



# 13<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN  
FUNCTION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

5th - 8th June 2023, Hotel Slatina, Vrnjacka Banja, Serbia

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




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2-7	SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF CITIES USING URBAN WETLANDS. Danijela Zlatkovic, PhD; Jelena Zlatkovic, MSc; Djordje Vaskovic, MSc;	 

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## **ELEMENTS OF THE FUTURE HOUSING IN SERBIA: ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABILITY – the OVCA settlement |0|**

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**Abstract:** If we look at a *flat* as a *result of a sociocultural era* that it belongs to, *housing* could be defined as a specific *set of conventions* about how it is to be used. What is considered here is the phenomenon of *rapid ordinariness changes* that prevail in the organization of architectural space and residential apartment complexes, as well as their use in our society. Housing is a basic and prevailing urban function and the way in which its fabric is structured depends on many things, from the simple economic calculations, to the *complex ethereality of human happiness*. The concept of multi-family or *large density urban housing* calls, therefore, for redefinition, in order to respond to the needs of the contemporary epoch.

**Keywords:** *multy-family housing, rapid ordinariness changes, social sustainability*

### **1.INTRODUCTION**

The theme of this research is focused on the future of housing in Serbia, primarily *multi-family* [1], or colloquially, *collective* [2] pattern of residential complexes, the way they are found today in our urban areas. At the same time, they actually serve here as a reference plane, inevitably subjected to the conceptual review at all levels that is the determinant of the overall methodological debate. The view of a time to come is always risky, but necessary. Relying on the previous experience and the knowledge of the tendencies that marked the recent past, the immediate future, so as in the next 15-20 years should be considered here. Considering the fact that the issue of housing is very complex, we decided to isolate some constituents as more important, according to the transitivity and ephemeral epoch we are going through. This choice is indicative and, being decisive for the character and orientation of the research, has a foothold in the absence of ambition considering the totality of the phenomenon of collective urban life and its unequivocal anticipation. In return, we will try to define certain attitudes that we believe may be useful in the discourse on problems of this way of housing in our country, as well as the possible ways of solving them.

The first part of this article is devoted to the correlation between normative and positive, and the interaction of conventional and unconventional developments in understanding of the quality of *high density urban housing* [3]. Comparative analysis of several recent development phases of housing in Serbia will, through case studies direct the orientation of the study goal towards the interpretation of the current trends in this field.

The future orientation of the mentioned trends is the subject of the second part of the discussion. It's about trying to anticipate a possible scenario with variant development, which may be "useful" in various combinations. Although initiated here, their interpretation is open, and meant to be one of the documents that actually witnesses the moment of its creation, more than its pretensions to be "right" when it comes to predicting future trends.

### **2.CORRELATION**

Instability in the political and economic sphere inevitably means - the versatility in building and the environment built, where it is, perhaps, reflected in the most obvious ways. On the other hand, variability of the socio-cultural environment, could be perceived only within larger temporal distances.

So today, retrospectively, a development in what might be called the *paradigm of an apartment* can be detected, within the domain of personal experience (which is very important), what, in fact denotes a series of *intersection points between the professional conventions and self-determination of a community* on the same issue. There are many possible illustrations of the degree of change in this area; we can look for them in the sphere of architectural appearance, but also

in the structure of the space organization. For this occasion, the position and the role of the dining room in the apartment will be singled out (as one of the basic elements and the pivot place in an apartment), during the last three periods in its evolution in the Serbian society.

It's well known that, under the Central European influence, Belgrade apartment between the two world wars was organized around the dining room that acted as the central and most important spatial element. Understanding of the family and the daily life of the time, has been shifting towards Western paradigms, abandoning earlier Oriental Conventions. (Western type furniture was promoted, rather than built in Oriental one: sleeping on beds and sitting on chairs instead of sleeping and sitting on the floor; meals served at the table instead on the low *sinija*, club sets instead of ancient roman sitting, bed like item - *divanhana* ...). Determined by such trends, gathering around the dining table has become a normal part of the living organization, which, in turn, fundamentally determined the flow of vital life activities. Within this interaction, a quite distinctive, clear typology has been generated, the model that can certainly might be argued that represents a symbol of its time – *salon apartment* (even today, this popular kind of flat represent a status symbol in certain social classes).

