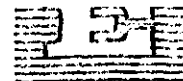


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PERMANENT HOUSING RECORDS

Prépared by Mr. L.J.S. de Jonge (Netherlands)

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## I. INTRODUCTION

1. Although the primary purpose of this paper is to discuss permanent housing records as a statistical tool in the preparation of house-building programmes, it goes beyond this framework. The reason is that permanent housing records are an invaluable tool for tackling many other housing problems and that no reference material is available on this subject.

2. Permanent housing records may be defined as records on individual housing units, kept regularly up to date and including a number of important data on the individual housing units registered. As housing records have to be kept up to date regularly, it will be clear that they enable us to keep abreast of the housing situation by making available at any given moment a variety of up-to-date data.

3. Permanent housing records enable us to deal with two types of problems:

(a) Problems concerning individual housing units: As each individual housing unit is recorded separately, it is possible to deal with each one individually. Permanent housing records might thus be used, e.g. to provide the individual addresses of housing units worthy of being connected up to the (public) gas, water and electricity systems; the addresses of dwellings to be condemned; the addresses of dwellings that should not be condemned because of their historical value; the addresses of housing units worth improving so as to prevent them from deteriorating into slums;

(b) Problems of a more general nature. The data on the individual housing units may be combined to provide a basis, say, for slum clearance and other town-planning schemes; for reliable local statistics on the housing stock; for calculations concerning local housing requirements and shortages, etc. The records may also serve as a framework for housing surveys.

/II. GEOGRAPHICAL

## II. GEOGRAPHICAL COVERAGE AND CONTENTS

### A. Coverage

Although there may be strong arguments in favour of having permanent housing records which would cover all housing units over the whole country, the high costs involved in initiating and maintaining these records must also be considered. The advantages to be gained must be in proportion to the money invested and obviously in large rural areas, for example, the costs involved would be far higher than the advantage to be expected would warrant. The same is true of urban communities having no housing problems, or problems of only minor importance.

5. It therefore seems essential that the decision whether permanent housing records should be started or not should be left to the local authorities. When taking such a decision the latter should bear in mind that permanent housing records are of value particularly to communities having very considerable housing problems and lacking the necessary up-to-date information to tackle them. In practice these will be large towns and rapidly-growing medium-sized towns.

### B. Contents

6. As regards the contents of permanent housing records a distinction should be made between the units to be included and the data to be registered for each unit so included.

(a) Units to be included. Permanent housing records should include all occupied housing units, whether intended for habitation or not, together with all vacant conventional dwellings. If the units not intended for habitation were omitted, it would be impossible - especially for towns with large numbers of such units - to obtain a complete picture of the housing situation. As far as the units intended for habitation are concerned, mobile housing units could as a rule be excluded from the records. However, owing to the shortage of dwellings, sometimes quite considerable numbers of households occupy houseboats and caravans, and in such cases

/it may

it may be considered necessary to register this type of housing unit also in the housing records. Thus, it will depend upon local conditions whether or not and to what extent mobile housing units should be included. Apart from housing units buildings unoccupied and not intended for permanent occupancy, e.g. churches, schools, shop and office buildings, could also be incorporated in the housing records. This would facilitate continuous control of the completeness of the records. It should be decided in each separate instance whether such control is important enough to warrant including the buildings in question.

(b) Data to be included. The items to be included in the permanent records should be carefully chosen, as should also the classifications for each item. In this respect it is very important to distinguish between

- (i) Non-variable (or practically non-variable) data such as location, class or type of housing unit, number of rooms, installations, characteristics of the building (year of construction, materials, floor space), etc.

Data of this kind, once gathered, need not be brought up to date since they hardly ever change. This means that the costs involved are restricted to the collection and compilation of the data and that no costs are involved in keeping them up to date. Nevertheless, it will still be quite expensive if too much of this type of data is included. Therefore a programme should be established indicating the minimum amount of data to be collected for all dwellings, with a number of additional items only to be included for those housing units on which more information is wanted (e.g. dwellings built before 1914, sub-standard dwellings, dwellings of historical value, etc.).

- (ii) Variable data such as rents, ownership, occupants, households, household equipment, etc.

Since it is much easier to collect data of this kind for a given moment of time than to keep them permanently up to date, it will be clear that the amount of such data included should be kept down to

a minimum. This will also help to keep the cost of permanent housing records at an acceptable level. On the other hand, some essential variable data such as the number of households living in each housing unit and the size of these households can hardly be omitted. If it is impossible or unduly costly to keep these data regularly up to date, they might nevertheless be introduced, if only to serve as an indication though this will of course be less and less valuable as time goes on. Correction of the data concerned may, however, take place every ten years, e.g. on the occasion of a new housing census.

