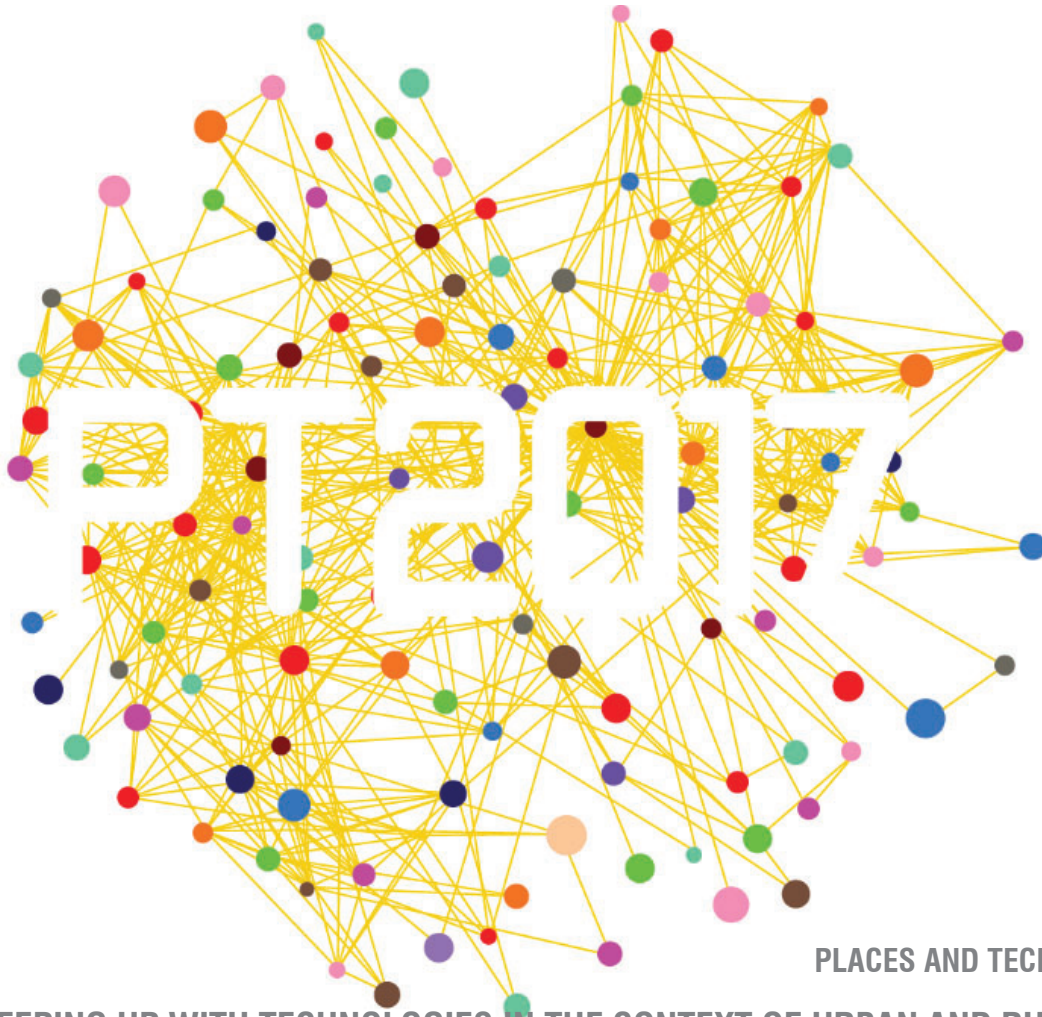


4th International Academic Conference



PLACES AND TECHNOLOGIES 2017
KEEPING UP WITH TECHNOLOGIES IN THE CONTEXT OF URBAN AND RURAL SYNERGY
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BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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Editors:

Dženana Bijedić, Aleksandra Krstić-Furundžić, Mevludin Zečević



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TOPIC II:
URBAN AND RURAL PLACES TOWARD HUMAN COMFORT, HEALTH AND INCLUSION

TENDENCIES IN NEWLY-BUILT MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING IN SERBIA: OUTLOOK OF URBAN EXPERTS

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ABSTRACT

Post-socialist period have brought the myriad of new socio-economic changes for states in Central and Eastern Europe. Knowing that all such changes mirror in space and settlements, they have also made an unavoidable impact on housing as the most prominent urban function. In the case of Serbia, these post-socialist changes in housing have been more severe due to postponed and more complex transition. On the other side, the uncommon model of qualitative socialist housing in the former socialist Yugoslavia has left a positive legacy to present-day situation. Hence, Serbian post-socialist housing has some unique features comparing to other post-socialist countries.

This uniqueness is reflected in Serbian reality. A good illustration is a newly-built, “transitional” multi-storey collective housing as dominant type in local typology. However, the data relating to these unique characteristics are rare and insufficiently accurate. The aim of this paper is to improve the research of the urban dimension in newly-built collective housing in Serbia from the point of the planning of housing in new urban plans for Serbian cities. This will be researched by analyzing the professional knowledge and experience of local urban experts. Therefore, the method used in the analysis was survey, in which urban experts had participated. It had been carried out in May 2015. It is expected that the results of the survey will enlighten some mutual issues in Serbian housing and related urban policy which can be better customised and adequately addressed to enable synergy in the future development.

Keywords: Urban planning, Multi-family housing, Post-Socialist Context, Survey

INTRODUCTION

⁵⁴ Corresponding author

The urban dimension of housing as a research topic can be studied through several relevant aspects. First, housing is often considered as a spatially-prevalent urban function, occupying the major area in an urban settlement. Second, housing is also known as the most sensitive general urban function, because it is strongly related to the private sphere of human life. Finally, every flat or house is also a commodity, i.e. housing is also a market-oriented urban function. Thus, its complexity can be easily observed (Petrović, 2004).

This complexity especially comes to the fore in the periods of sudden and tempestuous changes, when it is difficult to balance between all the mentioned aspects. A good example of this phenomenon is the post-socialist transition from a centrally-planned economy to a capitalist market economy in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This transition has been usually described with less or more negative attributes: sudden (Pickvance, 2002), dramatic (Hirt and Stanilov, 2009), hard to understand (Hamilton et al, 2005), etc. Considering these attributes, the qualitative transformation of urban housing in Central and Eastern Europe has been one of main challenges during the transitional period (IUD, 2013).

Nevertheless, differences among the countries in post-socialist Europe are evident. This can also be applied to housing in urban areas. These differences have been shaped by both historical heritage and current conditions (Hamilton et al, 2005). Similarly, housing in Serbia has also been unique, although it has some common characteristics with the surrounding countries. Thus, this part of post-socialist Europe is called the “south-eastern transition subregion” (IUD, 2013). Finally, the specificity of Serbia is also its postponed transition. It was the last country to start with ‘real’ post-socialist transition in 2000, i.e. after more than one decade of the so-called “blocked socio-economic transformation of society” during the Yugoslav wars (Petrović, 2004, p. 145).

This postponed transition has had apparent and usually negative reflections in the development of urban housing. Unfortunately, the qualitative practises of urban housing from the post-socialist countries with more experience have not been used to overcome the weaknesses of the existing situation. Thus, the common problem of inadequate and underdeveloped housing policy and legislation is still evident here (Antonić, 2015). Furthermore, the socialist model of housing was predominant during the second part of 20th century. A unique type of collective or multi-family housing with tenancy rights was a role-model in that time (Milić, 2006). This model was widespread in the country; the massive construction of collective housing was firmly supported by the state, side by side with rapid urbanization (Petovar, 2003). Finally, all the mentioned elements have had an influence on the present situation in new housing, which has been built during transition, forming unique “local” characteristics. This can be especially applied to newly-built multi-storey collective housing as the dominant type since 2000 (Jovanović Popović et al, 2013).

Despite the dominance of this type in situ, there is a general lack of adequate and accurate statistical data. For example, there is no clear division between homes and flats in statistical data. The general shortage in the housing statistics has been consequently followed by a shortage of adequate scientific analyses and projects. Therefore, the main problem is how to observe these characteristics, especially those which are crucial to general urban development.



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Fig. 1 and 2: Two most common types of post-socialist collective buildings, which are organised for open and traditional ('closed') urban-block structure (Author: B. Antonić)

In addition to statistical data, it is necessary to include other resources based on the irreplaceable knowledge and experience of local urban experts. This is the reason why the research interlocutors are Serbian experts in the field of urbanism. To interpret objectively their professional views and opinions about the main issues of urban dimension in newly-built collective housing in Serbia, survey and questionnaire have been chosen for methodological approach. The findings should present which characteristics of newly-built collective housing are crucial for general urban development. In accordance with the expected findings, the final contribution from the research will be directed to the formation of the first guidelines for general improvements of the urban planning and practices in collective housing in Serbia.

METHODOLOGY - THE USE OF SURVEYS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

The methodology presented in this paper is based on a survey. This method was chosen because it is the proper methodological approach for the fields where professional estimation is important. The feature of qualitative estimation is certainly significant for urban planning - it is in essence of every planning process. Therefore, the foci of this survey are on the macro-urban issues, which are more related to the urban-planning level. Since a survey had been chosen as the methodological instrument for such a research, questions were arranged. The prepared questionnaire had four groups of questions.

THE RESULTS OF SURVEYS

Text The aim of the research was to understand the experts' stance in the field of urbanism in Serbia. Thus, the accompanying survey was conducted in the Summer School of Urbanism 2015, which took place in Kragujevac, in May, 14-16th, 2015. Serbian experts in this field are the main participants of the conference. These experts, who numbered 114, took part in the survey. Most of them completed the entire questionnaire, but some of them omitted, or wrongly answered some questions.

The first part of the questions was introductory, i.e. it referred to the respondents' professional background. The overall majority of the respondents (92%) were professionals in the field of urbanism. The others worked in related sectors, such as the cadastre or building construction in situ. A visible majority of the respondents (82%) was primarily professionals who participated in the creation of the urban and spatial plans and urban projects, as well as other strategic documents. A small percentage (5%) included those who were primarily engaged in the sector of building provisions, or in education and research in urbanism. Those employed in the public sector accounted for 76% of the respondents. Apart from one respondent (an NGO employee), all the others came from private companies.

Newly-built housing vs. renovated housing

The second group of questions was the first ever dedicated to the essential analysis of newly-built collective housing in Serbia. It tries to explore the importance of this type of housing in urban areas and its relations to other forms of recent housing development, such as housing renovation or new affordable/social housing.

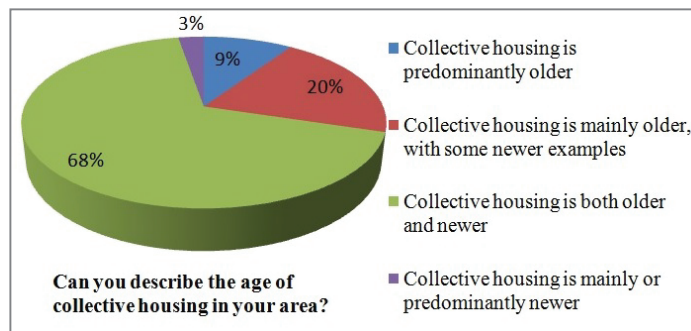
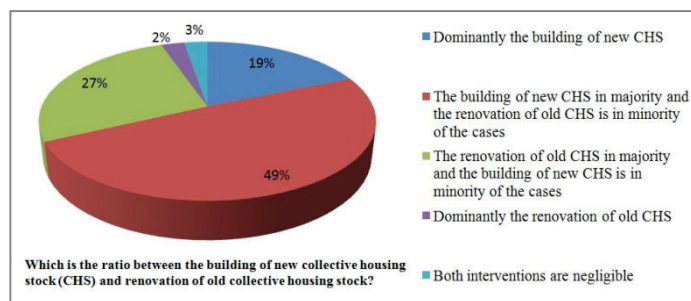


