

Scientific article

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-2-491-509

For citation

Volkova, A. V. (2026) Housing policy in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s, an attempt to standardize the everyday life of the Soviet citizen, Herald of an Archivist, no. 2, pp. 491-509.
DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-2-491-509

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Housing policy in the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s, an attempt to standardize the everyday life of the Soviet citizen

Abstract

The paper examines the development of the «new man» within the framework of the Soviet urban development program in the 1920s and 1930s, when housing policy was aimed at constructing residential buildings that reflected scientific and technological advances and provided comfortable living conditions for workers. Specifically, the Soviet government aimed to create housing conditions that would facilitate the organization of everyday life. Discussions regarding the direction of housing construction development were conducted at the level of the Party and Soviet leadership, as well as within the architectural community. Using archival materials from the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History (RGANI) and the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), the themes of debate were identified, in which the concept of «standardized construction» was frequently used. The Soviet government interpreted this term as a means of addressing the housing crisis in the USSR. Participants also believed that «standardized construction» was intended to regulate household management. This regulation of everyday life was achieved through uniform housing layouts, which immersed society in a new everyday reality. Architects actively debated the introduction of «standardized construction». Beginning in the second half of the 1920s, Soviet urban planners came up with a view the concept of a standard as a result of the analysis of everyday and social processes. Subsequently, discussions about «standardization» methods in housing construction began to be put into practice, where the formulated concept of social engineering was widely implemented in residential environments, and people were introduced to socialist ideas about social organization. The practical significance of applying standards to housing construction can be assessed using housing survey reports found in the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) and the Russian State Archive of Economics (RGAE). The obtained data demonstrate the Soviet government's inflated demands for residential amenities and mandatory criteria for

everyday life, which influenced the restructuring of public consciousness. In finale, the author concludes that civil architecture did not always meet high quality standards. Despite the difficulties in approving design documentation and fully implementing housing projects, the goal of creating a new citizen was always to be achieved. New houses of the future for the «new society» were destined to become a mass phenomenon.

Keywords

Soviet everyday life, Soviet architecture of the 20th century, standardization, housing policy, Soviet society, housing conditions, «new way of life».

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The article was received in the editorial office on 3.02.2025, recommended for publication on 20.03.2026

You can read completely article in the russian historic-archival magazine “The Herald of an Archivist”. Read more about terms of subscription [here](#) .

Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .