

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IN A NEW SOCIAL ORDER: RE-EXPLORING THE REASONS FOR APPLICATION OF SPATIAL STANDARDS

A B S T R A C T

The essence of the problem in this paper has been recognized in deterioration of public and residential space in the city, after deregulation of architecture in neoliberal context. This field is marked by increasing lack of rules-especially spatial standards in the architectural practice. Therefore, re-exploring the application of space standards in modern context is needed. The paper, thus, tries to give the answer to the following question: why contemporary architectural practice does not insist on standards for the design and planning any longer?

Since the production of space in neoliberal context is powered by mighty individuals who tend to be unique and to manifest power, using the spatial standards in architecture is not welcome. 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.

Different approaches, both theoretical and practical ones are necessary requirements in profession. A clear visibility of method is required for problem solving. The wider population should influence the architectural theory and practice by common set of criteria/standards. Finally, both ideological orientations mentioned are based on those who produce urban space and not on those who speculates with it.

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KEY WORDS

STANDARDS

CONTEXT

NEEDS

QUALITY

NEOLIBERALISM

NEO-MARXISM

OPENING REMARKS:
TRANSFORMATION OF THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER AND APPLICATION
OF STANDARDS IN ARCHITECTURE

Despite the undoubted value of the architectural vision that completes and strengthens the creative potential of architects in the modern society, it is not sufficient just to give hints of what is possible in practice. It is required 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 utmost importance, because they provide determinants for measuring the quality of built 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 built environment for urban dwellers. The need for questioning the 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 which stimulates one to think about reasons for (re)use of 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 so, 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). Urban planning and design experts address the problem of wealthy individuals only, not of the most (average) users, or “those who are unable to participate in market competition”. This problem is more and more expressed. “Postmodernist turn”, thus, has not had expected outcomes. Opportunities in social transition bring about some unwanted consequences, as follows:

- Escape or withdrawal of experts from the public sphere, while the new gap takes political action of government and the market without state intervention;
- Polarization of actors, which contributes to the planning crisis for the public realm (a decrease of intensity of planning for public space and public facilities).

Architecture in the neoliberal context is principally engaged in improving profession, with the aim of responding to market demands in consumer society. In this sense, it insists on distinctive position the ability of the architect

to convince the clients about the unique forms of space produced by him. This approach is commercially based – it corresponds to the demands of function/ use, and results in profit-gaining. 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 longer. 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 tissue, as well as the development of the social life of residents.

It has been noticed that in analysis of the spatial standards in residential environment before transition, there were four criteria of definition²: physical distance, functional orientations, spatial inclusion and territorial encompassment of the dwelling units. It has also been noticed that the functional layout of the dwelling units was of particular significance. