

# Built utopias: the rise and fall of large-scale collective housing in Serbia

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Biggest riots in France since May 1968 started on 27 October 2005 in Clichy-sous-Bois, an eastern Paris suburb (banlieue), notorious for its high unemployment rate and incidence of violent crime. This banlieue, inhabited mostly with labor-immigration of the 1960s and their posterity, consists of HLM (habitation à loyer modéré) - rent-controlled housing type.

Although early Modernist doctrine in architecture predicted large-scale collective housing for an ideal classless society of the future, the First World War and the housing shortage that followed, found these estates to be mostly inhabited by middle and lower class families. Middle class residents quickly fled to two-storey suburbs, leaving poorer people in their wake, surrounded by a specific set of high-rise problems. In France, this migration coincided with the immense immigration pressure of population from Maghreb countries; they were mostly employed in low-paid positions and their poor economic situation, along with considerable xenophobia among French natives, lead to progressive ghettoization of these residential suburbs.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the problems faced are significantly different. High-rise housing was built on a scale barely imaginable in Western Europe: in most Western countries around 17% of housing stock is in high-rise blocks, while in the countries of the East, this average share is closer to 40%. The idea of collective housing fit perfectly with Communist ideals, and a more mixed group of residents moved in to stay. Fortunately, these countries have so far avoided the massive ghettoization of high-rise estates experienced further west.

After the fall of Communism, many state-owned properties were sold to residents and in transitional years the demographic structure of inhabitants has been rapidly changing. Although most of eastern European societies still has not reached a level of economic wealth that would provoke the migration of higher-income inhabitants into suburban single-family units. It is important to start slowly now to address the situation before it becomes more urgent and starts to undermine the social cohesion. This research addresses the issues that would help avoid process of ghettoization of mass-housing estates in former communist countries.