



Tensions of Europe/Inventing Europe

Working paper nr. 2011_02

Title: **Housing in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland
in 1850-2010: Review of Historiography**

Author: Marija Drémaitė (ed.)

Date: June 2011

Keywords: Housing, Historiography of Housing, Eastern Europe in the
20th century, History of Architecture, Estonia, Latvia,
Lithuania, Poland

Edited by:

Dr. Marija Drémaitė, post-doctoral researcher, Vilnius University, Lithuania,
marija.dremaite@gmail.com

Contributions by:

Epp Lankots, doctoral researcher, Estonian Academy of Arts, epp.lankots@artun.ee

Dr. Sławomir Łotysz, lecturer, University of Zielona Góra, Poland, s.lotysz@gmail.com

Abstract:

The current decade witnessed growing interest in the post war housing in Europe with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe. Research of housing in these countries provided international scholarship with fresh insights especially in the field of comparative perspective: East-West technological relations, appropriation of Soviet directives, and innovations of local expertise. Local histories open the possibility to see other dimensions, local variations and regional adoptions, and are able to change the established narrative frames. The review covers historiography of housing studies (mostly written in local languages) in Central Eastern/North Eastern region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland) which did not receive much of international attention in the housing research so far. These countries are taken as a region, which in the course of the 1850-2000 experienced comparable historical contexts: annexation to Russian Empire during the 19th century, national revivals in the inter-war years (1918-1940), and exposure to the Soviet power in the post-war period and post-Soviet recovery in the housing field.

Introduction

The general and overall history of the housing in Eastern Europe in the 20th century has been discussed in several works particularly with regard to the larger areas as Russia or especially the USSR¹. The current decade witnessed growing interest in the post war housing in Europe with a special focus on Central and Eastern Europe both from the social-economic² and architectural³ points of view. Research of housing in Czechoslovakia⁴, Romania⁵, Bulgaria⁶, Hungary⁷, and other countries provided international scholarship with fresh insights especially in the field of comparative perspective: East-West technological relations, appropriation of Soviet directives, and innovations of local expertise.

Local histories of the smaller countries or the European periphery open the possibility to see other dimensions, local variations and regional adoptions, and are able to change the established narrative frames, as has been proved in one of the most inspiring academic books in the field – *Constructed Happiness*⁸ – which compares domestic environment in the Cold War era Europe.

Other important aspect of the local historiographies is that they cover even the information and knowledge, which is temporarily “out of fashion” in the international housing research discourse. As the current academic interest is exclusively focused on the postwar socialist housing in Central and Eastern Europe, it seems that mostly just local historiographies can inform a researcher interested in other periods. For the purposes of this survey, this means the period from 1850 to 1940.

¹ Andrusz G. D. *Housing and Urban Development in the U.S.S.R.*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1984; *Housing Policy in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, Ed. by J.A. Silince, New York: Routledge, 1990.

² *The Reform of Housing in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, Jozsef Hegedus, Ivan Tosics, Bengt Turner (Eds.), Routledge, 1992. This collection of studies, both Eastern and Western in perspective, outlines the most recent housing reforms in the former Eastern Bloc and relates them to the political and economic transformation of these countries.

³ *Style and Socialism. Modernity and Material Culture in Post-War Eastern Europe*, Susan E. Reid and David Crowley (Eds.), Berg, 2000; *Socialist Spaces: Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, Susan E. Reid and David Crowley (Eds.), Berg, 2002; *Ideals in Concrete: Exploring Central and Eastern Europe*, Cor Wagenaar and Mieke Dings (Eds.), Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2004; etc.

⁴ Elman Zarecor, Kimberly, “The Local History of an International Type: the structural panel building in Czechoslovakia”, in: *Home Cultures*, 2010, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 217-236.

⁵ Maxim, Juliana, “Mass Housing and Collective Experience: on the notion of *microraiion* in Romania in the 1950s and 1960s”, in: *The Journal of Architecture*, 2009, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 7-26.

⁶ Parusheva, Dobrinka, and Marcheva, Iliyana, “Housing in Socialist Bulgaria: Appropriating Tradition”, in: *Home Cultures*, 2010, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 197-216.

⁷ Pittaway, Mark, “Stalinism, Working-class Housing and Individual Autonomy: The Encouragement of Private House Building in Hungary's Mining Areas, 1950-4”, in: *Style and Socialism: Modernity and Material Culture in Post-war Eastern Europe*, Susan Reid and David Crowley (Eds), Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000, pp. 49-64.

