DASH Final Conference

The Role of Planning Systems and Land Policy in Delivering Social and Affordable Housing

A comparative analysis of planning systems in Denmark, Germany, Portugal and Serbia

Aleksandar Jevtić - Urban Planning Expert in Urban and Spatial Planning Institute of Vojvodina

Ivana Momić - Urban Planner in Public Enterprise Urbanism and Construction Leskovac

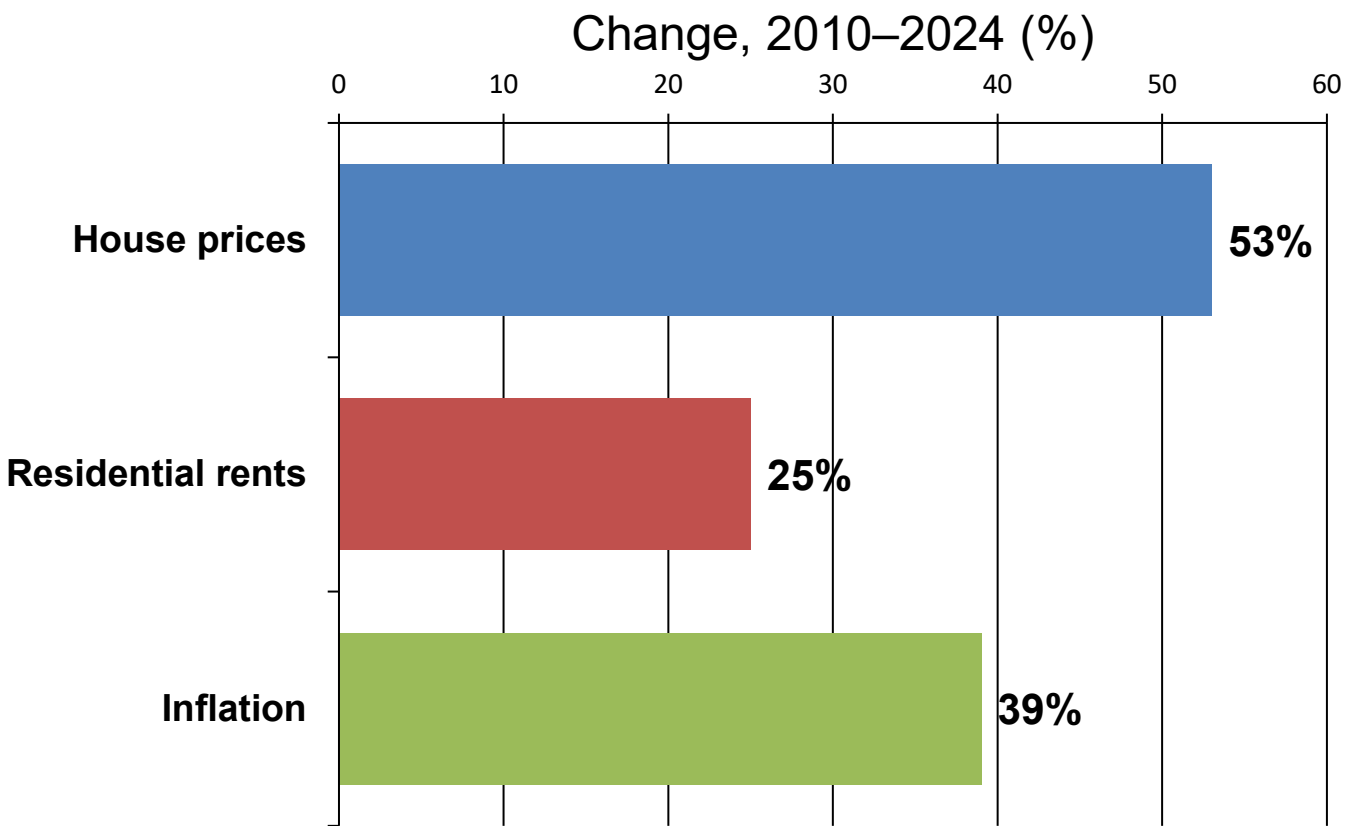
The Serbian Urban Planners Association (SUPA)

This presentation is a summary of our research report, fully published and accessible on the official DASH platform https://www.dashousing.eu/dissemination/

DASH – Deliver sAfe and Social Housing

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The evaluation of the macroeconomic indicators across the European Union between 2010 and 2024 (2010 = 100)



Housing prices have grown significantly faster than rents, in short, the cost of buying a home has grown twice as fast as the cost of renting

Source: Eurostat / ECB / OECD data as compiled and discussed in the paper; approximate cumulative changes.

Demographic Changes and Capital Flows

The existing housing stock doesn't fit today's needs in terms of size, location, or price.

- **Demographic Pressure**: a smaller average household size, rapid population ageing, and an increase in one-person households. Furthermore, urbanization continues to concentrate in major dynamic centers, while less attractive areas lose population.
- **Housing as an investment Asset**: Housing attracts capital as a safe haven during crises, separating prices from local wages and rents.

This investment demand drives real estate values completely away from local household incomes

A policy imbalance: reactive protection, weaker supply response

Our analysis reveals a critical policy imbalance across contemporary European systems

Public intervention is focused on REACTIVE / DEMAND-SIDE PROTECTION.
This requires:

- Rent control and stabilization measures.
- Standardized rent systems and rent controls.
- Protection for existing tenants.

While these tools temporarily reduce pressure in regulated segments, moderating rents is not a substitute for creating new homes.

To fix the problem, focus should be redirected toward SUPPLY / DELIVERY MECHANISMS.
This requires:

- Mobilize development land.
- Link planning gains to affordable housing.
- Establish municipal land policy and development agreements.
- Long-term funding and delivery capacity.

Research Question and Analytical Framework

- **Core Research Questions:** How urban planning affects social and affordable housing? Through which legal mechanisms can public authorities regulate development-land markets?

The Integrated Triad: Our analytical framework bridges the traditional division between urban planning, land policy, and targeted fiscal and financial instruments.

Methodological Framework: This research applies a qualitative analysis of planning systems, built on literature as well as structured interviews conducted within the DASH programme.

Empirical Component: A comprehensive analysis of official urban planning documents was conducted across **27 major cities in Serbia**.

Our paper provides a thorough analysis of plans, online resources, and extensive literature. It also includes the comprehensive register of experts we interviewed, and we sincerely thank all of them for their contribution to this project.
So far, this analysis shows the current indicators and global circumstances, the next slides focus purely on planning analysis.

Direct Comparison of Planning Hierarchies

Our research focuses on a direct evaluation of national frameworks planning legislation and includes a detailed review of regional and local level across Germany, Denmark, Portugal, and Serbia

Country	Strategic / Macro Level	Local Land-Use Plan	Binding Implementation Tool
Germany	State & Regional Plans (ROG)	Preparatory Land Use Plan (FNP)	**Statutory Dev. Plan (B-Plan)**
Denmark	National Planning Reports	Municipal Plan (Kommuneplan)	**Local Plans (Lokalplaner)**
Portugal	Regional Programs (PROT)	Municipal Director Plan (PDM)	**Execution Plans (PU / PP)**
Serbia	Spatial Plan of RS / Municipalities	General Urban Plan (GUP)	**Detailed Regulation Plan (PDR)**

As this matrix illustrates, all four planning systems are structured from the strategic macro or regional level, down to the general local land-use plan, and finally to the binding implementation tool. Legal regulation and right allocation happen exclusively at this binding plan.

Cross-National Matrix of Planning and Housing Indicators

Indicator	Denmark	Germany	Portugal	Serbia
National framework planning legislation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hierarchical planning system	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Social housing in national planning legislation	Explicit	Indirect	Indirect	No explicit reference
Social housing in national planning documents	No explicit reference	Indirect	Indirect / strategic	Explicit
Social housing in local planning strategies	Explicit and systematic	Frequent / established	Mainly strategic	Limited / declarative
Social housing in local plans	No	No	Generally absent; exceptions	Yes
Expropriation for social housing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, subject to public-use designation
Planning obligations on developers	Yes	Yes	Possible under conditions	No
Approx. share of social housing in total stock	20%	2.7%	2%	0.5%

This data confirms that the main differences—such as the massive share of social housing in Denmark—lie in local implementation mechanisms, not in the existence of planning systems.

Source: Author's comparative analysis (Table 9 in the paper).

Case Study Insights: Germany & Denmark

Germany (Federal / Germanic Tradition): A strict hierarchical system with formal procedures, strong local autonomy guaranteed by the constitution, multi-level planning, clear land policies, and urban development agreements. Germany's Directive: in practice means that cities successfully utilize Section 85 of the Federal Building Code (BauGB) and urban development contracts to mandate social housing quotas from private developers.

Denmark (Nordic / Scandinavian Tradition): A decentralized system built through cooperation, consensus, and strong local decision-making. Denmark's social housing relies on a huge non-profit market where municipal tools are crucial. **Denmark's Segmentation** in Copenhagen demonstrates that cost-based rental sectors serve as essential macroeconomic and social stabilizers.

Key Lesson: Strong urban planning helps stabilize unpredictable real estate markets.

Denmark and Germany: connect plans to implementation

This is the exact formula of how Denmark and Germany successfully connect plans to physical implementation

- Housing objectives can be delivered through ordinary development processes.
- Social housing need not be a separate land-use category.
- Municipal land policy can influence land availability and development conditions.
- Development agreements and planning obligations can connect private development with public goals.

Planning provides the framework; implementation mechanisms do the delivery work.

Case Study Insights: Portugal & Serbia

Portugal (Mediterranean / Urbanism Tradition): An evolving system transitioning from rigid centralisation to local plans, leaving execution to local authorities.

Serbia (Post-Socialist Transitional Tradition): A changing system with frequent legal updates and a clear enforcement gap between macro strategies and local execution.

- **The Serbian Reality:** Exactly **24 out of 27 cities (88.8%)** explicitly identified specific sites for social housing, proving strong recognition on paper.

- **The Implementation Gap**: Physical delivery remains strictly dependent on public land availability and direct public investment.

- Without active public land banking, local authorities face **The Land Deficit** falling into **The Developer-Led Trap** where urban plans utilize zoning parameters to accommodate private capital instead of guiding public housing delivery.

Conclusion & Strategic Recommendations

Urban planning is the core institutional framework—it defines development rights through zoning parameters, while coordinated policies secure the physical delivery.

Therefore, to structurally fix this housing crisis, Strategic Recommendations are proposed:

1. It must shift toward **Coordinated Management**, aligning spatial zoning, proactive land banking, and stable public capital.
2. Local authorities must overcome **The Planning Mirage:** Merely colouring a zone as "social housing" on an urban plan does not produce physical housing units.
3. It is recommended to equip municipal authorities with effective **Value-Capture Instruments** to integrate parcel-level zoning with delivery.
4. **The Spatial Integration:** the professional gap between macroeconomic housing targets and physical design must be bridged directly at the local regulatory planning level.

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Thank you very much for your time and your attention.

We look forward to your feedback, and we are happy to take any questions you may have

