



DR.10 DOCTORAL THESIS EVALUATION REPORT ¹		
DOCTORAL CANDIDATE		
First and last name:	Marko Horvat, mag.oecol.	
Registration number:	0067435595	
GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY PROGRAMME		
Institution responsible for organizing the studies:	University of Zagreb Faculty of Law	
Name of study programme:	Doctoral study of Social work and social policy	
Name of partner institution (in case of dual doctorate):		
Name of doctoral study programme at partner institution (in case of dual doctorate):		
Area / field / branch (if the doctoral study programme is performed within a branch):	Social sciences /social activities	
INFORMATION ON THE DOCTORAL THESIS		
Thesis language	English	
Thesis title:	In the language of the thesis	A Comparative Analysis of the Impacts of Housing Policies in Selected Post-Socialist Countries
	In Croatian	Komparativna analiza učinaka stambenih politika u odabranim postsocijalističkim državama
	In English	A Comparative Analysis of the Impacts of Housing Policies in Selected Post-Socialist Countries
MENTOR(S)		
	Full name, title:	Institution, country:
Mentor:	Assoc. prof. Danijel Baturina, PhD	University of Zagreb Faculty of Law, Republic of Croatia
Mentor:		
THESIS EVALUATION COMMITTEE		
Appointed Thesis Evaluation Committee ² :	Full name, title:	Institution, country:
	1. Assoc. prof. Jelena Matančević, PhD	University of Zagreb Faculty of Law, Republic of Croatia
	2. Adjunct Assistant Professor Anđelina Svirčić Gotovac, PhD	Institute for social research, Zagreb, RH

¹ Forward the completed and signed DR.10 form to the appropriate Student Office in digital and print format.

²Committee members 6 and 7 only in case of a dual doctorate



	3. Prof. Gerard Van Bortel, PhD	Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment
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Session of the competent body and agenda item within which the Committee was appointed:		Session of the Council of the Faculty of Law on 3/26/2026. point 36.
DOCTORAL THESIS EVALUATION		
Thesis form:	☒ monograph ☐ Scandinavian model ☐ artistic work	
Thesis is evaluated:	☒ for the first time	☐ after revision
Thesis should be:	☒ accepted ☐ revised ☐ rejected	
Explanation for the above opinion (specifying original scientific or artistic contribution and new discovery):		
Marko Horvat's doctoral thesis, entitled A Comparative Analysis of the Impacts of Housing Policies in Selected Post-Socialist Countries, comprises 371 pages. Following the preliminary pages containing the title pages, information on the supervisor, summaries in English and Croatian, and the table of contents, the main text extends to 305 numbered pages. The reference list covers pages 306 to 344 and is followed by an appendix presenting the results of the literature review. The thesis is organised into fourteen chapters that form a coherent and logically structured whole. Following the introductory chapter, the thesis addresses the conceptualisation of comparative housing research and the theoretical framework of path dependence, the research context and methodology, housing in post-socialist countries, and separate case studies of Slovenia, Croatia and Slovakia. The concluding part is comprised of the comparative analysis, discussion, research limitations, policy recommendations for strengthening affordable housing provision, and conclusions. In the introductory part, the candidate clearly defines the research problem and aim, taking as a point of departure the growing problem of housing unaffordability as an important social risk. A central question is why Slovenia, Croatia and Slovakia, despite comparable socialist legacies, broadly similar transition conditions and mass privatisation of the housing stock, developed different institutions, housing policy instruments and models of housing provision. The aim of the thesis is to identify and compare the factors that have shaped housing provision in the selected countries, with particular attention to affordable housing policies and the ways in which they recognise and address vulnerable groups. Particular attention is given to households that are unable to meet their housing needs through the market. The theoretical and conceptual part provides a systematic and critical review of the development of comparative housing research, the welfare regime and housing regime approaches, and their possibilities and limitations in the analysis of post-socialist housing systems. The main theoretical framework is the concept of path dependence, which is used to consider how earlier institutional decisions, policy priorities and policy choices may enable or constrain subsequent housing policy development. The thesis applies a weak, non-deterministic version of path dependence, using it as a theoretical and explanatory framework rather than as a deterministic model, thereby allowing for institutional change, the role of actors and variation across cases. The methodological approach is based on a qualitative comparative case study design guided by the logic of Most Similar Systems Design. Slovenia, Croatia and Slovakia were selected because they share important characteristics related to socialist housing provision, transition to a market economy, mass privatisation and high homeownership rates, while showing different affordable		

housing outcomes. The national housing systems constitute the primary cases of analysis, while the inclusion of Ljubljana, Zagreb and Bratislava provides additional insight into local housing policy implementation in urban settings characterised by strong housing pressures.

The thesis draws on a substantial and diverse evidence base. In addition to relevant international and Croatian academic and professional literature in the fields of social and housing policy, comparative housing research and institutional approaches, the analysis uses legislative and strategic documents, policy documents and secondary statistical data, particularly EU-SILC indicators and national statistical sources. The empirical material is complemented by data collected through nine semi-structured expert interviews in Slovenia, Croatia and Slovakia, with participants drawn from national and local institutions and the academic community. Statistical data, documentary evidence and expert insights are triangulated in order to link observed housing trends and outcomes more systematically with the institutional, political and implementation processes that shaped them.