After the Second World War, the environment changes radically, and consequently, new elements and new views on housing and apartments are at stake.

After the transitional post-war period, new paradigms have been reached. Technology takes the leading role and becomes the key influential factor that dictated housing space development. Accordingly, for example, a long distance district heating replaced the traditional central heating by solid fuel and, being more efficient, creating the opportunities for changing the spatial structure of the apartment; the layout (plan) of an apartment can now be developed in many more different ways, since all parts of its space at all times are identically heated; the need for ovens disappears, as well as the need to schedule summer and winter cycles of occupancy of the rooms within one apartment, which meant a change of premises used in one or another mode up to year season. Around that time the television and the TV set appears, being the cult object and an exponent of the emerging era. Coincidentally, at the same time the new apartment and housing ideal is accepted, influenced by mature, left-oriented modernism as a desirable form used to replace the former "reactionary" social system and it's housing architecture [4].

Thus, the phenomenon of evolved salon, so called. "Living room" (and within our society) had been smoothly conceived, taking over the leading role from the dining room. So, the dining space suddenly lost its definition and started it's wandering life from the "family kitchen" via division of "living room", to "extended communication" etc. Family and neighborhood gatherings, now took place in front of the TV screen, what is to be continued for the next few decades, until the appearance and popularization of, now inviolable, PC. Soon, the TV loses its magic and communication exclusivity, and alongside, the role of the family coagulant. With the increasing number of computers per household, primarily younger, followed by the older generations, started to isolate themselves going to their bedrooms in search of their own virtual spaces. After a short time, long awaited networking with face book, tweeter, etc., appeared so the time of the family socializing continued to decline. What remains is the traditional family meal and, miraculously, the circle is closed. Dining room, or some space of the kind is again in the center of events. Indeed, an incredible sequence of events in less than ninety years.

Therefore, as we have shown, the way of living follows the events, but also causes them. It is not necessary to repeat here the famous story about the users' needs in the era of our socialist modernism (because not everywhere was like that), because there is no such user any more, and in fact he never existed. That was one of the last offshoots of the late structuralism which, in an attempt to round up the "systematic basis", created a *mythical creature of ideal, speculative constitution*. (pure simulacrum - as we shall see later).

We will try to prove that this delusion is the key in increasing the gap - one might say, of misunderstanding between the architecture as a socially-responsible role and the society itself, which causes this role. Without going into wider considerations of this problem [5], some questions of direct and inelastic impact of a socio-cultural group of influential factors in the current and (not only) the local perception and understanding of this relationship are, in this context, being focused [6].

### 3.WHAT IS EXACTLY WRONG?

Overall, we can summarize the finding of a profound divergence between set goals and results. The concept of "humanity" was present at every step, both in theoretical discussions and in practical efforts to establish a "human dimension" of architecture as its foundation [7].

It is not difficult to conclude that this discrepancy is yet another manifestation of *functional autonomy of motives*, when it comes to the role of the architecture and its primary characteristic of a "service trade". There is, therefore, a series of clues that point to a much deeper kind of inertia of society, related to architectural creativity in general. The focus is not, therefore, on a small number of projects, which tend to be exceptional, progressive and highly aestheticized, addressing, so, the narrow circle of public that such information can identify and understand. It is a large part of the newly created buildings that address those who "just wants to live, to work and earn as much as they need ..." [8], therefore, everyday people with everyday problems. The lack of interest for the predominant part (residential) of architecture is evident, the

part that directly affects everyone's life, regardless of motivation or degree of simplicity. This part of the architecture is very present in all segments of the "base and superstructure", if we borrow again from picturesque ness of Marxist vocabulary, and represents a clear confirmation of Hartman's thesis on construction as a double exponent of cultural cross-section of society [9].

