

# SPATIALIZATION OF SOCIAL PROCESS VS SINGULAR OBJECT OF ARCHITECTURE

*Mihailo Lujak*<sup>1</sup>, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture, Belgrade, Serbia

**The fundamental subject of this research is spatialization of social process in the period of modernism manifested through transformation and/or change in meaning of space under a variety of social processes without changing the physical structure of space. These changes in meaning represent the specificity of development in space under the influence of the said social processes, which in this case is Yugoslav modernism, resulting in the creation of a singular object of architecture specific of a certain environment.**

**These processes have been researched in the residential complex of Block 19a in New Belgrade, designed by architects Milan Lojanica, Predrag Cagić, and Borivoje Jovanović, and constructed between 1975 and 1982.**

**The basic objective of this paper is to establish crucial causes for this complex to be considered the landmark in the designing practice of the time in Yugoslavia through research and critical analysis of the residential complex of Block 19a, and to try and determine the importance and potential influence in further architectural development in the period following its construction. In other words, the basic objective of this paper is to establish whether residential complex Block 19a represents a singular object of architecture in Yugoslavia/Serbia.**

**Key words: paradigm of modernism, singular object of architecture, discontinuity, intuition/anticipation, utopia, and an event.**

## INTRODUCTION

Residential construction in Belgrade after World War II until the early eighties of the last century is characterized by construction of huge, economical residential structures (buildings) within residential suburbs and suburban areas, and also in the territory of New Belgrade. This system of residential construction was put in place instead of the system of constructing individual buildings (Marić et al., 2009), within the framework of traditional block-structures in the old city core, that is, architecture of socialist modernism that had undergone several development stages in the three decades.

The subject of this research is the residential complex of Block 19a in New Belgrade, designed by architects Milan Lojanica, Predrag Cagić, and Borivoje Jovanović, and constructed between 1975 and 1982, in the final stage of socialist modernism in Yugoslavia.

Singularity of architectural structure that is the

subject of this paper originates from the fact that Block 19a, though one of the last in socialist modernism of Yugoslavia, due to some of its architectural features, represents the turning point or *terra incognita*, "the seed of possible anticipation of things to come" (Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2002), and can be simultaneously regarded as one of the first works in post-modern architecture in Yugoslavia.

Speaking of architectural principles executed in the residential complex Block 19a architect Milan Lojanica speaks (Lojanica, 2006) about changes in the paradigm of modern architecture and, at the same time, about the beginning of post-modern architecture in Yugoslavia. This stated indefiniteness or ambiguity of one of the authors indicates an insufficiently defined position of this residential complex in the development of modern architecture in Yugoslavia and additionally proves the statement that Block 19a represents the turning point in the development of modern architecture in Yugoslavia.

The underlying objective of this paper is to establish the crucial reasons which make this complex a landmark in the former architectural

practices in Yugoslavia through research and critical analysis of the residential complex Block 19a, and also to try and determine the significance and potential influence on further architectural development in the period following its construction.

Most writings dealing with residential complex Block 19a were written during the period immediately following the conclusion of the public competition (1975), that is, after the complex was constructed (1982) thus, due to the lack of necessary time distancing, these texts are mainly dedicated to the description and analyses of urban and eco characteristics, spatial and functional organization, and technical features of the structure, and will consequently be of secondary importance in this paper. Since this work has no aim at comprehensive research of Block 19a, the focus of the subject will be on three aspects rendering this residential complex the significance of a landmark in the then architectural practice in Yugoslavia. The three aspects, which are the subject of research, are: diagonal orientation of structures in an orthogonal city; vernacular architecture in a modern city; and, spatial pattern of a residential

<sup>1</sup> Bul. kralja Aleksandra 73/II, 11 000 Beograd, Serbia  
mlujak@sbb.rs

unit. Therefore, primary objectives of this residential complex Block 19a are to determine, within contemporary architectural theory, the following:

- If residential complex Block 19a represents the turning point in the former architectural practice;
- If residential complex Block 19a represents a unique structure of architecture;
- Significance of this architectural structure for the development of modern architecture in Yugoslavia/Serbia.

The theoretical starting points for the research of residential complex Block 19a are the two contemporary architectural theories: Theory of Singular Object and Event Theory. Creation of a singular object of architecture is one of the essential goals of architecture which Peter Zumthor defined as search for the uncatchable. The job of an architect means the search for what is necessary or for what constitutes a singular object of architecture, while theoretician insists that, at the same time, no intention or individual effort can guarantee the achievement of that singularity. Together, an architect and a theoretician will say that the search for singularity should go on.

Research is based on the analysis of primary sources, mainly original design documentation, and then design documentation obtained from the author, and published texts and papers on the subject of research, touring the site and the analysis of secondary sources.