Figure 3: The ratio between older and newer collective housing



TOPIC II:
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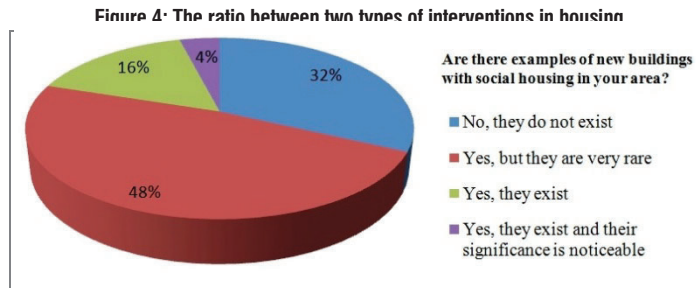


Figure 5: The importance of newly-built social housing

Localization of newly-built housing in urban areas

The third group of questions is associated with spatial distribution and location of newly-built housing in urban areas in Serbia.

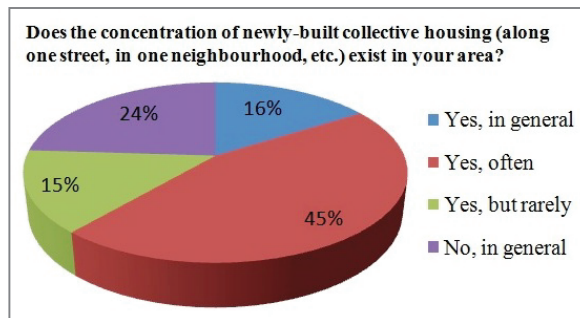


Figure 6: The existence of the concentration of newly-built housing

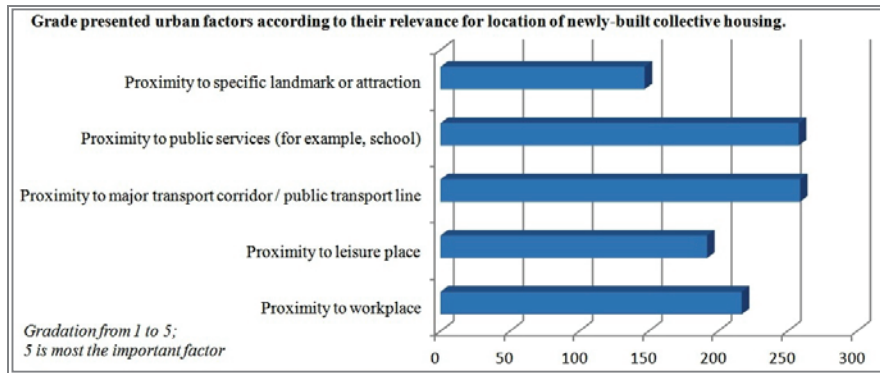


Figure 7: The importance of new-built social housing

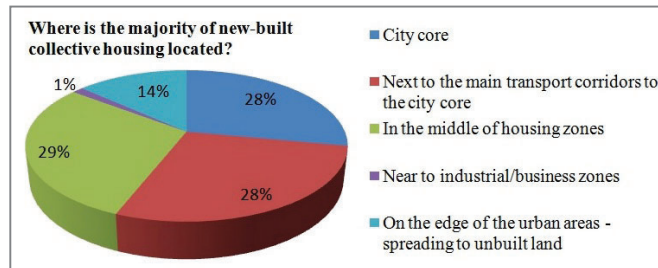


Figure 8: Newly-built collective housing in relation to the socialist monocentric urban model

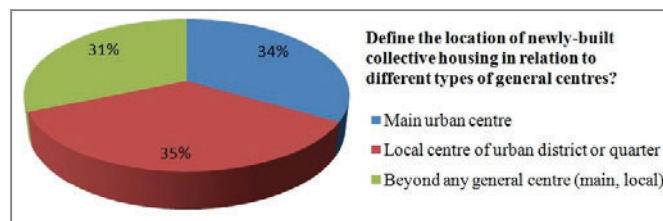


Figure 9: Newly-built collective housing in relation to the post-socialist polycentric urban model