If it is so, we must ask ourselves - how we actually see ourselves? Or, first: do we ever see ourselves in Hartman's terms, which determine the "spirit and meaning" of architecture of a nation, region or a similar economic and political entities? The answer, it seems, is not easy, but it can be estimated. It is in *the degree of recognition and validation* of a certain *social role* by the members of a society/community. Such social roles are established by consolidation of multifunctional character of community activities, by upgrading complexities and differentiation of specific and necessary trades or professionals who are mostly involved with them [10]. Number and nature of these activities are, in turn, also distinctive sociocultural cross-section of society, reflecting the extent to which the actual society is consolidated. Our society, as constantly part of a broader system over the past four centuries, (except for a period of about sixty years between the mid-nineteenth century until 1918) has never actually completed an indigenous process in this sense, permanently using the experiences of more developed societies, depending on the era. So now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Serbian Architecture, for the first time on the basis of its own, face a situation of questioning its own importance in the society it serves. In this context, it is clear that public indifference to (its own) architectural discourse, and the use of space and culture in general, expresses much different connotation than simple inertia and economically justified inertia. Turning points, or significant events, in fact *have never occurred*.

Architecture has never fully crystallized as a more or less complete system of values and, therefore, certain *ordinariness*. Of course there are exceptions, particularly when it comes to folk building, but this example actually proves the rule - the social role of the architect (Professional) here has never been established. Occasional periods of social relevance, and even some degree of authority in accordance with the responsibility that it carries, are the result of emulation, or inclusion of the area into the wider regional, economic, political and national systems, as I have already stated [11].

Current state independence, and present situation of relative isolation from other societies, clearly shows that the role of the architect, at the level of social activity needed in our country, is not recognized, or even is nonexistent. This assertion can be defended in several ways. Let's say that one of them may be parallels with our legislation, which in its current configuration, although highly adapted to European standards, does not really have expected enforceability. By modifying to the local system of values and common practices, some of the legal provisions become its opposite, serving entirely different objectives from those that should exist in their very basis. So, instead of providing equality of all citizens under the same conditions in the first place, they actually serve as the basis for stratification and ranking of people in the worst sense. The reason for this is in lack of recognition of underlying problem, for which the law had been made. Simply, the problem exists everywhere, but in different socio/cultural circumstances its recognition and definition varies [12].

Interestingly, this conclusion is directly applicable to the treatment of architecture and architects "in our country," even though at first glance may not seem so. Correlation is based on the recognition, evaluation and understanding of architecture as a "public affair". Being as such, "... a matter of community, even if it is insignificant and failed ..." [13], building is an exponent of common concern in every respect, both in the direction of the individual - collective (the motive for affiliation) and vice versa (regulation of social relationships and well-functioning community). Given the lack of community spirit, at least when it comes to the context of the formation of the analyzed residential structures, the consequences can be considered obvious and expected.

Independently of any personal choice, members of architectural profession participate in a unique venture. Having in mind the insensitivity of the society, that is, as we have concluded, the "invisibility" of the architectural profession as a social function, the problem of misunderstanding of the profession and the general public gets its foundation.

#### 4. WHAT IS TO HAPPEN?

Each social environment reacts differently to changes in customs, as specific types of *conventions*, which depends on many influencing factors. Without going into the deeper elaboration of the same, we can agree that our society has always done so, and now do it slower than the others, primarily European communities [14].

Such inertia is not genuine characteristic of the area, but in the context of understanding the relationship of *individual* and *common* (interests, goals, space), this feature takes on a new dimension. Seen from this aspect, the processes that are related to individual interests are stable and long-living. We have already compared the observations of architect Bogdan Nestorović regarding the behavior of participants of the building process between the two world wars and the present ones, acting in present, transitional situation in our community. The differences in the behavior of the two groups of participants mentioned are almost nonexistent, even though they worked in two historically distant times, the two socio-economic systems and different socio-cultural settings. Only the (exclusively) *self-interest* of both of them is common. It is this statement that represents the current focus of the analysis and its location on the field of social sustainability as a primary goal. What do I mean?

## 5. CONCLUSION

The future of multi-family housing in our community will be largely determined by cultural socio-influencing factors such as the nature and degree of social agreement, then, further development of the phenomenon of stratification of the population, among which the most important is actually a *relationship between personal and mutual interest*.

Comprehension of common unity and understanding that some goals cannot be achieved by individual action, here has a certain specificity, which is passed on to the zone of housing culture. The causes are partly explained by long term existence as a part of wider social and state systems that relativized and modified the responsibilities of individuals, groups and nations in different ways. The result is the absence of a social environment that clearly recognizes the role of the individual and the community, the citizen and the state, city or municipality, up to relationships within a city neighborhood. In other words, the domestic society, in spite of everything, is still orientated to, still present echoes of clan-tribal militarism on the one hand, and lack of understanding of different reasons for the existence of established forms of different types of common collaboration. Avoiding obligations to "the state" certainly shows and explains the situation in which "the citizen" does not see himself as state's principal, constituent part. Such a type of reasoning can, quite easily, be transferred to the zone of living and space use culture. As expected, here, responsibilities and obligations are evaded, up to the complete insensitivity to everything that is not in direct, relationship to individual interests. Solving the problem is expected to be (still) up to the respective institutions, which, in turn, are offered nothing. Lack of initiative is complete, which, in the field of "collective" housing, is actually the main problem.

*Social sustainability* is an aspect that is a catalyst of change in relation to housing in the future. In essence, this component assumes the personal interest and ability of individual or group activities aimed to improvement of personal (living) situation, with the assumption of full responsibility that it will not worsen the situation of other groups or individuals within a community.

The means of achieving this goal, then, is *user - participation*, which assumes, as we have pointed out - *recognizing positive trends in non-institutional housing construction and their introduction into institutional frames*. An important element in this is the need that a citizen-customer-investor continue to recognize the process described and actively participate, taking it as it's (partially) "own".

Next, a more developed level of *participation* involves *networking* of individuals or groups that share same or similar interests. Backed by institutions of (civil) society, as well as the architectural profession, such initiatives will, with a higher degree of probability, lead to solutions that are socially sustainable. For its part, this situation should have a positive feedback effect on the rest of the indispensable aspects of sustainability.

As an illustration of a fore mentioned, let's consider the few examples of our work, projected and realized recently by AGM studio [15] (OVCA settlement, Belgrade, Serbia 2023.).

The view of the new urban-architectural whole is dominated by a grouping of linear tracts, separated vertically, whose silhouette creates a multitude of corridors that pass lines of observation through the core of the complex. In this way, the exterior and interior of the new ensemble becomes transparent, logical and comprehensible. On the whole, the impression of bulkiness was avoided, while the required spatial capacity was mastered.

The character of the assemblies in the complex unites the rigidity of the system and the phenomenon of diversity, delineating, in this way, the relationship between the community (collective) and the individual (individual), thus representing the starting point for designing the uniqueness of a multi-family (collective) residential settlement. Varying the shape of assemblies contributes to the personalization of their visual appearance, as well as the manner of functioning. Being, currently, outside the perimeter of the built urban fabric, the new complex becomes a world unto itself, which generates urbanization processes in its surroundings, and, with its spatial and design characteristics, hints at further continuity in the development of the city.



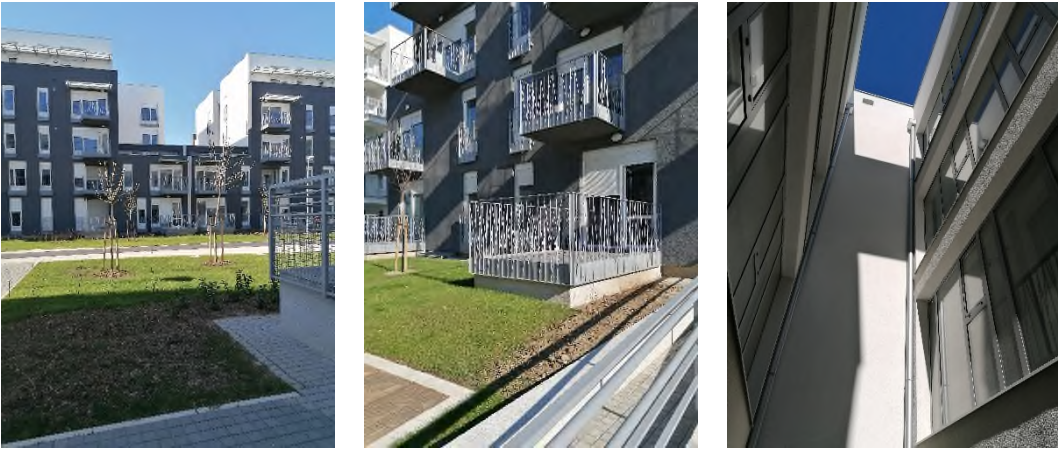


Fig.1-8.

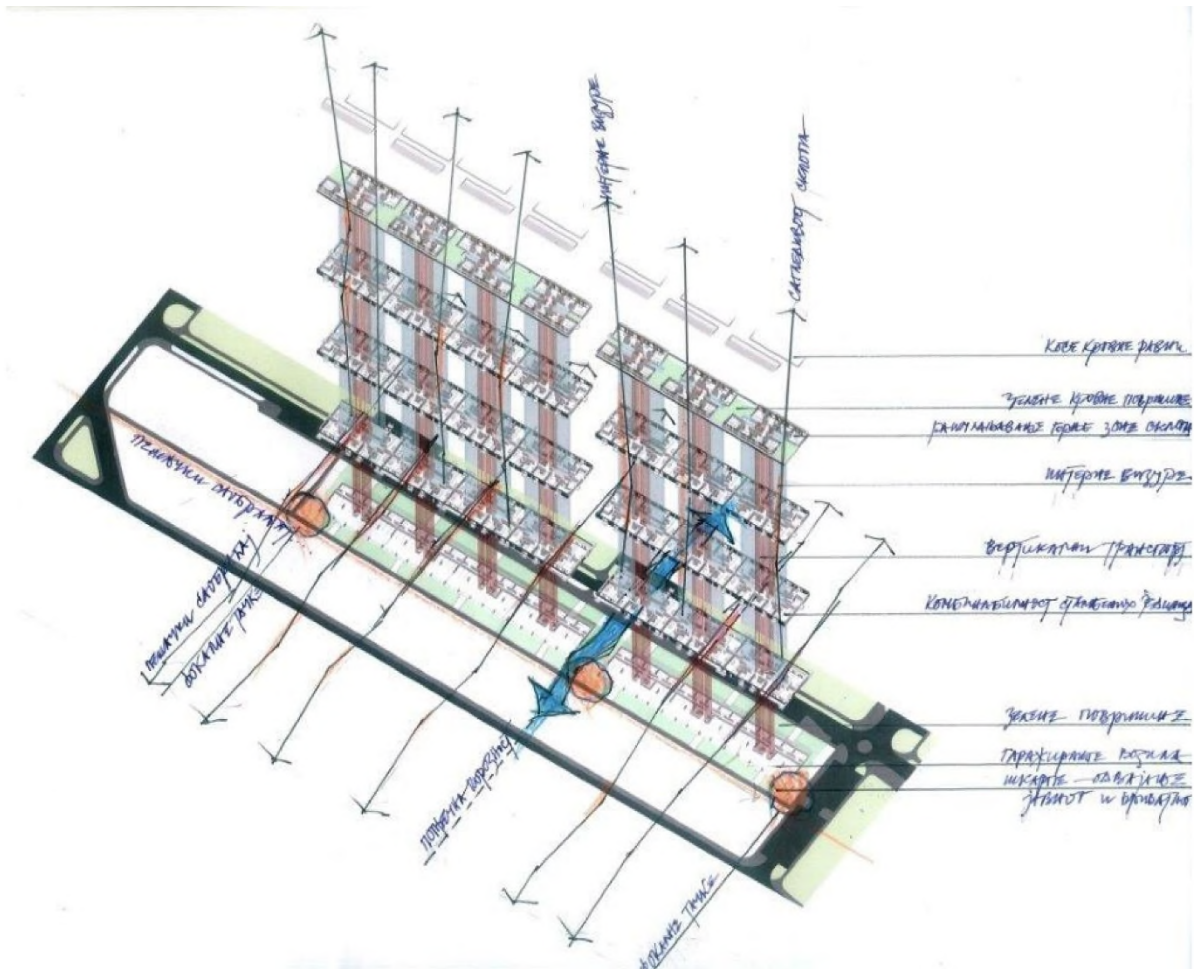


Fig.9

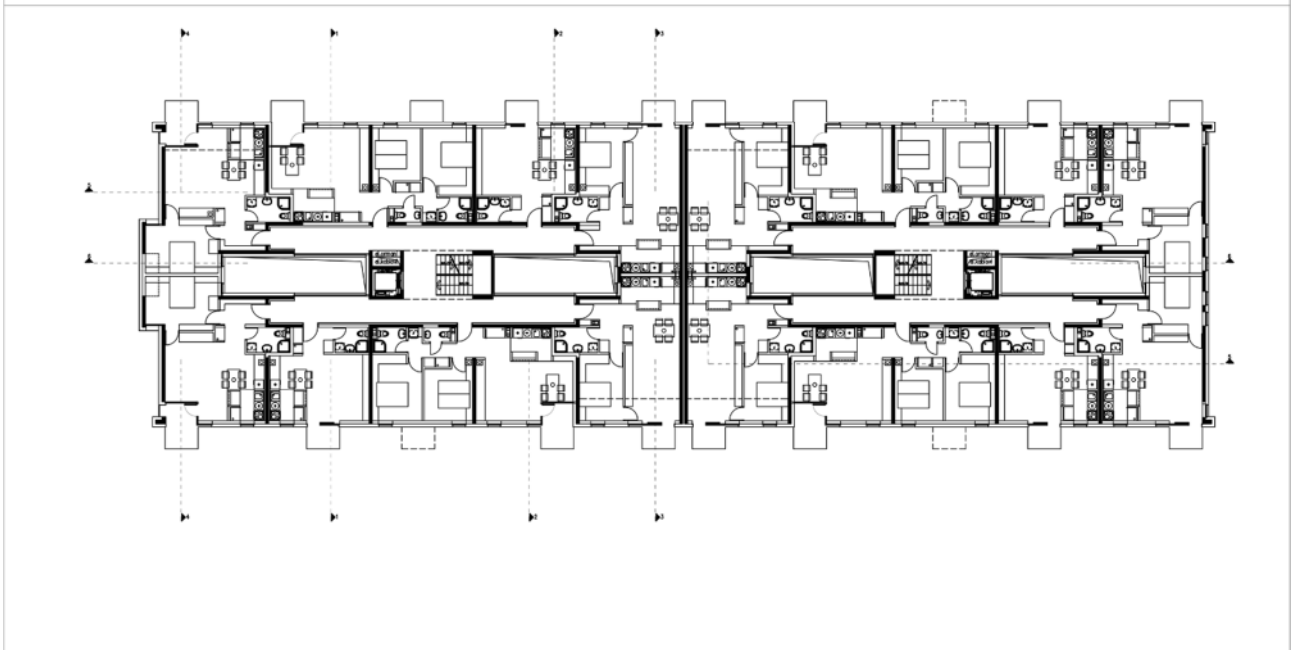