⁸ *Constructed Happiness: Domestic Environment in the Cold War Era*, ed. Mart Kalm, Ingrid Ruudi, Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2005. A collection of articles based on the presentations given at the eponymous international conference held in 2004 at the Estonian Academy of Arts.

Since international scholarship is less familiar with the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian history of housing, this essay aims to introduce it to a broader field of research. The review covers Central Eastern/North Eastern region (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland) which did not receive much of international attention in the housing research so far. However, countries over there were under more or less heavy influence of different superpowers over the time period and thus present differences and particularities to an asset and not only as a delayed mirror of what happened in the superpowers with modern housing ideas and practices⁹. The countries also can be viewed as a region, which in the course of the 19th and 20th century experienced comparable historical contexts: annexation to Russian Empire during the 19th century, national revival in the inter-war years (1918-1940), and exposure to the Soviet power in the post-war period. These contexts by no means hugely influenced either policy of housing, or architectural, technological and social expression of it. In this regard a book *Russian Housing in the Modern Age* (1993) might be important, since it comprehensively covers the development of housing in Russia during the 19th and 20th, which influenced the neighboring regions of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia¹⁰. The recent research of gender issues, construction technologies and social engineering of the Soviet housing also gives a broader social and political context of housing in the region¹¹.

The Period of Russian Empire (19th c. – 1914)

The pamphlet “On the relations of building and social economy” by Casimir Langie (1864)¹² is considered the first major work in Polish language dealing with the housing question. Not surprisingly the author focused particularly on the situation among peasantry, as most of the contemporary Polish population lived and worked in the countryside. The migration of rural population to urban areas, caused by the slowly developing industry, had already began, but was not quite as urgent a problem as the condition of residence in the overpopulated countryside.

⁹ *Different Modernisms, Different Avant-gardes: Problems in Central and Eastern European Art after World War II*, Proceedings of the Art Museum of Estonia, Tallinn, 2009;

¹⁰ *Russian Housing in the Modern Age: Design and Social History*, William Craft Brumfield and Blair A. Ruble (Eds.), Cambridge University Press, 1993.

¹¹ Smith, Mark B., “Khrushchev’s promise to eliminate the urban housing shortage: rights, rationality and the communist future”, in: *Soviet State and Society Under Nikita Khrushchev*, Melanie Ilic and Jeremy Smith (Eds.), Routledge, 2009, pp. 26-46; Attwood, Lynne. *Gender and Housing in Soviet Russia*, Manchester University Press, 2010; Ilić, M. and Davies, R.W. “From Khrushchev (1935-1956) to Khrushchev (1956-1964): Construction Policy Compared”, in: *Khrushchev in the Kremlin: Policy and Government in the Soviet Union, 1953-1964*, J. R. Smith and M. Ilić (Eds.), Routledge, 2011, p. 202-230; Меерович М.Г. [Meerovich, Mark]. *Как власть народ к труду приучала: Жилище в СССР – средство управления людьми. 1917-1941 гг.* [How the Government Inured People to Work: Housing in the USSR as a means to control the people, 1917-1941], Stuttgart, Ibidem-Verlag, 2005; Меерович М.Г. [Meerovich, Mark]. *Квадратные метры, определяющие сознание: государственная жилищная политика в СССР. 1921-1941 гг.* [Square Meters Defining the Consciousness: State Policy of Housing in USSR, 1921-1941], Stuttgart, Ibidem-Verlag, 2005; etc.

¹² K. Langie, *O związku budownictwa z ekonomią społeczną i obecnem jego zadaniu u nas* [About relations between building industry and social economy, and its current tasks in our case], Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1864.

As to the situation in cities, in addition to the typical problems plaguing early industrial societies, such as uncontrolled migration, environmental pollution, labor exploitation, the fatal condition of housing in Polish (as well as in Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian) cities was also affected by political reasons. In late 18th century Poland and Lithuania lost its independence to neighboring countries, and because of different political conditions prevailing in Russia, Austria, and Prussia, an unambiguous and consistent assessment of the housing situation in the Polish lands is a complex task. For each of the three parts of the country the condition of housing should be considered in accordance to the one in the partitioning countries. For example, in Warsaw and other cities in the territories occupied by the Russian Empire, the persecutions against the ethnic Polish population had an immediate influence on housing condition. The tightening of Russian oppression intensified particularly after the failed uprising of January 1863. It is worth noting that, due to restrictions from even an earlier period of 1815-16, all cities in Russian part of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia had been deprived of self-management, as a part of repercussions. This happened at the very same time, when the rule of city councils was widely introduced in the entire Russian Empire.