Another possibility is to exclude variable data altogether and to collect them periodically, or whenever they are wanted, by means of sampling surveys based on the non-variable data included in the housing records. This may in many cases prove to be much less costly than including the variable data in the housing records and keeping them regularly up to date.

7. Precisely what data should be included will depend on the intended use of the records and on the cost. Hence, general recommendations in this respect cannot be given. The demands made on permanent housing records for the calculation of housing requirements need not be dealt with separately, since they coincide with those already formulated for housing censuses under item 4.2 (a).

### III. INITIATING AND MAINTAINING HOUSING RECORDS

#### A. Initiating a permanent housing records system

8. This may be undertaken as a separate operation, which would involve visits by a large number of enumerators, within a limited period, to all housing units to be incorporated in the system, for the purpose of recording data concerning the items to be included.

Since the procedure involved is very similar to that followed in taking a housing census, the only real difference being the type of data collected, it is obvious that from the point of view of costs, a combination of both operations is desirable. This would imply the use of the housing census questionnaires both for housing census purposes and also for the initiation of permanent housing records.

/9. If the

9. If the decision to keep records is taken before the questionnaires for the next housing census have been drawn up, account could be taken in establishing the questionnaire concerned of the lines of the housing records programme. If this is no longer feasible the possibility still exists of taking the housing census questionnaires as a starting-point in so far as the programmes for housing censuses and permanent housing records coincide. In this connexion it should be borne in mind that it is not at all necessary to collect all the data simultaneously. It may be found more practical and economical to start permanent housing records with only the minimum of data (e.g. only the address and the type of housing unit) and to spread the collection of data - particularly the non-variable data - over a fairly long period. The task could then be entrusted to a smaller number of more highly trained enumerators, which would make for greater reliability in the data to be collected.

10. This is particularly true of data of a more technical character, which normally cannot be collected in connexion with a general housing census, since the enumerators are for the most part not technically skilled. In this case it may even be necessary to have the relevant data collected by technical specialists. As this will involve a good deal of time it is preferable to make a start with the housing records and to begin collecting technical data only after all the relevant housing units have been recorded.

11. It is therefore recommended that a long-term programme for the collection of data be established, taking the questionnaires for the latest census as the starting-point. Such a programme would clearly indicate the different stages at which the housing records should be brought up to a more advanced level on the basis of their intended practical use. The relevant programme should preferably cover not more than an inter-census period.

/B. Maintaining housing

B. Maintaining housing records

12. Housing records serve in the first instance as a picture of the actual housing situation. It is therefore necessary both to add to the records all new housing units and to strike off those units that cease to exist.

As far as new units are concerned, there is not much difficulty in incorporating conventional dwellings or housing newly built or emerging as a result of conversions etc., since the relevant activities are mostly undertaken under government licence and are thus known to one government department or another. The same applies to other housing units intended for habitation.

As however units not intended for habitation should also be incorporated in the records as soon as they are occupied, the difficulty arises of keeping abreast of these cases, since they are as a rule not known to the local authorities. The reverse case, the abandoning of units, as well as most instances of loss of normal dwelling stock, e.g. by demolition, destruction by fire, slum clearance and the like will raise the same difficulties. For reporting this type of change in the housing stock a special field organization will be necessary. This would at the same time be entrusted with many other duties regarding the housing records, e.g. the control of variable data on a sampling basis, the collection of variable data not incorporated in the housing records, and the like.

13. It should be stressed here that it is not sufficient to add to the housing records the addresses of any new units that emerge. It will be necessary at the same time to collect the relevant data for these units, at least the data included in the minimum programme. Most of these data will be obtainable via the administration, at least for newly-built dwellings. Should this not be the case, the use of the field organization referred to in paragraph 14 will be necessary. To avoid having too many people employed in the field organization it is advisable to keep the records up to date as far as possible on the basis of data from departments controlling or registering changes important for housing records.

/14. Thus it



14. Thus it is of vital importance that in the preparation of housing records an inventory should be made of administrative departments that can supply data concerning changes in the dwelling stock. The maintenance of housing records could then be entrusted to the local authorities that control most of the relevant changes. However, preference should be given to the technical building authorities even if they do not have administrative control over the majority of the changes.