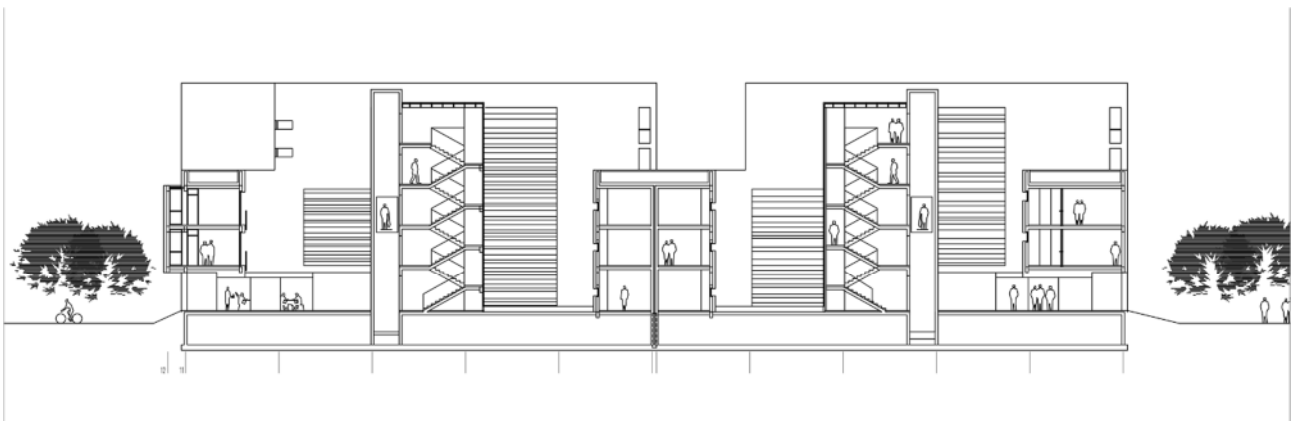
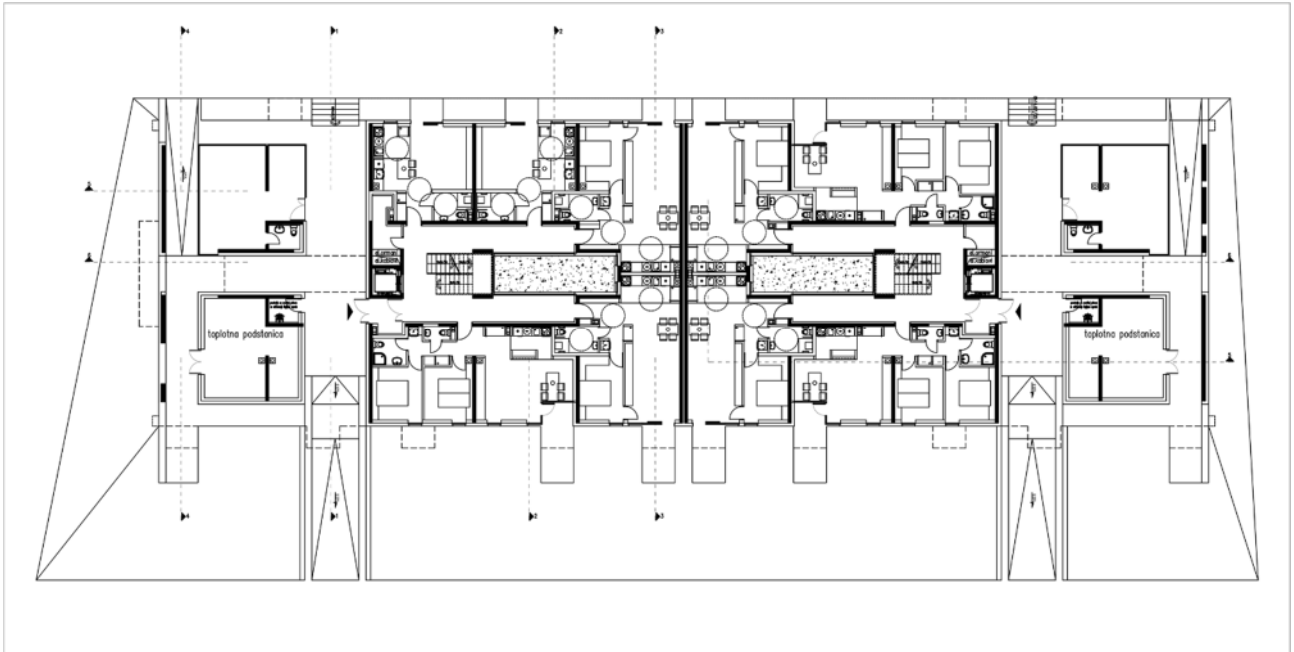