As a consequence, the North-Western lands of the Russian Empire became the only territory in Europe where residents had no influence on the shaping of their life in cities. That seriously affected not only the contemporary housing conditions but also stopped the natural growth of civic awareness and impaired the ability of effective self-governing for the next generations. After a long break the problems of urban housing was taken up by Adolf Suligowski, the author of the book "The Question of Housing" (1889)¹³. It appeared in Warsaw and mainly concerned problems related to housing in this city, then the largest settlement and the most important industrial center within the borders of Russian part of Poland.

At the beginning of the 20th century poorer people in Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian towns "moved to shabby wooden buildings on the outskirts of the cities, whereas the well-to-do settled in large apartment buildings of stone"¹⁴. New residential areas in the expanding towns were filled with high-rise apartment buildings of stone in Riga, while in Kaunas or Tallinn mainly one- or two-storey wooden structures or city villas for the wealthier population were built. At the end of the 19th century, a tenement house became a popular city housing type. These were mainly four-storey houses; apartments were divided into zones of living and household, water-supply and sewage systems were started to be installed. Some of these houses had elevators as well as central heating and lighting. Entire new quarters of such houses were built in Riga, which is now world-wide famous for its well-preserved Art Nouveau houses from this period¹⁵.

¹³ A. Suligowski, *Kwestya mieszkań [Dwelling's question]*, Warszawa: Gebethner i Wolf, 1889.

¹⁴ M. Kalm, *Eesti XX sajandi arhitektuur / Estonian 20th century architecture*, Tallinn: Sild, 2001, p. 9.

¹⁵ J. Krastinš, *Jugendstils Rigas arhitektura [Art Nouveau in Architecture of Riga]*, Riga, 1980.

J. Krastinš, *Stilj modern v arhitecture Rigi [Art Nouveau in Architecture of Riga]*, Moscow, 1988 (in Russian).

The Period of Nation States (1918-1939/1940)

As the consequence of WWI and the Russian revolution, the three Baltic States and Poland (re)gained independence from the Russian Empire and started to (re)build their nation states. The situation of housing in Estonia is accurately described by Mart Kalm, and this description could equally be applied to Latvia or Lithuania: “During the first Republic of Estonia, thousands of new smallholders established farms in the countryside, co-operative buildings appeared in the cities, a unique Tallinn-type residence was designed to house working class families, Functionalism brought along flat-roofed and light-colored elitist villas and Representative Traditionalism filled city centers with distinguished apartment buildings”¹⁶.

The inter-war period is also known for the lively discussion about the rural and urban “national house”.¹⁷ Several texts and books written in the period in the Baltic States reveal an important issue of tradition reflected in material, style and decoration. In the late 1920s, rural traditionalism matured and its principles were published in the Estonian collection “Rural Architecture”¹⁸ and Lithuanian “Rural Construction”¹⁹. The period also saw different housing reforms, municipal and state loan programs, which promoted the investment of private capital in construction. The result of these can be well seen in Tallinn, Vilnius and especially Kaunas, which in one decade (1930-1940) grew out of a peripheral town into a modern European city²⁰.

However, during the period of independence between the two world wars, the housing problem remained unresolved both in the Baltic States and in Poland. As one of the reasons for the stagnation, one could also consider the attitude of all the successive governments, which showed a lack of a consistency in shaping the manner of functioning of municipal authorities. At the same time, the state of Poland narrowed the financial base of local governments by taking away some of their usual sources of income. On the other hand, the state imposed new responsibilities and duties onto the city authorities. The local governments opposed such policies, which led to the establishment of the Association of Polish Cities. In the second half of the 1930s, the activity of the association yielded a number of important publications trying to spread awareness of a thorough reform of housing. As the key work here one should undoubtedly call the book by Konstanty Krzeczkowski, which appeared in 1939²¹. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the war stopped that promising discussion.

¹⁶ M. Kalm, *Eesti XX sajandi arhitektuur / Estonian 20th century architecture*, Tallinn: Sild, 2001, p. 9.

¹⁷ V. Švipas, *Miesto gyvenamieji namai [Urban Houses]*, Kaunas: Varpas, 1933.

¹⁸ *Maaehituse [Rural Architecture]*, Vol. I, A. Esop, 1928; Vol. II, A. Volberg, 1930, Tallinn: ART Pollumajandusliit.

¹⁹ V. Švipas, *Kaimo statyba [Rural Construction]*, Kaunas, 1936.

²⁰ *Tallinn Architecture 1900-2010. Architecture Guide*. Texts by Karin Hallas-Murula. Tallinn: Museum of Estonian Architecture, 2010; *Vilnius 1900-2005. A Guide to Modern Architecture*. Ed. by Jurate Tutlyte. Vilnius: Architektūros fondas, 2005; J. Kančienė, „Kaunas – laikinoji sostinė“ [*Kaunas – the Provisional Capital City*], in: *Archiforma*, 2002, No. 2, pp. 97-105; V. Petruelis, „Modernėjantis Kaunas: architektūra ir politika“ [*Modernizing Kaunas: architecture and politics*], in: *Istoriniai miestai: sena ir šiuolaikiška*, Vilnius, 2003.

²¹ K. Krzeczkowski, *Kwestia mieszkaniowa w miastach polskich [Housing question in Polish cities]*, Warszawa: Związek Miast Polskich, 1939.

The Soviet Period (1945-1990)

In the socialist system the housing question was considered the domain of the state. It did not, however, facilitate the improvement of the chronic housing shortage. The patterns of organization of the entire housing market were not a continuation of pre-war practice, but were imposed along with the entire political system from the Soviet Union. Also the construction technology was borrowed from that country.

Pretty soon, Polish engineers, in many cases educated at Western European polytechnic schools in the prewar period, began to realize the inefficiency of the methods adopted in Poland after 1945. Already in the second half of the 1950s, benefiting from temporary political thaw in the country, they attempted to draw on experiences made by architects and engineers outside of the Soviet Union, but without visible results, as the new regime in Warsaw had tightened the internal policy after the thaw of 1956. It is significant that the attempt of some leading Polish engineers to adopt the American methods in housing industry, including construction, planning, and financing, was completely ignored in the country upon their return.²²

The next decades brought a fixation of the socialist model. Construction methods and organization, the design of both urban and architectural structures, the financing of the building industry corresponded to the objectives of socialism. The effects were far from satisfactory; therefore scholars in architecture, economy, and sociology eagerly looked to improve the housing situation of ordinary Poles, but still within a fairly rigid and not so easy to reform structures. From 1950s to 1980s a significant number of authors were analyzing the problem from different perspectives, but none of them dared conclude that nothing could be done without changing the entire political system in the country. The most active contributors to the publication of that period include Jerzy Cegielski and Adam Andrzejewski.²³ The first one, on the basis of detailed historical research, attempted to identify the possible directions of improvement in the Polish housing industry. Using the capital city of Warsaw as an example, he produced the most comprehensive description of the history of housing within Poland in the 19th and 20th centuries.²⁴

In the meantime the Soviet Baltic architecture and urban planning (also dwelling on the pre-war experience or drawing inspiration from the post-war Nordic models) became something of the “design excellence” in the entire USSR, sometimes called

²² S. Łotysz, “Wacław Żenczykowski w Ameryce: echa zapomnianej wizyty” [A glimpse behind the curtain: Polish perspectives on the American housing industry in the 1950s], in: *Przegląd Budowlany*, 2009, No. 1, p. 55-60.

²³ A. Andrzejewski, *Sytuacja mieszkaniowa w Polsce w latach 1918-1974* [Situation of Housing in Poland, 1918-1974], Warszawa: Państwowe Wydaw. Ekonomiczne, 1977.

²⁴ J. Cegielski, *Stosunki mieszkaniowe na ziemiach polskich w wieku XIX i na początku wieku XX. Studium bibliograficzne*, Prace IBM, nr 20, Warszawa: Arkady, 1957; J. Cegielski, *Stosunki mieszkaniowe w Warszawie w latach 1864-1964* [Housing relations in Warsaw in 1864-1964], Warszawa: Arkady, 1968; J. Cegielski, *Kwestia mieszkaniowa w miastach i gminach województwa stołecznego warszawskiego w okresie 1944-1978. Przeszłość - współczesność - perspektywy* [The residential problem in towns and villages of the metropolitan Warsaw voivodship: past - present – perspectives], Warszawa: TERN, 1982.

“an inner abroad” referring to the Western influenced residential districts. Pioneering residential micro-rayons designed by Lithuanian architects in the 1960s and 1970s were widely publicized by the Soviet and socialist press to showcase achievements in housing and living standards²⁵. Some texts published in the West revealed different living standards of the Baltic Republics within the USSR²⁶.

In print Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian scholars hardly criticized the contemporary housing situation, except several articles in the specialized press. As in Poland, the critique has been focused only on the poor construction materials, technologies, and monotonous facades, avoiding any discussion on the issue of Soviet social engineering. It was characteristic for the historians of architecture of the period to “hide” behind “safer” topics such as those of the medieval or Baroque epochs or some approved modern topics such as Art Nouveau architecture in Riga. Information about housing in the Soviet period is to be found in the rather uncomplicated descriptive summaries of the “architectural achievements of the Soviet period” in Estonia²⁷, Latvia²⁸ and Lithuania²⁹. In the late 1980s local research culminated in the well organized (and directed from Moscow) series of books covering Soviet period architecture in all the three Baltic Republics³⁰. The books (written and published in Russian) present a thorough description of housing types of the 20th century.

New approaches towards housing research: 1990-2010

The collapse of the USSR and the constantly growing issues of national identity, inspired by regained independences, brought scholars, architects, and politicians of the Baltic States and Poland to the discussion about the need of revising the inherited state's housing policy. It was unarguable at that point, that it was far behind the contemporary standards and trends in Europe, and certainly not meeting the growing aspirations and demands of the entire population.

The conclusion that the Communist regimes (lasting for almost half a century) caused significant devastations in both the urban landscape and the sphere of social behavior was quite obvious for many authors. The most comprehensive approach and intriguing account on legacy of the communist era in Poland was authored by Andrzej Basista, an outstanding architect and scholar.³¹ He gave a very skillfully written analysis of his own interpretation of the pathology that plagued Polish architecture and housing in 1945-1989. He managed to convincingly explain the

²⁵ See, for example, W. Rietdorf, *Neue Wohngebiete sozialistischer Länder*. Berlin: VEB Verlag für Bauwesen, 1976.

²⁶ Bohnet A., Penkaitis N., “A Comparison of Living Standards and Consumption Patterns between the RSFSR and the Baltic Republics”, in: *Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 19, Spring 1988.

²⁷ L. Volkov, Y. Kruusimagi, *Architektura Sovetskoi Estonii*, Moskva: Stroiizdat, 1972 (in Russian).

²⁸ *Laimetiga arhitektura padomju Latvija*, Riga: Liesma, 1966 [parallel text in Russian].

²⁹ E. Budreika, *Architektura Sovetskoi Litvy*, Leningrad, 1971 (in Russian).

³⁰ J. Krastinš, I. Strautmanis, O. Buka, G. Asaris, *Architektura Sovetskoi Latvii*, Moskva: Stroiizdat, 1987; Jonas Minkevicius, *Architektura Sovetskoi Litvy*, Moskva: Stroiizdat, 1987; Leonid Volkov, *Architektura Sovetskoi Estonii*, Moskva: Stroiizdat, 1987 (all in Russian).

³¹ A. Basista, *Betonowe Dziedzictwo. Architektura w Polsce czasów komunizmu* [[Concrete Heritage: Architecture in Poland in the Communist Era](#)], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo naukowe PWN, 2001.

genesis of the difficulties besetting the contemporary Polish housing industry, including the sub-standard training of engineers and architects, demographic questions, loans for the building industry, and the social perceptions and expectations of architecture. The historical perspective in studying the question of housing in postwar Poland can be found in works of several other researchers, including Irene Paczyńska.³² Housing issues in Poland between the wars (1919-1939) were partly covered in a book “East European Modernism”³³.

The historiography of modern architecture and housing has witnessed a notable change also in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, one could say even (a mild) critical re-assessment. In the 1990s when “the West” was already critically revising its research methodologies as well as the subjects in the field, these states were involved in constructing their national “grand narratives”. Hence, the 1990s was a decade of more introductory themes and general historical overviews. Theoretically informed research was focused on the inter-war republican period: Elo Lutsepp’s research on the new rural settlements and farm house typologies of the 1930s as a part of new ideological program in the 1930s in the context of modernization of traditional Estonian rural life³⁴. Estonian researchers also compared their Functionalism of the 1930s to the Neo-Functionalism of the 1960s,³⁵ while Jolita Kanciene and Vaidas Petrulis in Lithuania researched interwar housing and urban planning³⁶. Another, more thematically concentrated research area was the early 20th century, mostly *Art Nouveau* apartment houses in Tallinn³⁷ and especially in Riga³⁸, and, although methodological approach being mainly traditional style history, it also included the concept of bourgeois development and urbanization. In Lithuania the early 2000s saw the publication of the 3rd volume of Lithuanian architectural history covering the 19th through the early 20th century³⁹. It also influenced more focused books on 19th century architecture in Vilnius and Kaunas in which large chapters examine

³² I. Paczyńska, *Gospodarka mieszkaniowa a polityka państwa w warunkach przekształceń ustrojowych w Polsce w latach 1945-1950 na przykładzie Krakowa*, Kraków, 1994,

³³ *East European Modernism: architecture in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland between the wars (1919-1939)*, ed. Wojciech Lesnikowski, New York: Rizzoli, 1996.

³⁴ E. Lutsepp, “Riigi roll taluarhitektuuri suunamisel aastatel 1928-1942. Materjaliiuendused ja tüüplahendused uusasunduste näitel” [*Role of the State in Directing Vernacular Architecture in 1928-1942: New Materials and Standard Solutions in New Settlements*], in: *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi* [Studies on Art and Architecture], No. 16 (1-2), 2007, p. 92-121.

³⁵ Teisiti: funktsionalism ja neofunktsionalism Eesti arhitektuuris [*Otherwise. Functionalism and Neo-Functionalism in Estonian Architecture*], Eds. Mart Kalm, Krista Kodres, Tallinn: Eesti Arhitektuurimuuseum [Museum of Estonian Architecture], 1993.

³⁶ J. Kančienė, “Racionalizmas Kauno tarpukario laikotarpio gyvenamuosiuose namuose (1918–1940)” [*Rationalist houses in Kaunas 1918-1940*], in: *Lietuvos TSR architektūros klausimai IX*, 1988, pp. 106–122; J. Kančienė, „Kaunas – laikinoji sostinė“ [*Kaunas – the Provisional Capital City*], in: *Archiforma*, 2002, No. 2, pp. 97-105; V. Petrulis, „Modernėjantis Kaunas: architektūra ir politika“ [*Modernizing Kaunas: architecture and politics*], in: *Istoriniai miestai: sena ir šiuolaikiška*, Vilnius, 2003;

³⁷ K. Hallas, “Juugendstiilne üürimaja Tallinnas” [*Die Jugendstil-Mietshäuser in Tallinn*], in: *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi* [Studies on Art and Architecture], No. 9, 1998, p.161-186.

³⁸ J. Krastinš, *Riga Jugendstilmetropole/ Riga Art Nouveau Metropolis/ Riga jugendstila metropole*, Riga: Baltika, 1996; Janis Krastinš, *The Art Nouveau Architecture of Riga*, Riga: Jumava, 1998; J. Krastinš, O. Sparitis, *Architecture of Riga. Eight Hundred Years Mirroring European Culture*, Riga: Nacionalais apgads, 2005.

³⁹ *Lietuvos architektūros istorija*, T. 3, (nuo XIX a. II p. iki 1918), Vilnius: Savastis, 2000.

various types of houses – urban residences, villas, housing colonies, and apartment houses⁴⁰. A narrower topic is covered in the book *Eesti Puitarhitektuur [Estonian Wooden Architecture]*, containing articles that give a general overview – such as the first published accounts on the 19th and early 20th century wooden suburbs in Estonian towns and housing types by Epi Tohvri⁴¹.

In 2002, the first general account on modern and contemporary architecture in Estonia was published. *Estonian 20th Century Architecture* by Mart Kalm is a classical general history that according to the specificity of the genre is not as analytical or focused, as it is compendious on the spatial culture of one nation. Yet, the value as well as the difference with many Western analogous „big books” is its clear focus on the development of professional architectural culture, but also the inclusion of minor or everyday architectural practices of past decades that characterized the era. Housing is thoroughly considered in the book; it is also a good source book for introduction to housing policy in pre-War Estonian Republic as well as in the Soviet period.

As in many post-Soviet countries, the shift in architectural history and research is marked by a new interest in the domestic environment, especially that of the Soviet period, since 2000, including not only housing issues, but also a view on the private sphere as a specific cultural and symbolic entity. The history of modern architecture and housing now includes keywords such as everyday life and modern vernacular housing, (alternative) spatial and artistic practices and their relation to dominant building and housing practice, social differentiation, etc⁴². Mass-housing and standardization has been one of the key topics in new research themes: e.g. Triin Ojari in Estonia has observed how the concept of “neighborhood unit” was spread and adjusted to the Soviet context as well as the ideological program behind the optimization of residential units: „floor space” being an important keyword in Soviet rhetoric in the 1960s⁴³. Marija Dremaitė⁴⁴ in Lithuania and Andis Ciniš⁴⁵ in Latvia

⁴⁰ N. Lukšionytė-Tolvaišienė, *Istorizmas ir modernas Vilniaus architektūroje*. [[Historicism and Modern Style in the Architecture of Vilnius](#)], Vilniaus dailės akademijos darbai, 2000; N. Lukšionytė-Tolvaišienė, *Gubernijos laikotarpis Kauno architektūroje*. [[The Government Period in the Architecture of Kaunas](#)], Kaunas, 2001, (with English summaries).

⁴¹ E. Tohvri, “Estonian Urban Wooden Areas. Their Formation and Type of Houses”, in: *Eesti puitarhitektuur [Estonian Wooden Architecture]*, Tallinn: Eesti Arhitektuurimuuseum, p. 139-150.

⁴² A. Kurg, “Almanahh „Kunst ja Kodu [Art and Home]” 1973-1980”, in: *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi [Studies on Art and Architecture]*, No. 13 (2), 2004, p. 110-142; *Constructed Happiness: Domestic Environment in the Cold War Era*, Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Arts, 2005; Mart Kalm’s article on 1950’s vernacular one-family houses in a small town of Rakvere in Estonia, M. Kalm, “Rakvere triibulised majad. Stalinismijärgne rahva-art déco Eestis” [[The Striped Houses of Rakvere: Post-Stalinist Folk Art-déco in Estonia](#)], in: *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi [Studies on Art and Architecture]*, No. 13 (2), 2004, p. 71-109.

⁴³ T. Ojari, “Modenismi parameetrid: Mustamäe kujunemisest” [[Parametres of Modernism: On the Formation of Mustamäe Housing Area](#)], in: *Kümme. Eesti Arhitektuurimuuseumi aastaraamat*, Tallinn, 2005, p. 49-64; T. Ojari, “Elamispind. Modernistlik elamuehitusideoloogia ja Mustamäe” [[Floor Space. The Modernist Residential Housing Ideology and Mustamäe](#)], in: *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi [Studies on Art and Architecture]*, No. 13 (2), 2004, p. 42-70.

⁴⁴ M. Drėmaitė, “Masinė gyvenamoji architektūra” [[Mass-Housing in Lithuania](#)], chapter in: *Architektūra sovietinėje Lietuvoje [Architecture in Soviet Lithuania]*, Vilnius, 2011, p. 149-171.

have both written on mass-housing in the context of the International Modern Movement. In the USA, John V. Maciuika published a research of modernist features of the Lithuanian residential districts describing a westward looking orientation of local architects which kept alive an historical ambition to be included in a Western European cultural community⁴⁶. Ideological controversies about the “classless society” were analyzed by Epp Lankots in her account on the Soviet *nomenklatura* living conditions and apartment houses in Tallinn⁴⁷. Mart Kalm has written about collective farm settlements as a specific spatial and cultural phenomenon in Estonian countryside producing a radically different type of domestic environment as compared to the traditional settlements of early 20th century⁴⁸.

