



September 28 - 29, 2012, Belgrade, Serbia
Faculty of Architecture University of Belgrade and
Board of Ranko Radović Award, Association of Applied Arts, Artists and Designers of Serbia

Vladimir Mihajlov, PhD | Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade
e-mail: mihajlovvladimir@yahoo.com, phone +381 64 153 55 03

INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALITY AND CONTEMPORARY REALITY: THE NEEDS FOR SPATIAL STANDARDS IN ARCHITECTURE

SUBJECT: CITY AND POWER (FOCUS: SPATIAL STANDARDS AND SOCIAL GROUPS)

Abstract | The essence of the problem considered in this paper, is recognized in deterioration of public and residential space in the city, after the transition and deregulation of architecture and construction in Serbia. This field is marked now by increasing lack of rules-especially spatial standards in the architectural praxis. The paper, thus, gives the answer to the following question: why contemporary architectural practice in Serbia does not insist on standards for the design and planning any more?

Architecture in the neoliberal context is principally engaged in improving profession, with the aim to respond to market demands in consumer society. In this sense, it insists on distinctive position - the ability of architect to convince clients in the unique forms of space produced by him. This approach is commercial based – it corresponds to the demands of content/use, and results in profiting. Since the production of space is powered by mighty individuals who tend to be unique and to manifest the power, the use of spatial standards in architecture is not welcome any more. However, neo-marxist orientation tries to revive the critical reflection of reality, and its main task is to define the standards and types derived from the spatial context. It insists on the public areas and projects, on comfortable housing, which will guarantee the integration in the urban fabric, as well as the development of the social life of residents.

The uniqueness of both approaches, theoretical and practical, is the requirement that the profession needs. A clear visibility of the objectives and method are needed for problem solving, in order to overcome urban decline in space for clients. The wider population with common set of criteria/standards should influence the architectural theory and practice. Finally, the both ideological orientation mentioned are based on those who produce city space, not on those who makes speculations with it.

Keywords | standards, context, needs, quality, neoliberalism, neomarxism

OPENING REMARKS: TRANSFORMATION OF SOCIETY IN SERBIA AND APPLICATION OF STANDARDS IN ARCHITECTURE

Despite the undoubted value of the architectural vision that completes and strengthens the creative potential of architects in modern society, it isn't enough just to give hints of what is possible in practice. It needs to indicate the mechanisms for effective implementation of ideas, in order to achieve high quality urban and architectural space. Therefore, the guidelines in crisis and social transition are of the most importance, because they provide determinants for measuring the quality of build environment, as well as to establish the limitations of the architectural design that can change the reality. The essence of the problem in this consideration, thus, recognizes the declining quality of build environment for urban dwellers. The need for questioning of causes and tendencies after the transition and deregulation is stressed in town enterprising (especially in Serbia). Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to examine the political and ideological background of application of standards in urban planning and architectural practice.¹

The cause for which we are stimulated to think about reasons for (re)use spatial standards, particularly in Serbia, is in connection with the emergence of conflicting interest of social groups, because of different ways of land use in the city. A higher social class behaves according to quasi-market principle and makes the transformations of urban form. In doing that, the tendency of adaptation of the city to its users, moves towards fulfilling the needs of a small number of social groups (investors and those who have money). The urban planning and design experts treat the problem of wealthy individuals only, not most (average) users, or "those who are unable to participate in market competition" (Buchanan, 1962). This problem is more and more expressed.

Architecture in the neoliberal context is principally engaged in improving profession, with the aim to respond to market demands in consumer society. In this sense, it insists on distinctive position - the ability of architect to convince clients in the unique forms of space produced by him. This approach is commercial based – it corresponds to the demands of content/use, and results in profiting. Since the production of space is powered by mighty individuals who tend to be unique and to manifest the power, the use of spatial standards in architecture is not welcome any more. However, neo-Marxist orientation tries to revive the critical reflection of reality, and its main task is to define the standards and types derived from the spatial context. It insists on the public areas and projects, on comfortable housing, which will guarantee the integration in the urban fabric, as well as the development of the social life of residents.

NOTES:

¹ Standards in this paper posit the set of criteria for the evaluation of quality of architectural design. They are the result of continuous monitoring of the people's habits and their manner of using urban space. As such, they are not assumed as fixed values, so is necessary to constantly review and adapt them to new, current needs (M. Bobic, 1984; F. Chapin Jr., 1994). All standards, thus, should be adapted to local conditions, customs and behavior of users. Primarily, it posits building density, surface area required for housing and business, intensity of transport, distribution of public services (schools, urban greenery, etc). Dr Nedeljko Borovnica, dr Mihailo Čanak, Mate Bajlon have dealt with defining the spatial standards in Serbia (housing and construction), Miodrag Ferenčak (urban centers), D. Macura (health care services) Source: *Dwelling Communities Program*, the Federal Bureau of Urban Planning and Public Housing, Belgrade, 1968. Source: <http://www.centarzastanovanje.com> . Since 2007, the Serbian Chamber of Engineers has launched an initiative to review existing and to establish the new recommendations for residential buildings standard. (*Sl. list grada Beograda*, br. 32/IV/83 and 5/88). This document was used only for housing projects initiated by the public sector.

Source: http://www.ingkomora.rs/glasnik/06/cl06_071.pdf

However, in consideration of the current transformation of urban structures, we may rely on claims of theorist Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1970), who argued that in the system of capital and profiting is in front of the needs of users, and therefore in front of the use of spatial standards, who ensure the quality of space. Conflicting interests of social groups and land speculation by powerful individuals are, according to Lefebvre, the reasons why in modern social paradigm, as well as in architectural and planning practice, arose the questions and problems of social integration caused by the quality of life in the city.

Nowadays, there is presence of a desire for diversity of forms, resources, lifestyle and cultural heritage of different social classes in the city (see Giddens, 2010). In the aforementioned diversity of patterns also is detected in community groups in Serbia, especially the high-class groups that owns capital and power. Because of this, there is increasing use of quasi -patterns in common praxis in Serbia, where architectural design standards do not have established place. The dominant values of society no longer exist, and they are usually formed by creating messages of the desirable way of life (throughout the television, the various information networks ...), by those in whose hands the capital and power are.

All the problems mentioned above mainly have a technical dimension of output, but are essentially a political issued and represent a result of social value dilemmas. Because of this, in this paper we will try to interpret the importance of spatial standards in architecture, through the prism of social ideology. Here we will also try to answer the question: why there is no insisting on spatial and urban planning standards in contemporary architectural practice, particularly in Serbia?

IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT AND ARCHITECTURE: VISION, REALITY AND STANDARDS IN DESIGNING AND URBAN PLANNING

The problem in determining this theoretical paper - the context of work, is marked by the following dilemma (see Habermas, 1987: 343): "Is modern time dominated by social reality, or technical rules? Neo-liberal orientation (which relies on poststructuralist philosophical discourse-see Koolhaas, 1998) and neo-marxist orientation (relied on the structuralism's point of view, see Zizek and Soja, 2009), take different positions in relation to the problems that are in connection with the use of standards in architecture. In the opinion of referent authors, mentioned ideological orientation deals with the improvement of trade in profession, in order to respond to market demands and consumerism (Zizek, Soja, Smith, Stavrakakis, 2009).² In this sense, neo-liberal orientation insists on recognizable position of the architect, i.e. his ability to convince clients to unique design and forms, and this approach corresponds to the commercial - the demand for content and results in profit. Why is this so? The current process of globalization of capital, increasingly concentrates the power of information, data and corporate associations in tertiary sector. Employees in this sector have many times higher salaries than those who are engaged in the primary sector. Because of that, these clients often require a luxurious, extravagant dwelling units, restaurants, hotels, cultural centers... Therefore, in this ideological concept, the wider use of strict spatial and urban planning standards becomes obsolete (Koolhaas, 1998).³

On the other hand, the position of the neo-Marxist orientation is trying to revive the critical reflection of reality according to the established architectural and urban planning standards. Its task

² *Urban Politics Now: Reimagining Democracy in the Neoliberal City*. Ed. by BAVO (Gideon Boie and Matthias Pauwels), NAI Publishers, 2008. <http://post-traumaticurbanism.com/?p=138>

³ Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau: *S,M,L,XL* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998)

is provide the city vision and architectural practice, through the standards and types are derived from the urban context (tab.1)

Approach to the problem: Critical (neo-Marxist)	Approach to the problem: Neoliberal
Focus: Theory - explains the problem	Focus: practice – solves the problem
Scale: out of eye horizon - urban planning	Scale: in the eye horizon– form and housing design

It is interesting that the ideology mentioned is based on the collective consumption of public realm and on maintaining the social system through state intervention. The state intervention, according to Manuel Castells, helps correcting market imperfections arising from the logic of capital, and takes part in the more efficient functioning of health institutions, education, transportation, urban green, and housing (Castells, 1978)⁴. That's the reason of taking focus of this approach on standards. The emerging of urban and regional movements increasingly insists on collective equipments and public spaces in the project, and opposes the logic of global capital and neoliberalism. Against this attitude stands the claim that the state intervention is often more imperfect than the market mechanisms, so the practice and standards arising from neo-Marxist ideology often turn into dogma (Begović, 1995)⁵.

Of course, it is worth to mention that both of attitudes must be considered in the architectural practice.



Fig 2: Delta Studio - Creative Kitchen. The project from year 2011. The expression and character are reflected in the uniqueness, deconstructivistic and attractive design. Each piece of furniture is original and unique, but expensive to realize. Source: <http://www.dehomedesign.com/kitchen-design/modern-and-imaginative-kitchen-design-by-delta-studio/>



Fig 3: Margarete Schütte Lihotzky - Frankfurter Küche, year 1929. Kitchen designed according to architectural standards. It enables to meet the needs of more different profiles of customers. The furniture can be mass - produced cheaply, in the industry.

Source: http://www.artvalue.com/image.aspx?PHOTO_ID=2458588

⁴ Manuel Castells: *City, Class and Power* (New York: MacMillan; St. Martins Press, 1982)

⁵ Boris Begović: *Prihvatljiv nivo državne intervencije tokom tranzicije: slučaj urbanističkog planiranja*. Urbano planiranje i politika, Ed. Urbanologija, Sveska 4 (Beograd: Arhitektonski fakultet, 1995)

Inspired the statement of Henri Lefebvre in his book "The production of space", we are inevitably encouraged to think about outcomes of architectural form and contents, depending upon whether the design and urban planning include the standards, or they are omitted. Arguments supporting the application of standards, were given long time ago, in the late of nineteenth century. Philosopher, Bozidar Knezevic, shared his observations about the principles and values in spatial science, and said that "the laws of science on the space first discovered, were formed only on the laws and relations of space and to the planned use/content".

However, neoliberal attitude opposes to this statement and argues that it is necessary to change the content and methodology of practice. In addition to comfort and healthy living as the set of the established values, it may be derived additional criteria/standards: rationality, efficiency, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness. We must agree with both point of views, but we should decide, which to favour?



Fig 4 and 5: Kitchen blocks in residential buildings in Skenderbegova street in Belgrade, built in 2004 and 2007, in the period of social transition in Serbia. Here it can be seen the complete absence of empirical architectural criteria –architectural standards.

Source: author



Fig 6 and 7: Kitchen and dining blocks in residential buildings at Mike Alasa Street in Belgrade, built in 1980 and 1981. These projects include all necessary facilities and programs, designed with prescribed architectural standards by Center for Housing in Belgrade.

Source: author

Structuralist context in manufacturing of dwelling units, which may be reflected on the analysis of implementation standards in the contemporary education of architects, dates since the Bauhaus Manifesto, 1919: " ...To construct buildings means to shape and organize the life of residents in psychological, economic and technical point of view...". In this manifesto, architectural theory and

practice deal with the basic issues, objective needs, programming and planning, design, construction, and land use. The theorist, Aldo Rossi, also argues about implementation of architectural standards in the practice: "In my projects I've started to deal with the architecture types that are shaped in the long tradition process of housing" (Rossi, 1973). Therefore, the legacy of structuralist methods suggests respectation of the context, empirical criteria / standards, and all the cultural archetypes in relation to the genius loci (Ungers, 1997).⁶

Nevertheless, the author Reem Koolhaas completely negates and denies urban context in his book "S, M, L, XL". According to his poststructuralistic and deconstructivistic point of view, one of the most important aspects of the architectural project is the entity of size and formal design. In the presence of items mentioned, the tendency is expressed in "preoccupation with formal design considerations in creation of money and personal status, much more than to serv to potential users" (Nan, 2002). In modern architectural terms and context, "The five" (Eisenmann, Graves, Gwathmay, Heiduk, Meier) and later Koolhaas and Libeskind, were looking for a source of pure architectural forms, as the opposition to structuralists. They didn't seek to discover the basic order of language, pattern and attitudes of the inhabitants in the city, and to support the concept of application of standards in architecture. According to the poststructuralists claim, the globalization of capital, leads to the negacy of architectural standards. Therefore, the task of this architecture is "to contribute to the appearance of a friendly and seductive mask ... while the main parts of a job contract are carried out by the investors" (see Nan, 2002: 163).

After the wide offer of space with an attractive form and incomplete program in the market, the lack of standards in the late postmodern followed by the reaction of pop-art artist Peter Blake, who proclaimed the maxim "form follows a fiasco".⁷ In his work, he refutes the myth of the arcitectoral standards and function on the one hand: "Individual and collective are not in the same sphere, although it is shown the necessity of survival" (Blake, 1977)⁸. Today the same finding can be applied to the reality in architectural practice in Serbia .