The main empirical part of the thesis consists of three case studies following a common analytical structure. Each case examines the demographic and economic context, housing stock and tenure structure, housing supply and prices, the institutional framework and governance arrangements, national and local housing policies, supply-side and demand-side measures, the position of vulnerable groups, and selected indicators of housing affordability and housing quality. This common analytical structure enables the systematic identification of similarities and differences across the three countries and provides the basis for the subsequent comparative analysis. The thesis distinguishes between the institutional and policy dimensions that contribute to explaining housing policy development, policy outputs, and broader housing outcomes that are also shaped by economic, demographic and market factors. The findings point to the particular importance of institutional and political decisions made during the early post-transition period, policy priorities, housing policy funding arrangements, and implementation capacity at the national and local levels. Slovenia retained stronger institutional continuity and a more developed affordable rental housing infrastructure. In Croatia, immediate post-transition priorities were strongly shaped by war and reconstruction, while no comparable permanent institutional framework for affordable rental housing was developed. Slovakia established a national institutional and financial framework for housing policy, but a substantial share of its capacity was directed towards the renovation of the inherited housing stock, while the implementation of affordable rental housing measures remained strongly dependent on local implementation capacity. The thesis therefore shows that broadly similar transition starting points did not lead to a single housing policy trajectory. At the same time, the affordable rental housing stock remains relatively small in all three countries and is therefore too limited to exert a substantial influence on the wider housing market. The findings also point to the limited reach of demand-side measures when they are not accompanied by corresponding measures to expand the supply of affordable housing.

Particular attention is given to vulnerable groups. The analysis shows that there can be a considerable gap between the formal recognition of particular groups in strategic and other policy documents and the availability, reach and implementation of housing measures intended for them. The selected countries differ in the extent to which vulnerable groups are recognised, in the development of dedicated policy instruments, and in institutional capacity to provide access to affordable housing. The candidate appropriately limits the scope of the conclusions: the thesis supports conclusions about how vulnerable groups are defined in policy, which measures are formally available to them, and how institutional provision is organised, but it does not allow conclusions to be drawn about the direct effects of these policies on the lived experience of people in these groups, as such an analysis was not part of the research design.

The original scientific contribution of the doctoral thesis can be identified at several interrelated levels. Its empirical contribution lies in the structured comparative analysis of three housing systems that remain underrepresented in comparative housing research, combining statistical data, policy documents, institutional analysis and expert interviews. Its conceptual contribution lies in demonstrating that the broad category of the post-socialist housing regime conceals important differences between countries in institutional arrangements, policy priorities and housing provision. Its explanatory contribution lies in specifying how institutional continuity or absence, policy prioritisation, funding mechanisms and local implementation capacity contributed to different housing policy trajectories. Finally, the thesis makes a policy contribution by developing context-sensitive recommendations for strengthening affordable housing provision that reflect the institutional and political conditions of the individual countries analysed.

On this basis, the doctoral thesis can be considered a systematic, methodologically grounded and original scientific study that advances existing knowledge on housing policies in post-socialist countries. Its particular value lies in linking historical development, institutional arrangements, policy instruments and local implementation to differences in the development of affordable housing, and in demonstrating that broadly comparable transition starting points do not necessarily produce similar institutional arrangements, policies or housing outcomes. The thesis therefore makes a relevant contribution to the field of social policy and comparative housing research, as well as to the development of future affordable housing policies.

Opinion and proposal:

The Committee considers that Marko Horvat's doctoral thesis, entitled A Comparative Analysis of the Impacts of Housing Policies in Selected Post-Socialist Countries, constitutes an original and valuable scientific contribution to the field of social policy, particularly to research on housing policy and affordable housing.

The thesis addresses a relevant and timely research problem, is clearly grounded in an appropriate theoretical and methodological framework, draws on a substantial evidence base, and presents a systematic comparative analysis of three housing systems that remain underrepresented in existing comparative housing research. A particular strength of the thesis lies in its reasoned explanation of why broadly comparable post-socialist starting points did not result in similar housing policy trajectories, and in identifying the importance of institutional development, policy priorities, funding mechanisms and implementation capacity for the development of affordable housing. Its empirical, conceptual and explanatory contributions are complemented by relevant policy recommendations adapted to the circumstances of the individual countries analysed.

The Committee considers that the research aims have been achieved, that the findings are relevant to the field and appropriately interpreted, and that the doctoral thesis meets the scientific and academic standards expected of a doctoral thesis. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that Marko Horvat's doctoral thesis be accepted and that the candidate be permitted to proceed to the defence of the thesis.

Separate opinion (only if a member of the Thesis Evaluation Committee has a separate opinion):

Signature

(full name of Committee member)

Additional comments (optional)

**Signatures of Thesis
Evaluation Committee
members³**

Full name, title, institution, country

Signature

1. Assoc. prof. Jelena Matančević, PhD
(Chair of the Committee)



2. Adjunct Assistant Professor Anđelina Svirčić
Gotovac, PhD



3. Prof. Gerard Van Bortel, PhD



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In Zagreb, on September 11, 2026

³ Committee members 6 and 7 only in case of a dual doctorate.