Conclusion

The historiography of housing in the region (Baltic countries and Poland) has concentrated on the field of architectural history and went through several stages or paradigms. In the entire region, the end of the 19th century (1) housing reflected both tradition and significant social change, from the peasant countryside to the growth of major new urban centers where Moscow, St Petersburg, Riga and Warsaw set the trends. The latter two cities illustrate the contrast in shelter, as well as the accomplishments and inadequacies of the pre-WWI building boom. The inter-bellum period (2) saw developing nation states on the Baltic shores with very similar national housing ideas and practices. The countries of the region faced similar housing problems after the occupation of Baltic States and implementation of socialism in Poland since 1945 (3), and shared the bombastic pretensions of Stalinist housing architecture as well as new industrially produced micro-rayons starting with the 1960s.

Due to censorship, the histories and research carried out in the Soviet period developed certain methods of architectural history limited to building descriptions

⁴⁵ A. Cinis, “Signs of Modernism in the Architecture of Soviet Latvia between 1960–1980”, in: *Industry and Modernism: Companies, Architecture, and Identity in the Nordic and Baltic Countries during the High-Industrial Period*, ed. Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna, Helsinki: Studia Fennica Historica 14, 2007, p. 172–183.

⁴⁶ Maciuika, John V. “East Block, West View: Architecture and Lithuanian National Identity”, in: *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, University of California Press, 1999, Vol. XI, No. 1.

⁴⁷ E. Lankots, “Two faces of Stalinism. The privileged space and the Academics’ House in Tallinn”, in: *Quo Vadis Architectura? Architectural Tendencies and Debate from the late 1930s to early 1950s*, ed. by T. Simons, Helsinki: Helsinki University of Technology, 2008, p. 208–217; E. Lankots, “Klassid klassideta ühiskonnas. Elitaarne ruumimudel Eesti NSV-s ja nomenklatuursed korterelamud Tallinnas 1945-1955”, [[Classes in a Classless Society. The Elite Housing Model in the Estonian SSR and Apartment Buildings in Tallinn for the Communist Nomenklatura 1945-1955](#)], in: *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi* [Studies on Art and Architecture], No. 13 (2), 2004, p. 11 - 41.

⁴⁸ M. Kalm, “Does Urban Life Make Farmers Happy? The Central Settlements of the Collective Farms in the Estonian SSR”, in: *Urban Planning and the Pursuit of Happiness. European Variations on a Universal Theme (18th-21st Centuries)*, Eds. Bartetky, A. & Schalenberg, M., Berlin: Jovis, 2009, p.128 – 147; M. Kalm, “The Oasis of Industrialised Countryside in Soviet Estonia”, in: *Industry and Modernism. Companies, Architecture and Identity in the Nordic and Baltic Countries during the High-Industrial Period*, ed. Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna, Helsinki: Studia Fennica Historica 14, 2007, p. 352 – 371.

and style issues. However, contemporary material from that period can still serve as a good visual and empirical source. It can be concluded that only during the recent 20 years, social approach has been employed in housing history. This, in turn, has left the traditional methodology of style history in the background, replacing it with a more critical and socially informed research agendas and hybrid approaches.

After Poland and the Baltic States joined the European Union there has been an increasingly growing awareness among the public as well as among the scholars that a solely commercial approach is not the best way to solve the housing question. One can notice a growing number of studies in which authors seek to answer these questions under new economical conditions. Still, even relatively easy access to financial support did not change much in the overall housing situation in Poland.⁴⁹ Today one may try to adopt or learn from the expertise of other European countries, and that is what attracts attention of Polish scholars. They recognize the importance of drawing on the experiences of other countries of the former Soviet bloc, as the most relevant in that case.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ L. Frąckiewicz (ed.), *Przeszłość i przyszłość polskiej polityki mieszkaniowej* [[The past and the future of Polish housing policy](#)], Warszawa: IPISS, 2005. A set of 20 papers covering the following topics: Housing as a social problem, Housing policy and Evaluating housing conditions; M. Cesarski, *Sytuacja Mieszkaniowa w Polsce w Latach 1988-2005* [[Housing situation in Poland in 1988-2005](#)], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo SGH, 2007; M. Frąckowiak, *Ekonomiczne i społeczne problemy polskiego mieszkalnictwa* [[Economic and social problems of Polish housing](#)], Poznań: PTPN, 2008.

⁵⁰ B. Komar, B. Kucharczyk-Brus (ed.), *Mieszkalnictwo i środowisko zbudowane w krajach postkomunistycznych* [[Housing and environmental conditions in post-communist countries](#)], Gliwice: Wydawnictwo Politechniki Śląskiej, 2007.