

International Comparison: How Small is a “Small Apartment”

Amos Weingarten, Jonathan Naeh, Bayan Ali, Musa Taha and Nir Mualam

ABSTRACT

The article reviews the phenomenon of small apartments through an international comparison of legislation and policy in 14 countries. The comparison includes the minimum size of a small housing unit in these countries, the size of a minimum room in a small apartment, and a comparison of the reasons for applying minimum standards for the size of housing units. We found that there is a relatively wide range of definitions of a 'small apartment' in different countries and cities around the world. The policy definitions of 'small apartments' are quite broad. On the one hand, there are relatively 'generous' countries like Ireland. On the other hand, the comparative analysis points to countries/cities – like Hong Kong- that define 'small apartment' in a rather minimal way. The motivation to regulate is different, as are the types of legislation (for example, local versus national). The comparison shows that in Israel the minimum size of an apartment is quite generous and is larger than most countries included in the sample, yet still below the countries of the British Commonwealth of Nations - England, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. We also found that, like other countries, in Israel there is a significant gap between the size of a single living room according to the legislation, and the aggregate size of an apartment that is considered 'small'.

Keywords: small apartment; housing policy

Amos Weingarten is a permit-licensing coordinator at the Lower Galilee Planning and Construction Committee. Weingarten is an architectural engineer, with a bachelor's degree in geography and environmental studies and a master's degree in urban and regional planning.

Jonathan Naeh is an attorney and urban planner with a bachelor's degree in law and government and a master's degree in urban and regional planning. He is a graduate of the urban planning cadet program of the Ministry of the Interior, and specializes in planning in Arab communities.

Bayan Ali Musa Taha is an urban planner, with a master's degree in urban and regional planning from the Technion, and a graduate of the urban planning cadet program of the Ministry of the Interior. Bian is a consultant for government bodies and served as an assistant engineer for the Majd al-Krum City Council.

Prof. Nir Mualam is an associate professor in the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning and head of the planning policy laboratory at the Technion. Mualam is an expert in planning and construction law, a lawyer, and an urban planner. His research focuses on housing, local government, preservation of historic buildings, urban design and legal and institutional aspects of planning and local government.