This work consists of five parts: 1) Introduction stating the subject of the paper, objectives of the research, basic hypotheses, methods of research, and structure of paper; 2) second part stating basic theoretical assumptions, description of researched facts, as well as review and explanations of research results in regard to Singular object of architecture and Event; 3) third part which gives basic theoretical assumptions, descriptions of researched facts, review and explanations of research results in regard to residential complex Block 19a ; 4) fourth finishing part, presents proof for the hypotheses, review and explanations of results of the research, and derived conclusions which represent the sum and synthesis of results obtained during research; 5) conclusion, as an appendix to part four with comparative analysis of given hypotheses and research objectives, that is, definite and unambiguous confirmation of research results as presented in parts two, three, and four. Conclusion is followed by 6) Notes to the text; 7) Literature, list of sources structured alphabetically according to the significance.

### **Singular object of architecture - an event**

The subject of research in this paper, which is residential complex Block 19a, after a time distance of more than two decades following the construction, will not be observed in a conventional or traditional way characteristic for the theory of architecture in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

During the eighties of the last century, at the time of post-structural thought, progressive thinkers advocated de-differentiation of disciplines, that is, uniting theory and practice into one discipline – theory of architecture. Two decades later at the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century de-differentiation of disciplines and intentional erasing of borders between specific cultural areas and practice tends to homogenize all distinctions and differences into one neutral and global way of thinking. The negative character of such approach is defined by terms 'global' and 'neutral', with term neutral as something indefinite that signifies the lack of quality thus becoming non-quality, and so, according to Jean Baudrillard: "neutral can not be loved." (Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2002), The latter term 'globalization' represents a conscious and intentional discrimination which forms a closed virtual space available only to those *connected*. In the globalized world there are those who are in the process of globalization or IT connectivity, while those who are not simply do not exist. Global unification, apart from excluding any possibility of social conflicts, creates absolute neutrality and as such represents the production of non-quality. Baudrillard regards a singular object of architecture as a declaration against these neutral global systems, aspiring to universal quality with the term *universal* designating the system of values.

Accepting the necessary individuality of disciplines and authors, this research done on the example of residential complex Block 19a represents a search for the singular object of architecture and theory.

According to Baudrillard the singular object of architecture is *an event*. The event exists between specific cultural practice and specific cultural context in real time. Duality of event is expressed in the need to be placed between two forms of reality: what was and what will be. Baudrillard claims that "future of architecture is not architectural" (Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2002), while it must be determined "what architecture is and where it is headed, that is, what culture is and where it is headed." (Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2002), Through the growth of domination of perspective, specific form of architecture and its practice will be seen

as production of concepts whose impact and significance will exceed the domain of architecture and enter socio-cultural field. This new activity of theory does not demand new ideas for objects but the invention of new techniques of thinking and analyzing the forms of representation, meaning that theory has transformed "that what used to be philosophy" (Baudrillard and Nouvel, 2002), into its subject of research – *architectural problem*.

Event is an unstable but adaptable open system whose essence is the production of novelty, that is, new political, social or cultural reality. It transforms non-current potential into a new state, in other words, produces a whole new series of potentials that will be effectuated or not. The event is unique and autonomous but there is a whole network of influences, intentions, borrowings, and exchanges in its background and they are the subject of this research. As authors we are not able to choose or determine the event, it appears or not independently of our intention leaving us with the opportunity to choose the concept. At one moment in time object becomes an event, namely object becomes something that is not easy to define sociologically, politically, spatially or esthetically. What is certain is that *singularity* is not an issue of esthetics, an object may be outstandingly beautiful but it does not necessarily become a singular object of architecture, and vice versa, singularity itself is a very complex socio-cultural system.

By researching the event in this paper, it is the change or mutation of space that is researched, change of Block 19a that went on in front of our eyes although not as a confirmation of change or a contemporary need for constant change but as change which represents *coming into being*, as change which aspires to a certain goal as a result of conscious or unconscious intention. The issue of coming into being is far more complex and more profound than the issue of change (Djokić and Nikezić, 2007). In this way it does not imply the existence of theory, just as this paper is not an analysis of strategy because strategy in this case does not exist, but there is a collection of single events which unconsciously reflect reality and anticipate future.

### **Residential complex Block 19a**

In the period after World War II most designs for reconstruction of larger parts of cities or construction of new cities in the world (Blagojević, 2004) were executed by the urban concept of modern city as advocated by CIAM. Basic principles of urbanization by CIAM were given in the publication 'Athens Charter' which greatly reflected Le Corbusier concept of Radiant

City, as well as CIAM concept of Functional City.