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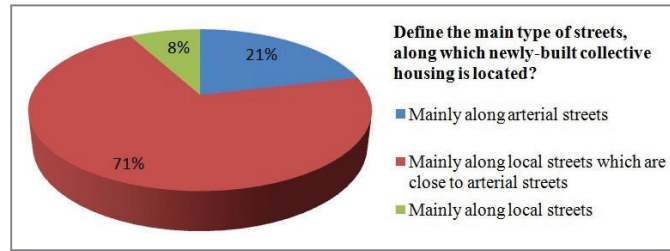


Figure 10: Newly-built collective housing in relation to street types

Functional aspect of newly-built housing in urban areas

The functional aspect of newly-built collective housing in Serbia, herein, is understood in two ways: how general urban zoning in Serbian urban areas has influenced housing and how it has influenced some accompanied urban-development projects, such as the improvement and renewal of urban infrastructure.

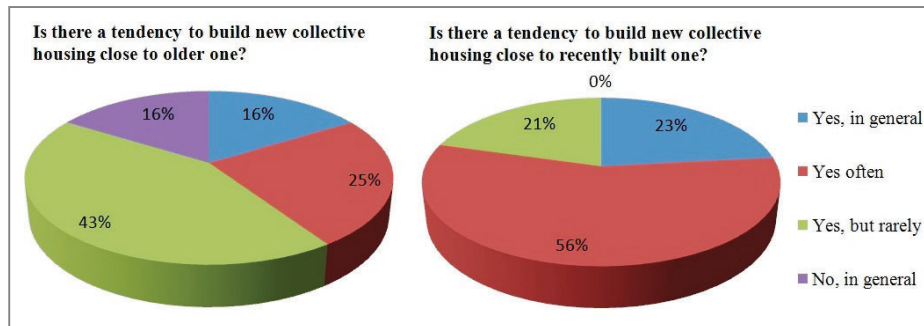


Figure 11: The tendencies of newly-built collective housing in relation to the older one

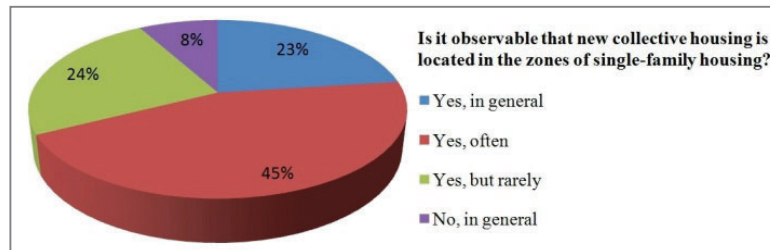


Figure 12: The tendency to build new collective housing near the zones of single-family housing

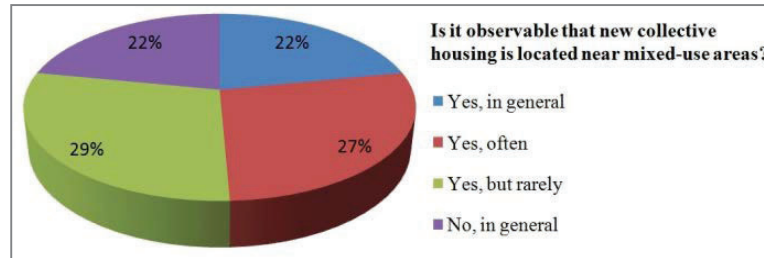


Figure 13: The tendency to build new collective housing near mixed-use areas

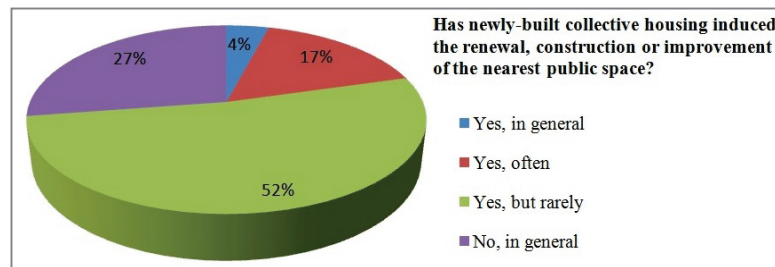


Figure 14: The influence of newly-built collective housing on interventions in the nearest public space