Fig 10-12

## FOOTNOTES

- [0] RESIDENTIAL BUSINESS COMPLEX of social housing in OVČA settlement, Belgrade, Palilula Municipality, BLOCK 1, building 1A and 1C, total 9800 m<sup>2</sup> Author: AGM studio (B.Petrovic & associates), Belgrade 2023.
- [1] "multi-family housing": a term that indicates the assembly of a number of housing units, used by families that have no substantive or formal interconnection. They represent a (random) group of families that did not choose each other for life together in one place, but they came together by the line of personal criteria in choosing an apartment, by their purchasing power or some kind of selection (state organized allotment during era of socialism).
- [2] "collective housing": a term that implies some measure of mutual common goal, synergy or coordinated action within a group of families that share a common housing space, so that they can therefore be considered as collective and can relate to some experimental communities of European philosophers that promoted the Enlightenment ideas (some French utopian concepts of the eighteenth century - familisteries), some modernist settings (the original version of Marseille block and some ventures in the Soviet Union) as well as the community and spontaneous kind like hippie communities, squatters or some religious groups. One illustrative explanation on this concept is given by M. Baylon (Mate Baylon, apartments in Belgrade, graduate studies - course housing 1979th-1981., Materials, volume-54, Faculty of Architecture, Belgrade, 1980..) pp.26
- [3] high-density urban living - seems to be most appropriate conceptual reference that, while avoiding logical and ideological pitfalls of previous formulations, affects the meaning.
- [4] "Absolute Savings" is a term used by the architect. Bogdan Nestorović when he writes about multi-family building immediately after the Second World War. Nestorović Bogdan" Evolution" Belgrade apartment, in: Yearbook of Belgrade, vol. II (1955)).
- [5] more extensively in: B.Petrović, I.Rašković, *TRADICIJA-TRANZICIJA*, (Beograd, Arhitektonski fakultet, Orion Art i IAUS, 2011.g.), pp.7-14.
- [6] Regarding similarity of housing units, the *socialist aestheticism* could be mentioned, in terms of how it is understood by Milos Perovic: the intention to be operationally and financially rational within the concept of industrialized building technology, transformed the residential construction (prefabrication assemblies, etc..) into its opposite - instead of the lower price of prefabricated apartment per square meter, it turns out that the square meter of such apartment is more expensive than one built by a conventional method. (Milos R. Perovic *SERBIAN ARCHITECTURE* twentieth century: from historicism to modernism second (Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture, 2003.)
- [7] "Building and thinking - each in their own way - an essential for living. However, they are insufficient for housing, as long as they are - every one of them - busy with their singular occupations, instead of listening to each other."Milan Đurić i Jelena Živančević *077 pojmovna arhitektonskog diskursa* (Beograd, Poligon, 2011.) pp.150, 151
- [8] M.Veber: *Protestantska etika i duh kapitalizma*, (Sarajevo, Veselin Masleša, 1989.)
- [9] N. Hartman, *Estetika*, (Beograd, Kultura, 1968..) pp.259
- [10] M.Veber: *Protestantska etika i duh kapitalizma*, (Sarajevo, Veselin Masleša, 1989.)
- [11] B.Petrović, I.Rašković, *TRADICIJA-TRANZICIJA*, (Beograd, Arhitektonski fakultet, Orion Art i IAUS, 2011.),
- [12] B.Petrovic, *On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Serbian Architectural Criticism*, in *Serbian Architects 2000-2010*, ed, Ana Kovencs-Vujic, (Belgrade, Serbian Chamber of Engineers and Association of Belgrade Architects, 2011.)
- [13] N.Hartman, *Estetika*, (Beograd, Kultura, 1968.)
- [14] B.Petrovic, *On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Serbian Architectural Criticism*, in *Serbian Architects 2000-2010*, ed, Ana Kovencs-Vujic, (Belgrade, Serbian Chamber of Engineers and Association of Belgrade Architects, 2011.)
- [15] AGM studio, www.agm.rs

**Fig. 1-8.** Author's photos of the settlement in Ovca, Belgrade, Serbia (primary source)

**Fig. 9.** Author's diagram of the future building (primary source)

**Fig 10-12** Author's drawings of horizontal/vertical plan (primary source)

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