents protecting their green spaces (May 2017) [30].

5. DISCUSSION

The three selected examples from Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade illustrate distinct yet complementary pathways for the (re)creation of public open spaces (POS) in inherited multi-family housing estates (MFHEs) from the socialist period. While each case reflects specific national and local conditions, their comparison reveals a set of shared mechanisms as well as context-dependent differences shaping regeneration processes and outcomes.

A first key distinction concerns **forms and roles of citizen participation**. In Ljubljana's Savsko naselje, POS regeneration is driven by a structured, long-term participatory process integrating residents, professionals, and institutions into a shared vision, implemented through a sequence of small-scale interventions [18]. Participation functions as an enabling framework for regeneration, fostering local ownership, stewardship, and continuity.

In Zagreb's City Gardens programme, engagement is less formal in spatial design terms but deeply embedded in everyday practice. Community involvement arises primarily through the use, care, and maintenance of space, supported by municipal programmes that legitimise and stabilise residents' initiatives [23]. This case demonstrates how institutional support can transform informal practices into a stable mechanism for sustaining POS, even without comprehensive spatial redesign.

The Belgrade case of Block 70a represents **reactive citizen participation** within statutory urban planning procedures. Residents' engagement was triggered by proposed interventions perceived as threatening existing public and green areas. Participation occurred mainly through formally submitted objections and collective mobilisation, including public protests, rather than through co-design or collaborative planning. This mode reflects the limited scope of participatory mechanisms within Serbia's planning framework, where citizen involvement is largely consultative and activated in response to conflict.

A second comparative dimension is **governance and institutional context**. Slovenian and Croatian examples demonstrate relatively higher institutional openness to collaboration with residents and civil society. In Savsko naselje, cooperation between residents, local authorities, and educational institutions enabled the translation of a bottom-up vision into tangible spatial changes. Zagreb's programme illustrates how municipal policy instruments can formalise and support community-based POS use. In contrast, the Belgrade case reflects a more constrained institutional environment, characterised by centralised planning practices, rigid regulatory frameworks, and limited flexibility in participatory approaches.

Finally, the cases differ in **spatial and programmatic strategies**. Savsko naselje relies on multifunctional, adaptable POS combining green areas, playgrounds, gathering spaces, and community facilities to support diverse social practices. Zagreb's City Gardens foreground productive landscapes as a key function of public open space, reinforcing everyday use, intergenerational interaction, and environmental awareness. In Block 70a, the focus is on defending existing POS as essential components of neighbourhood life and quality of living, highlighting the role of POS as socially valued and contested urban resources.

Despite these differences, all three examples confirm that successful (re)creation or protection of POS in inherited MFHEs depends less on large-scale physical reconstruction and more on

incremental, context-sensitive, and socially grounded actions. Whether through participatory co-production, institutionalised community use, or reactive citizen mobilisation within statutory planning procedures, each case demonstrates that POS continue to function as socially valued and adaptable components of everyday neighbourhood life in post-socialist contexts.

6. CONCLUSION

Inherited multi-family housing estates (MFHEs) from the socialist period represent one of the most significant and enduring layers of the urban fabric in the former Yugoslav republics. Although their original planning concepts were based on modernist principles of openness, greenery, and collective life, post-socialist transformations have profoundly altered the conditions under which public open spaces (POS) within these estates function today. Privatization, fragmented governance, reduced public investment, and market-driven development pressures have contributed to the degradation, underuse, or functional transformation of many inherited POS.

This paper has provided a selective overview of three good-practice examples from Ljubljana, Zagreb, and Belgrade, illustrating different yet complementary pathways for the (re)creation and protection of POS in inherited MFHEs. Rather than presenting a single model of regeneration, the cases highlight how diverse social, institutional, and planning contexts shape the mechanisms through which POS are defended, reactivated, or adapted to contemporary needs.

The comparative analysis confirms that successful (re)creation of POS in post-socialist housing estates relies primarily on incremental, context-sensitive, and socially grounded approaches rather than on comprehensive physical reconstruction. In Ljubljana, long-term participatory and co-produced processes enabled the gradual regeneration of POS and strengthened local stewardship. In Zagreb, the institutionalisation of community-based practices through municipal programmes stabilised everyday use and care of POS, demonstrating the importance of governance support for socially driven regeneration.

In Belgrade, the case of Block 70a illustrates a distinct pathway based on reactive citizen participation within statutory urban planning procedures. Although participatory mechanisms remain limited and largely consultative, the mobilisation of residents in response to perceived threats to public green spaces demonstrated that citizen engagement can still influence planning outcomes under constrained institutional conditions. This example highlights the role of POS as socially valued and contested resources, as well as the capacity of local communities to articulate public interest even in predominantly top-down planning systems.

Taken together, the findings suggest that effective regeneration and protection of POS in inherited MFHEs requires a holistic and context-sensitive approach that combines social activation, supportive governance frameworks, and appropriate planning instruments. While the balance between these components varies across national and local contexts, their integration is crucial for sustaining long-term spatial quality, social inclusion, and everyday use of POS.

Rather than viewing socialist-era housing estates as obsolete urban forms, the examples presented in this paper demonstrate their continued potential to support inclusive, resilient, and liveable neighbourhoods. Recognising POS as essential social infrastructure and embedding their protection and (re)creation within participatory, institutional, and planning frameworks represents a key challenge and opportunity for future urban development in post-socialist cities.

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