The subject of this research residential complex Block 19a is situated in New Belgrade, part of Belgrade which was constructed in the period following World War II. New Belgrade was also planned and designed as a modern and functional city involving concept and principles of CIAM and Le Corbusier Athens Charter (Blagojević, 2004). Basic principles of Athens Charter, which were crucial in designing residential blocks in New Belgrade, as well as residential complex Block 19a, are besides the concept of strict functional zoning and also several significant principles relating to function of residing:

- Paragraph 14 – aired structures (pleasant apartments) occupy refined zones sheltered from hostile winds ... with abundant insulation (Le Corbusier, 1933).
- Paragraph 16 – structures rising along busy roads and at crossroads are damaging to living conditions: noise, dust, and harmful gases (Le Corbusier, 1933).
- Paragraph 27 – arranging residential buildings along highways should be prohibited (Le Corbusier, 1933).
- Paragraph 29 – high rising buildings arranged at distance from one another (Le Corbusier, 1933).
- Paragraph 62 – a pedestrian should be able to move on a path separated from the road (Le Corbusier, 1933).
- Paragraph 63 – streets should be distinct as to their purpose: residential streets, walking paths, transit roads, and main roads (Le Corbusier, 1933).

### Competition

The planning framework for construction of residential complex Block 19a was General Plan for Urbanization of New Belgrade from 1958. This plan resolved the main issues of zoning and the purpose of areas, it defined the road and railway networks as well as planned river and other water-area regulation. Plan of New Belgrade is dominated by the residential function whose density of population was determined at 350 per hectare. Exact locations of individual objects were not defined by plan, they were only indicated. Definite locations and dimensions were to be defined during detailed design of individual blocks or by public urban tenders for more significant blocks and structures.

In accordance with such recommendation given by General Urbanization Plan, September 1,

1975 saw the beginning of public local limited urbanization-architectural competition for ideological solution of residential complex Block 19a located in southern New Belgrade, Milentije Popović Street, to which five design teams were invited:

Team 1 - Aleksandar Stjepanović, Branislav Karadžić, and Božidar Janković;

Team 2 - Milan Lojanica, Predrag Cagić, Borivoje Jovanović, Radisav Marić, and Radmila Lojanica;

Team 3 - Darko Marušić, Milenija Marušić, and Nedeljko Borovica;

Team 4 - Slobodan Komadina, Dušanka Lalić, and Tamara Škulić;

Team 5 - Slobodan Drnjaković, Zoran Radosavljević, Ljubomir Zdravković, and Milan Pavković.

Competition being completed and the first prize awarded to team Milan Lojanica, Predrag Cagić, Borivoje Jovanović and Radmila Lojanica, it was pointed out that the *judging jury* selected the designs “evaluating the contribution to environmental improvement, attitude towards activities – the degree of functional aggregation, importance for social community – socializing component, contribution to relationships between visual forms, and the attitude towards technical and technological treatment” (Aleksić, 1977). The jury also emphasized their detailed analysis of all organizational levels of submitted designs by the following characteristics: features of proposed units and structures, and the way urban tissue is organized; the degree of development of individual and collective sphere; the way units get enclosed or included into urban tissue, or how the hierarchy of the complex is organized – from an apartment, neighbors next door, local community – content cooperation and physical connectivity; proposed standards or residing in the block; value of design in terms of development – according to international experience. Besides evaluating these characteristics, another complex model of appraising the apartments, structures and residential complexes was applied, which was made by Centre for studies of residences IMS, as well as the partial model of evaluating the inner organization of apartments with the aim of obtaining parameters for the complex model (Aleksić, 1977). Having completed evaluation of the submitted designs, the jury emphasized the following as significant results of the competition:

- opening the issue of methods of construction for residential complexes in New Belgrade and their applicability in Block 19a;

- affirmation of the issue of optimization of ecological conditions in residential entities;
- need to create a higher level of residential entities' identity.

According to these characteristics, we notice that Block 19a represents a practical realization of theoretical assumptions of CIAM. In accordance with the standing about unity of disciplines, theory or theoretical assumptions represent the framework or guidelines for architecture, not the definition. Theory is the chart of a singular object of architecture and as such it produces architecture as the subject of knowledge. Acceptance and transformation of dominant theoretical assumptions into architectural design from Block 19a produce primary cultural system for representation; that is, Block 19a becomes *an exclusive representative of the present*.

### Location

Location of Block 19a is a spatial entity surrounded by very busy city roads, Bulevar Milentije Popović, two other streets and inter-city highway Belgrade-Nis. In the vicinity of the location, just by the Vladimir Popović Street, there is a railroad. City roads, spots of their intersections and the railroad represent significant sources of negative impacts in terms of air pollution and high levels of noise, while a certain favorable influence is observed in the closeness of green banks of the Sava River.