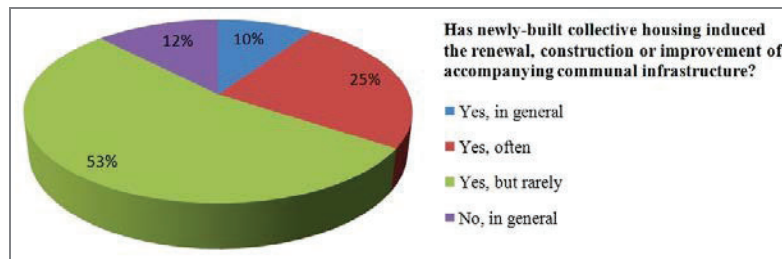


Figure 15: The influence of newly-built collective housing on the interventions in accompanying communal infrastructure

CONCLUSION



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Analysing 25 years of transition in Serbia, new collective housing, built during this period, has become the visible element of urban housing stock in the country. This stance is firmly supported by the survey, where the majority of respondents (68%) equated the older, mostly socialist housing with the newer or post-socialist housing in their presence. These opinions question the aforementioned data on the total predominance of housing from the socialistic period of former Yugoslavia, with mass construction of huge housing blocks.

The mentioned visibility of new collective housing can be a crucial factor for the next question, which refers to newer interventions in the housing sector. New housing is more present (68%) than the renovation or the renewal of older collective-housing stock. The motive is probably associated with the current situation in Serbia, where the overall level of development as well as national planning and organization is still below those in many post-socialist countries in Central and Central-Eastern Europe. Therefore, it is easier to build new building than to organize and manage the renovation of old ones.

The localization of newly-built collective housing in Serbian urban areas is also unique by some elements. To clarify, there is no visible pattern of localization in relation to urban (de)centralization or specific urban factors (workplace, public services, etc.). This is presumably linked to a strong influence of different regional and local conditions in Serbia, rather than to some nationally developed pattern or approach.

In contrast, the importance of good transport accessibility is very noticeable - it was confirmed in more than 90% of the answers in the survey. The interpretation can be connected with the transitional circumstances in Serbian cities, where new development is more concentrated along the main transport corridors. This is especially true in the case of the vital retail sector, where the issue of accessibility is significant. Finally, this clearly represents how the process of relevant urban planning and localization of new collective housing has been simplified.

The importance of the functional element of newly-built collective housing in Serbia comes right after the issue of localization. There is no visible approach of adequate "pattern" in the zoning or the functional concentration of new collective housing. Thus, according to the survey, this new collective housing can be commonly found in the zones of both older collective housing (79%) and single-family housing (68%). Therefore, retail and public services usually follow the construction of new housing instead of acting as the "initiators" of new-housing development.

Given these points in the discussion, the general deficiency of a strategic and planned approach and fragile regulation of newly-built collective housing in Serbia should also be understood as a significant problem for the general development of urban areas. Solid proof can be found in the last two questions in the survey, which are dedicated to the possible influences of new collective housing on the improvement or renewal of accompanied urban and technical infrastructure as a basic element of qualitative urban life. In both cases, it is obvious that new housing is not a sufficient factor for the improvement of the nearest public space (79%), or technical infrastructure (65%). The financial side certainly is the main contributor to this situation, but it probably is not the only one. The causes can also be inadequate objectives, solutions, and measures in planning and strategic approaches at local level. For instance, almost all governments in Serbian cities

have invested immense resources in the renewal of relative small pedestrian zones in their inner centres. If there had been better redistribution of these resources, more resources would have been realized for the improvement of infrastructure in other zones with new housing.

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TOPIC II:

URBAN AND RURAL PLACES TOWARD HUMAN COMFORT, HEALTH AND INCLUSION

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