15. If many variable data are included in the housing records, special measures will have to be taken to keep these data up to date. In principle the same possibilities arise here as with regard to the changes in the units, viz. incorporation on the basis of administrative machinery, if necessary combined with reporting by the field organization. (See the heading "variable data" in paragraph 6.) A special warning should be given here regarding the inclusion of data concerning the occupants of housing units. If too many such data are included, dwelling records ipso facto become population records, which means that the number of changes to be incorporated increase enormously. For apart from the changes in the housing stock all births, deaths, moves from one housing unit to another (even within the same town), marriages, divorces and so on will then have to be incorporated to keep the records up to date. So in this respect strict limitation is vital.

#### IV. HOUSING RECORDS AND HOUSING STATISTICS

16. From the foregoing it is evident that up-to-date housing records are an ideal basis for housing statistics.

(a) Statistics on the housing stock can easily be derived from the number of units recorded. It is not necessary to count all the units each year. After the first complete count of the units of each type, figures for subsequent years are arrived at by simple addition and subtraction of the relevant annual changes.

/(b) Statistics concerning

(b) Statistics concerning items included in the record can easily be calculated without equipment, but in certain circumstances, especially when cross classifications are required, it is advisable to use punch cards. Obviously this necessitates a dual record of changes: once in the records themselves and once on the punch card, unless it is decided to keep the records in the form of punch cards only. This can, however, only be done if

- (i) The punch cards are not used (or little used) for individual consultation;
- (ii) The punch cards are made identifiable by punching or printing the address;
- (iii) The personnel is skilled in dealing with punch cards.

Whichever of the two systems is chosen, however, there will always be a set of punch cards giving a permanently up-to-date picture of the housing situation.

(c) Housing records offer a reliable basis for the enumeration in each new housing census. They indicate to each enumerator exactly what addresses he has to visit in his enumeration district. On the other hand the housing census provides a check on housing records, since enumerators may find housing units that are not incorporated in the records. In the same way the housing records may provide a check on the completeness of the housing census.

(d) As previously indicated, housing records are an ideal basis for sample surveys of the housing situation. If no data on the occupation of housing units are included such surveys may be programmed in such a way as to provide the data necessary for the calculation of housing requirements (see in this respect the paper on item 4.1(b)). It need hardly be said that housing records can also serve as an ideal basis for sample surveys of many other types.

## V. UNIFORMITY

17. The linking of housing censuses to housing records implies the use of uniform concepts and definitions in both as well as in record standards in the different towns of any given country. This uniformity is of vital importance, as comparable statistics can be derived where the procedure is uniform. It is not suggested, of course, that housing records in different towns should be uniform in all details. Different towns may have different needs in many respects, and local differences may call for differences of approach. Nevertheless uniformity should be aimed at, at least for the minimum programme recommended.

18. Obviously it is a very difficult matter to achieve this basic uniformity, say, between independently-kept housing records in different towns. It will, therefore, be necessary to set up an advisory board to assist local authorities responsible for keeping housing records in tackling problems of initiating and maintaining housing records. The members of the board should include housing policy experts and experts on housing statistics. This would to a large extent ensure the quality of the records as well as the reliability of the statistics derived from them.

## VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

19. Permanent housing records are defined as records on individual housing units that are regularly kept up to date and include a number of important data on the individual housing units registered. They can be used for dealing with problems concerning the individual units as well as problems of a more general nature.

20. As housing records are to be regarded as a relatively expensive tool for dealing with housing problems they are justified only in communities having considerable housing problems and lacking the necessary up-to-date information to tackle them.

/21. Housing records

21. Housing records should include as a minimum all occupied housing units together with vacant conventional dwellings. Local conditions must dictate whether or not and to what extent other units should be added.

22. As regards the items to be collected it is advisable to restrict variable data to a minimum, and to take into account in regard to the non-variable data the use to be made of them and the cost of collection.

23. It is recommended that housing records be compiled preferably on the basis of housing census questionnaires and to bring the records up to a more advanced level on the basis of a balanced programme covering not more than an inter-census period.

24. In compiling housing records it is necessary to keep them up to date as far as possible on the basis of existing administrative machinery. For changes which are not administratively known a field organization should be established.

The keeping of housing records should be entrusted to the administration controlling most of the changes, preference being given wherever possible to technical building authorities.

25. Housing records are an ideal basis for statistics on the housing stock and the items relating to housing units; and they provide a reliable basis for housing surveys and surveys of many other types. They can offer a basis for the enumeration in each new housing census. The housing census supplies a check on the records and vice-versa.

26. Housing records should be based (at least for the minimum programme) on uniform concepts and definitions which are the same as those applied in housing censuses.

To guarantee uniformity between local housing records and periodic housing censuses it is recommended that an advisory board be set up including housing policy experts as well as experts on housing statistics, to deal with problems involved in initiating and maintaining local housing records.