With these characteristics of the location in view, authors located residential objects in the center of the block, and positioned them diagonally to surrounding roads. Objects, which are diagonally positioned to the surrounding road network and to the usual position of objects in nearby blocks, stretch along the narrower side in the direction north-south, and by its wider side in the direction east-west. This abandonment of orthogonal system provides better use of natural characteristics of the location; in other words, better quality of apartment insulation is achieved as well as airing of the space between structures (Aleksić, 1977).

Discussing the competition for Block 19a and analyzing the awarded design, Branko Aleksić emphasizes three very significant conceptual characteristics of Block 19a in his text:

- positioning of objects in the center of the block due to the need for isolating *unpleasant sounds and fluids*; (Aleksić, 1977)
- diagonal orientation of objects due to more favorable position in regard to insulation and wind direction;
- importance of spatial context stated through



Fig. 1. A wider location - showing diagonal organization of Block 19a in comparison with surrounding buildings and traffic organization

connection with *vital spots of Belgrade landscape*. (Aleksić, 1977)

The first two features are the result of environmental needs, while their theoretical base is represented by Paragraphs 14, 16, and 27 of Athens Charter. Moreover, we notice that changes in “recipes applied in construction of New Belgrade blocks” (Aleksić, 1977) do not represent negation of paradigms of modernism or abandonment of modernism but the very opposite – they represent the return to its fundamental principles.

### Diagonal spatial organization

“It was Mondrian who finally detached himself in 1925 from De Style and Van Duisburg due to Van Duisburg’s ‘arbitrary’ rotation of orthogonal format.

The third stage of de Style’s activities after 1925 is the period of post-neoplastic development...At the very beginning of the period there was a dramatic severance of relations between Mondrian and Van Duisburg caused by Van Duisburg’s introduction of diagonal into his work back in 1924. The conflict led to Mondrian’s detachment from the group.

...At his parting Mondrian wrote to Van Doesburg: “After your arrogant improvement (?) of neoplasticism any further cooperation is impossible for me...as for the rest sans rancune.” (Troj, 2000)

During the seventies and eighties of the last century Lojanica was researching the problem of form identity through the relationship of *full and empty, place and non-place*, (Lojanica,

2006) or as he explicates himself, he is interested in spatial organization *based on the principle of island form* (Lojanica, 2006) which has a spatial point in the center and plasmatic bordering space. Such spatial concept was applied in the international competition for Goclaw, a town in Poland, then in residential suburb Julino Brdo in Belgrade, and also in the spatial solution for residential complex Block 19a in New Belgrade. The central space of Block 19a is a square or *an island in the negative* (Lojanica, 2006), to which outer structures with residential objects gravitate. The whole composition of Block 19a is spatially rotated in regard to surrounding streets and to orthogonal matrix of New Belgrade for environmental reasons as the author points out, and because of enabling better orientation to the sun and the wind. Lojanica respects the obligatory standardization and industrialization so he builds the complex form of object from a simple standardized particle with two same windows – the traditional *bifora*. Bifora on the structures in Block 19a originated from the transformation of double lancet windows of the traditional Morava

house by which the author consciously burdened an object of modern architecture with history, that is, constructional tradition. The author calls this act *an attack on the Modernism*, (Lojanica, 2006) which it certainly is in the context of late development of post-modernism in Yugoslavia, while in the context of development of post-modernism in the world it can be viewed only as a logical consequence of current courses. However, another *act* in Block 19a is much more of *an attack on the Modernism*, and that is the rotation of the whole block, namely introduction of (baroque) diagonal into a (renaissance) orthogonal city of Modernism, which initiated the process of post-modernization of the Modern city of New Belgrade.

The basic concept of spatial organization of Block 19a is “orientation of residential objects towards environmentally most valuable part – the center of the block in a way which renders it the character of coherent entity; visually connects it to vital spots of Belgrade landscape...which have the visual root and beginnings in the sketches and silhouettes of the city” (Aleksić, 1977). Later in the text he adds that ‘urban matrix of New Belgrade blocks, characterized by orthogonality and harmony with directions of main traffic flows, then enclosure – some sort of autonomy realized through enclosing space and directing it towards central parts of the block – is being cleverly and bravely transformed here” (Aleksić, 1977). Similar explanation was also presented by Milan Lojanica more than twenty years later at a lecture in the School of Architecture of Belgrade University, which suggests that signifying component of a diagonal in an orthogonal city represents an unknown, an unconscious discovery or intuitive risk.

We notice that only environmental reasons were given for conceptual explanation of withdrawing object to the central part of the block and for the rotation of the axis of objects and their diagonal positioning. Importance of orientation for the full quality of residential objects is great but the



Fig. 2. and 3. The diagonal organization of Block 19a in comparison with surrounding buildings

position of objects in Block 19a, according to the conceptual and the aspect of meaning overcomes environmental interests of a residential complex. With such concept authors do not accept the new *modern* context of orthogonal matrix of New Belgrade but associate the design of new residential block to the spatial context of location – its natural characteristics and position within city surroundings, where they tend to establish 'direct dialogue with the panorama of the (old) city' (Aleksić, 1977). Architecture of Modernism tended to form new spatial context criticizing and often negating the heritage of the traditional town so that urban matrix of New Belgrade developed independently from the matrix of traditional Belgrade on the right bank of the Sava River. Nonexistence of necessary historic context in the author's intention of connecting the two city parts, excludes this connection from the post-modernist question of *place spirit* and keeps it in the framework of modernist principles of spatial context and their re-examination. Connecting Block 19a to old Belgrade is a concept of illusion, an attempt to seek compromise between what authors set to cause and what they actually managed to control and perform. Conceptual connection between the two city parts exists exclusively as a mental extension of realistic view, that is, as virtual spatial connection.

### Architectural object

Design of residential complex Block 19a has brought a certain degree of innovation in the traditional recipes which had already turned into practice in the last decade in Belgrade. These novelties are primarily concerned with dimensions and methods of organization of activities/functions in residential complex/block, with solutions for objects and space between structures, with outlook and functional organization of objects and structure of residential units. (Aleksić, 1977)

After performing the analysis of the realized novelties in spatial organization of residential complex Block 19a and their meaning, it is necessary to establish whether there are novelties in *appearance and functional organization of objects and structure of residential units* and if there are any, to establish their meaning.

The fundamental characteristic of the plan/base of the object is two-tract concept of interior organization. The corpus of the object consists of two tracts which are interconnected by the core of vertical communications (stairways and elevators), around which four apartments are grouped. Such organization of object unifies the

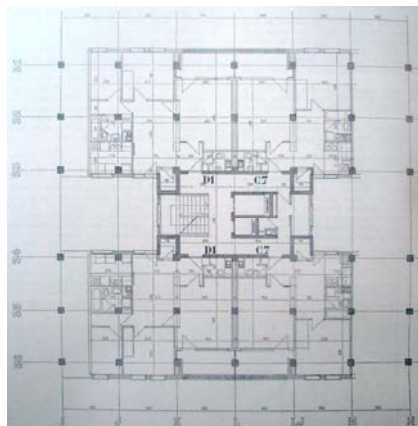


Fig. 4. Block 19a: The Double-tract-base

advantages of corridor concept with the central core, and with gallery concept of spatial organization.

The advantage of gallery system represents an opportunity to organize comfortable two-side-oriented, while the disadvantage is inefficiency in terms of spatial exploitation and maintaining gallery in the conditions of continental climate. Gallery system was often used in the period in between wars as comfortable apartments delivered better apartment exploitation through obtaining higher rents. In the post war period the private property of apartments was annulled so no property was built for renting, economy of building and maintenance of apartments was of primary significance, so during the period of socialist modernism no example of gallery system is known in the practice.

Dividing the object into two symmetrical tracts provided the possibility to organize comfortable apartments two-side-oriented, while organization of residential units around the central core instead of along the corridor/gallery, solved the problem of inefficiency and gallery system maintenance. By further connecting several objects to four residential units a larger entirety was formed on the principle of spatial concept of urban structure for the bordering city block, as concept of multi-storied houses in a row, where the whole or the row represented macro-form consisting of fragments in the form of individual multi-storied built-in objects.

Combination of advantages of corridor concept with central core and gallery concept of spatial organization created the scheme of object with short communication corridors while enabling two-side-orientation of apartments at the same time.

### Spatial scheme of apartment

Industrialization and technological development which emerged after World War II enabled the

development and practical use of new skeletal constructive system, which during the fifties of the last century provoked the construction of first modern apartments in Belgrade. Spatial organization of modern apartments in Belgrade was characterized by the appearance of 'widened communication', (Baylon, 1979) the room which in economically limited conditions played the role of 'living room as a family gathering spot, around the dining table removed from the space of kitchen'. (Baylon, 1979)

During the fifties and sixties of the last century modern apartments developed fast going through several stages of development in short time, during which rooms in the apartment were completely differentiated functionally. The result of such development was the division of the apartment into two functional zones, daily zone where enlarged communications living room and dining room comprised separate rooms, and night zone bedrooms.

During the period of socialist modernism, evaluation of spatial organization of the apartment used to be determined through the achieved degree of apartment *utility*. The term utility was used to determine the total quality of residential units which meant, besides spatial organization of the apartment, its usable area, spatial and functional flexibility as well as inner connection among various groups of rooms and their relation to outer space.

