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Public housing estates in Greece. Services and housing projects

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Abstract

The need for production of public housing estates in Greece is the result of particular Greek housing conditions and appears mainly after the Second World War (1940-1945). Although the housing activity before 1940 was not significant, except for the decade 1920-1930, the article will analyze the issues that existed immediately after the liberation of the Greek state from the Turkish domination and will attempt to separate them into periods. Each period will be presented and analyzed separately by referring to the main points that characterize it and will be tried, if not answered, at least commented some of the following issues: the size of the housing problem, the factors associated with it (reasons for shortage of housing) and the housing policy (modes of housing production - housing agencies and programs) in order to face it. It should be noted, however, that the public housing estates in Greece until the 1970 was almost exclusively confined to settlements of social agencies (Workers’ Housing Organisation, various ministries, etc.) as a result of important historical events and under the pressure of pressing needs (rehabilitation of refugees, victims of wars, internal migrants, etc.) and a few private industrial complexes built occasionally covering a small percentage of housing needs.

Keywords: Public housing estates, Public housing services, Public housing programs, Workers’ Housing Organisation (W.H.O.)

1. Introduction

This article will attempt to present public housing estates in Greece as a result of the particularity of Greek housing conditions. Although the need for mass production of housing identified, except during the decade 1920-1930, especially after the Second World War 1940-1945 its description will start immediately after the liberation of the Greek state from the Turkish domination and will be divided into time periods. Each period will be presented and analyzed individually by reference to its most important points and features. There will be an effort, if not to answer, at least to comment on some of the following issues: the size of the housing problem in each time period, factors with which it is connected (reasons of housing shortage) and at last housing policy (modes of housing production).

2. First Period: 1830 - 1920

After the liberation of Greece from the Ottoman Empire, the average resident did not have the requirement by the state to cover his housing needs, especially when he had the ability to build, repair and maintain his house by himself. Governments benefiting from this situation and focusing on foreign policy issues, interior, finance, administration

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focused on the organization of the state without dealing with the housing policy as greater government accountability. As a result, during this period, housing was developed exclusively at private initiative influencing housing conditions. The extremely high density of habitation (3-4 people per room), the elemental structure or even the absence of the most basic equipment, the frequent lack of services provided by the community for the house and its inhabitants, the complete absence of utility facilities create a black picture of the housing conditions.


After the First World War a series of large-scale events, throughout the period 1920 - 1960, which exacerbated the already existing housing problem forced the state to penetrate more in this area and envisioned large scale, for the time, housing programs. These events were the massive inflow of refugees from the Asia Minor in 1922 just after the Asia Minor disaster, large-scale earthquakes, widespread destruction throughout Greece as a result of the Second World War (1940-1945) and the simultaneous civil war (1940 -1949), disasters by earthquakes again, and also smaller problems due to floods, storms, consolidations, etc. The period between 1920 and 1960 can be divided into two sub-periods in relation to the need for mass production, which are: the first one from 1920-1940 and the second from 1940-1960.

3.1. Time Period: 1920 - 1940

Between 1920 and 1940 the government is activated in the design and construction of public housing estates after critical events for housing social groups, such as refugees, earthquake, working-class and bank employees.

Photo 1: Small simple house type used in rural areas
Source: (1975). Vasileiou, J. (1944). The social housing: social techniques and financial aspects, the traditional residence in various foreign countries and in Greece, Athens, Dialisma editions, 73

Regarding the rehabilitation of refugees -the main social group- about 2,000 villages are created in rural areas in which small simple house type is used (photo 1)\(^3\). Urban settlements were placed at a distance from the edge of the city and gradually incorporated into the urban tissue using types such as twin homes and apartment buildings.

### 3.2. Time Period: 1940 - 1960

![Diagram](image)

Photo 2: House type in rural areas

\(^3\) (1975). Vasileiou, J. (1944). *The social housing: social techniques and financial aspects, the traditional residence in various foreign countries and in Greece*, Athens, Dialisma editions, 73
During the period 1940-1960 the state intervenes after the Second World War and then the civil war with the reconstruction and rehabilitation of earthquake victims after the new wave of earthquakes of the decade 1950-1960. Immediately after the war with significant central figure K. Doxiadis\(^4\) in rural areas was estimated the transportation of many settlements in new positions. The State proceeded in design, financing and construction of dwellings in two ways: the policy of erecting "cores" (photo 2) and the policy of self-help housing. The urban program housed the homeless families in specially curated communities inside cities consisting of 2-3 storey (or in some cases higher) multifamily buildings.

4. From 1960 onwards\(^5\)

Up until the end of the previous period, Greece faced a succession of urgent large-scale problems: refugees, war and natural disasters. The gaps created between these events were covered by smaller-scale problems involving the loss of houses which had to be replaced. Facing these issues led to a housing policy not comparable to that of European countries. The situation was critical. The mountain villages were abandoned and their inhabitants moved to urban centers where it would be easier to find work, while the building stock of the country suffered from age, lack of equipment and auxiliary spaces. The housing sector during this period began to be analyzed and connected with the bad housing conditions. The policy applied by the state for the house took into account the data presented (after studies and research) aimed to cover the shortage of houses and the new needs which were appeared and certainly improved the housing conditions in terms of size, construction, equipment, auxiliary facilities, accompanying infrastructure and urban environment.

5. Greek housing agencies and housing programs\(^6\)\(^7\)

The public and social housing in Greece is implemented by public services and materialized in two ways:

A. indirect intervention, means lending by Greek credit institutions, aiming at the purchase or construction of residential, which are: the National Mortgage Bank, Deposits and Loans Fund, the Postal Savings Bank and the Agricultural Bank.

B. direct intervention, means use of available resources from the state budget in order to design and construct public housing estates. The public sector services are: the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Defense through two services: the Autonomous Officers Housing Agency with activity until today and the Military Service of Rehabilitation Projects

\(^4\) Doxiadis, K. (1947). *Housing policy: the reconstruction of the country with a twenty year old plan*, publications of the Ministry of rebuilding, Athens


in the past and finally the Ministry of Labour and Social Security through the Workers' Housing Organization (WHO).

6. Housing policy and housing services after the 1970

Photo 3: Urban plan by EKTENEPOL in Komotini

Photo 4: Urban plan in Kalamitsa in Kavala.
The agenda for effectively planning and private urbanization after 1970 aim the support of these programs by other services such as municipalities, companies of mixed economy and individuals. New housing services appeared such as:

A. Mortgage Construction Inc. "EKTENEPOL\(^8\)" which in 1984 construct two large residential units in Greece enrolled in ZEP Areas in Komotini (photo 3) and Xanthi.

B. The Public Enterprise of Urban and Housing responsible for urban development in Kavala in the area Kalamitsa\(^9\) (photo 4) and some holiday settlements of Greek emigrants such as the Arcadian village.

C. The National Foundation for the Reception and Rehabilitation of Overseas and Repatriated Expatriate Greeks.

7. Epilogue

The public housing estates in Greece aimed to cover the existent housing requirements due to critical historical events. As a result of this situation in Greece are common small-scale projects inside of the large ones over the European area. In this direction also led the fragmentation of freehold land and high rates of ownership in combination with the ownership consciousness of Greek people and at last the lack of cadaster. Nevertheless, the small scale of the housing projects, the variety of uses, the traditional vitality of the Greek city has diversified substantially Greek in relation to the European experience, which led to considerable problems of isolation, physical and social devastation and crime.

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Vasileiou, J. (1944). *The social housing: social techniques and financial aspects, the traditional residence in various foreign countries and in Greece*, Athens, Dialisma editions


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