INSTEAD OF A CONSLUSION - ONE PROPOSAL FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEM

The key question in every architectural theory is how to build a design form in terms of a society, topology, and typology. Therefore, the architectural form should be realized by certain rules or, as Aldo Rossi said, towards the principle tested in similar surroundings and contexts. The need for such a proposal, i.e. methodological approach, may be seen in the crisis of postmodernist and poststructuralist practice, "whose dictionary is limited in a few familiar recognizable elements " (Milenkovic, 1992). Because of that, architectural theory and practice neither represents the originality and relation to context, nor makes the respond to customer needs, no matter how strong the motivation of the author is.

Therefore, the uniqueness of theoretical and practical work is the requirement that developes profession, provides clear visibility of targets, the method used and problems solved, in order to overcome the impression of a pure crafter's deal of work ("I build what investor has ordered me"), and thus ensure the survival of the profession. As stated by prof. Branislav Milenkovic, "the program for architectural design can be built only on the basis of predetermined performance - goals, clearly orchestrated in the entire lifestyle of professional expertise (...) with the mentality of

⁶ Osvald M. Ungers: *The Dialectic City* (Skira Editore, 1999)

⁷ Peter Blake: *Form Follows Fiasco* (Atlantic, Architectural Forum, 1977)

⁸ Branislav Milenković: *Urbani prostor i arhitektonsko projektovanje*. Istraživanje prostora, Ed. Urbanologija, sveska 1 (Beograd: Arhitektonski fakultet, 1992)

the population as a primary measure of impact." These statements indicate the hypothesis at the beginning of this consideration, that the broader use of standards in architecture is needed.

Thus, operationalization of the social values of users, expressed in the form of empirical criteria (standards) is a basic imperative. But it also represents an additional expense and represents the hard circumstance to modern drivers of townbuilding - investors. No matter what, the investors must also take into account the needs of clients, and costs from the primary business sector for whom are often designed and built (employees, customers with lower incomes). The set of architectural standards may be defined and realized by law-documents, rule-books and urban plans.

Finally, the system should be based on those who produce the urban space, not on investors who speculate with it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Aldo Rossi & Peter Eisenman : *The Architecture of the City (Revised Edition)* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011)
2. Boris Begović: *Prihvatljiv nivo državne intervencije tokom tranzicije: slučaj urbanističkog planiranja*. Urbano planiranje i politika, Ed. Urbanologija, Sveska 4 (Beograd: Arhitektonski fakultet,1995)
3. Branislav Milenković: *Urbani prostor i arhitektonsko projektovanje*. U Istraživanje prostora, Ed. Urbanologija, sveska 1 (Beograd: Arhitektonski fakultet, 1992)
4. Charles Moore: *Daniel H. Burnham, Architect, Planner of Cities*. "XXV "Closing in 1911–1912"". Volume 2. (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin,1921)
5. Herbert A. Simon: *The sciences of the artificial* (MIT Press, Cambridge, 1996)
6. Manuel Castells: *City, Class and Power* (New York: MacMillan; St. Martins Press, 1982)
7. F. Stuart Chapin: *Urban Land Use Planning* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995)
8. *Dwelling Communities Program*, Federal Bureau of Urban Planning and Public Housing, Belgrade, 1968 <http://www.centarzastanovanje.com>
9. *Grupa autora: Smernice urbanističkog opremanja gradova i naselja*, Savezni Zavod za urbanizam i komunalna stambena pitanja, Beograd, 1968
10. Osvald M. Ungers: *The Dialectic City* (Skira Editore, 1999)
11. Milica Milojevic: *Re-conceptualization of the Idea of Neighborhood in Post-socialist Belgrade*. Serbian Architectural Journal no. 1 (Belgrade: Faculty of Architecture, 2009)
12. Paul Ralph & Yair Wand: *A proposal for a formal definition of the design concept*. Ed. Lyytinen, K., Loucopoulos, P., Mylopoulos, J., and Robinson, W. (Design Requirements Workshop, Springer-Verlag, 2009)
13. Franck F. Randall & John D. Randall: *History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2008)
14. Elin Nan: *Postmoderni urbanizam* (Beograd: OrionArt, 2002)
15. Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau: *S,M,L,XL* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998)
16. Saskia Sassen: *Gradovi i zajednice u globalnoj ekonomiji*. Misliti Grad. Ed.Vladan Djokić & Petar Bojanić (Beograd: Arhitektonski fakultet, 2011)
17. *Sl. list grada Beograda*, br. 32/IV/83 i 5/88
18. Sreten Vujović: *Urbani pokreti i socijalne borbe*. Istraživanje prostora, Ed. Urbanologija, sveska 1 (Beograd: Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, 1992)
19. Peter Blake: *Form Follows Fiasco* (Atlantic, Architectural Forum, 1977)
20. *Urban Politics Now: Reimagining Democracy in the Neoliberal City*. Ed. by BAVO (Gideon Boie and Matthias Pauwels), NAI Publishers, 2008. <http://post-traumaticurbanism.com/?p=138>