However, in the mid-eighties of the last century, apartments began to be considered as part of spatial, purposeful-functional system which shapes it and affirms it by the selection of appropriate interior connections and relations among rooms. The result of such observation of the spatial scheme of the apartment required that the apartment, in order to be effective and modern, should have attributes of free and dynamic spatial concept besides great utilitarian value. Presenting the character of changes in the apartment organization Branko Aleksić points out 'powerlessness and subordination of one-sided static dispositions which are created by mechanical and technical coupling of parts with specific purposes, mono-functional in relation to those which are based on the concept that an apartment is the field onto which numerous various and changeable needs, interests, conditions, and processes linked to family life are projected and expressed' (Aleksić, 1977). The change of spatial organization of an apartment, which originated from the need for greater dynamics of apartment space, marked the change of typical model of modern apartments in Belgrade in early seventies of the last century. (Lujak, 2006)

Specific apartment scheme in the early

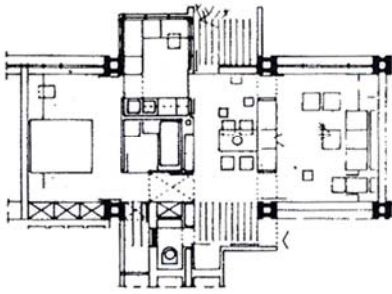


Fig. 5. The scheme of Blok 3 apartments, located in Novi Sad

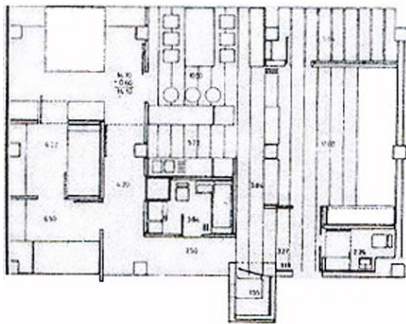


Fig. 6. The scheme of Blok 19a apartments

seventies of the last century was the scheme with entry space which was applied in residential objects in Bulevar Jurija Gagarina (Blocks 61 and 62) in New Belgrade from 1971 (designed by architects Milenija and Darko Marušić). Apartment scheme applied in Blocks 61 and 62 represents an example of stiff, static apartment organization with large communication space comprising entry space and a long hall around which mono-functional and clearly defined night and day zone rooms are grouped. These apartments were significantly less utilitarian as opposed to dynamic apartments with a quality of varied utility (Aleksić, 1977), as seen in apartments in Blocks 19a from 1975 (designed after the concept of apartment scheme developed for the competition in Novi Sad, 1971) or apartments in Cerak-Vinogradi suburb from 1978, designed by architects Milenija and Darko Marušić.

Taking part in competition by public invitation for the residential complex Block 3 in Novi Sad in 1970, team of authors Lojanica, Cagić, and Jovanović for the first time applied solutions which would later have a significant influence in development and formulation of spatial organization of apartments in Block 19a in New Belgrade.

Location for Block 3 in Novi Sad is similar in space to location of Block 19a, namely location is a free and large piece of land without any structures already built and bordered by roads. It does not have a formed context which enabled

the creation of new, modern context.

Competition for Block 3 in its program demanded complementary content of shopping mall, kindergarten, educational and social institutions, apart from residential function. Within the framework of urban scheme of spatial organization in the block objects are evenly distributed throughout the block area, while disposition of objects was executed in orthogonal system placed parallel to main roads. In accordance with urban principles of the time segregation of functions was strict so that supplementary functions were resolved as separate objects, or as annexes to residential objects. Free green area was located in the quiet inner zone of the block.

Such spatial organization of the complex was to be completely changed later in Block 19a.

Spatial-functional organization of Block 3 and solution for shapes of objects do not represent a significant characteristic of this design – it is the organizational scheme of residential units and the degree of prefabrication, that is, standardization of elements. Conceptual determination for maximum standardization was delivered through the use of singular constructional modular raster for all residential objects in the block; through standardization of all constructional elements: pillars, stairways, inter-floor ceilings, exterior and interior walls, windows and façade parapets, and central sanitary unit comprising kitchen and bathroom.

It is the spatial-functional apartment organization that is interesting for this research. It is developed around the standardized sanitary block formed by kitchen and bathroom. Positioning the sanitary block in the center created a simple division of the apartment where on one side rooms belonging to day zone are being developed, and on the other rooms belonging to night zone. Kitchen is façade oriented, while the bathroom is oriented to entry zone where the possibility of natural airing is lost. Dining room is positioned in the center of the apartment, into separate space which is integrated with living room space, and physically connected to the kitchen. Such disposition of apartment rooms enabled circular movement through the apartment which subsequently enabled better connectivity of the zones, and reduced the area of rooms intended for communication purposes only. On the one hand, the dining room is directly connected to entry space, and on the other with the kitchen and balcony. Utilitarian value and importance of mid area are reflected in its poly-functionality since, apart from the function of a kitchen, it can be used as an annex to the living room when organizing a big gathering, or as children's

playroom or a study.

High degree of element unification of objects in Block 3 in Novi Sad resulted in modest solution of shape on the one hand, but also in great speed of construction, extreme efficiency, and up-to-date scientific and technological solutions achieved through patent system for industrial manufacture of apartments NS-71.

Problem of visual monotony and modesty of shape solution, caused by element unification, authors would resolve in their design for Block 19a in New Belgrade.

### Singular object of architecture – Block 19a

Post-modernism appeared in Europe and America in mid sixties of the last century in the social environment still feeling the consequences of World War II and communism, as the result of general disappointment and loss of faith in manifestations of modernism. The appearance of post-modernism meant the return to concept of architecture as art, where the value of architecture does not lie in its redemption of the social strength any longer, but in its transformation of productive process and communicational power as an object of culture. Pointing out the loss of political power of modern architecture Mary McLeod claims that at the time of modernist movement, political role of architecture was first conceived as an issue of process, and only secondary as issue of form, and also states that one of the most significant changes that post-modernism brought about was that meaning – not constitutional reform – became the objective (McLeod, 1998). Nevertheless, the new post-modernism movement was soon accepted and, at the time of financial recovery in the sixties of the last century, it became the new corporate style. McLeod points out that *'if there is any dialectic tension with dominant power of structure in post-modernist architecture, it dwells not in institutions but in the content of architectural form'* (McLeod, 1998).

During the seventies of the last century a significant characteristic in the development of post-modernism was re-discovery of history as duality of tradition and innovation, which led to post-modernism accepting decoration as a liberating gesture, after the formal monotony of modernism. Post-modernism was closely connected to regionalism while reacting to tendency of modernist movement to erase cultural differences, and during the eighties new duality of post-modernism appeared: *'how to become modern and return to sources'* (McLeod, 1998). However, during the eighties of the last century post-modernism changed

radically and from a remarkable movement criticizing esthetic and social parameters, it became the movement which confirms *status quo*. McLeod emphasizes this moment as the crucial one for the change in postmodernism and for the appearance of post-structuralism and de-constructivism as reactions to conservative postmodernism.

This moment was also of crucial importance on the territory of Yugoslavia. The death of Josip Broz Tito (in 1980) marked the beginning of fragmentation of Yugoslavia which would culminate in total collapse of social system of values and long-term war during the nineties of the last century. Modernism lasted in Yugoslavia till the beginning of the eighties when postmodernism appeared as a reaction to conservatism of modernism. The weakening of socialism in Yugoslavia after Tito's death marked the conquering of greater social freedom and creation of more significant cultural ties to Western Europe. Overcoming the economic crisis from the early eighties brought about the formation of economically strong middle class similar to European 'technocratic and bourgeois society', which accepted postmodernism. Robert Stern states in his definition of postmodernism that: 'Postmodernism is not revolutionary in the political or artistic sense; actually it strengthens the effect of technocratic and bourgeois society we live in' (McLeod, 1998), indicating the special relationship of postmodernism and economically strong society.

At the end of eighties, which was the beginning of postmodernism domination, German philosopher Jirgen Habermas, in defense to modernism, indicated that modern art was still an unfinished project and that the period to come, namely postmodernism, was a neo-conservative reaction to modernism (Šuvaković, 1995). English historian Paul Wood indirectly announced the possible guidelines for the period to follow postmodernism when effects of postmodernism had already been historically recapitulated in the mid nineties of the last century by saying that 'eclecticism and decadence of rhetorically constructed postmodernism can only be used to reopen the difficult issues of modernism itself' (Šuvaković, 1995).

By accepting vernacular architecture authors of residential complex Block 19a react to *conservatism of modernism* and open some *difficult issues*.

The moment of adopting the solution (Block 19a) which brought the elements of vernacular architecture into the modern architecture of New Belgrade was preceded by significant political

events in Yugoslavia. After winning social liberties after the students' protests in 1968, Yugoslavia of the seventies of the last century witnessed the strengthening of local nationalism in the republics which were its constituent members. By adopting the Constitution of SFRY in 1974, this reality was accepted and much greater autonomy was granted to republics. Simultaneously with these events modernism, which was the dominant architectural movement in Yugoslavia since World War II, expressed all the features of conservatism not accepting the

appearance of postmodern art in Western Europe and America.

Bernard Tschumi questions if 'architects can reverse events and instead of serving conservative society which had affected our cities, could they make cities influence the society. In other words, can space become a peaceful tool of social transformation, the means of change of an individual's relation to society by generating new life style' (Tschumi, 1996). Architectural space by itself implies political neutrality, that is 'asymmetric space is no more or less revolutionary or progressive than symmetric one' (Tschumi, 1996). The thing that can give space a political role is not architectural form, be it contextual or modernist, but its purpose and meaning which was added to it.

In light of political events from early seventies of the last century in Yugoslavia, the use of vernacular architecture in Block 19a can be understood as adding political meaning to architectural space. However, the way vernacular architecture was used in Block 19a indicates that it had more of importance of style than politics. At the moment of reawakening of national identity in republics of Yugoslavia, Lojanica in an interview for magazine *Communications* in June issue of 1987, independently from Block 19a, stresses that during his career:

He tended to create dialogues with inherited closer and farther (above all) national constructional heritage. One line of that dialogue runs through affirmative relationship, and the second one through the negative relationship with models. Affirmative line repeatedly summarizes well compared patterns and reaffirms models through which elementary concepts about character and being are renewed. These are archetypal forms that act as firm places, strong landmarks, elementary things like, for instance, roof of the house, doors to the house, windows of the house...these are the things that turn out to be important only when there are not enough of them, with which you advocate an ontological level, the newness of the indispensable inherited being of the house. The better you interpret it, the greater the value of the work. At the same time, the other, negative

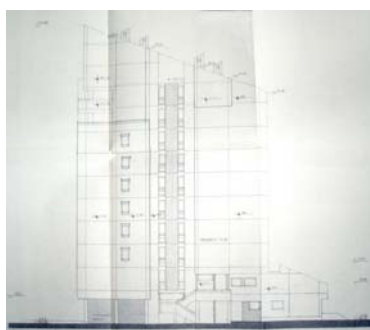


Fig. 7. The Lateral Façade(The Historical Archives of Belgrade)

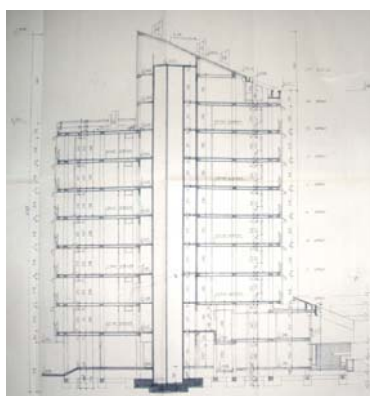


Fig. 8. The Cross section - original designs (The Historical Archives of Belgrade)



Fig. 9. The Lateral Façade -the photograph



Fig. 10. The View of buildings of Block 19a

line is always fighting to overcome and conquer the model – the existing constructional experience, as you do not want to repeat yourself, you would like to improve and, bottom line, be different.’ (Lojanica, 1987)

Introducing vernacular architecture into modern architecture and into space of new *modern* city resulted in significant changes in the existing architectural language and, within it, development of new formal language. These changes primarily represented the suspicion in the existing several-decades-dominant architectural values and did not tend to reject them or introduce new values, but only to reexamine them. Reexamination involves inner contradictions of modern architecture, namely two factors: space and its purpose, that is, concept of space and experience of space. (Tschumi, 1996)

Vernacular architecture of Block 19a does not emphasize local/national features originating from cultural differences in republics of Yugoslavia, but represents universal esthetics of the past. Its role is the change of paradigm of *conservative* modern architecture, in other words change of style. Not having socio-political role its significance becomes symbolic and iconographic, and it becomes the mark of tendency to communication. However, this communication is not metaphor based, which was specificity of postmodern architecture, but is exclusively of formal character. It is one-way directed, reduced to the *sign* of roof, chimney or window in the traditional house with the single goal to influence modernist esthetics of abstract forms.

The result of such work is that Block 19a represents critical practice of modernism, in other words, this residential complex is retained within the frame of modern architecture, not turning it into the work of postmodern architecture.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research into Residential Complex Block 19a resolved the current uncertainty or ambiguity of the position of the said complex in the development of modern architecture in Yugoslavia, namely Serbia, which was the prime objective of this paper.

The research confirmed that Block 19a, though remaining within the framework of socialist modernism and not representing one of the first designs of post modern architecture in Serbia, represents *terra incognita*, that is, a turning point in modern Serbian architecture.

Fundamental features of Block 19a, diagonal spatial organization of the complex, then

application of vernacular architecture in modern architecture, and the lack of *any dialectic tension in the content of architectural form*, place Block 19a between what was and what is to come. In this way Block 19a becomes *utopian and destructive*, opposes *the hegemony of anti-utopia of the present*, tends to destroy the present and as such represents discontinuity. Inclined on ruining modern architecture, or rather what it had become, Block 19a tends to establish a new system of values anticipating near future.

The research proved that residential complex Block 19a in New Belgrade, simultaneously utopian and destructive, turned to future and exclusive representative of the present, and as such it is special/peculiar object, that is, it is more of an *event than object*, thus becoming a **singular object of architecture** in Serbia.

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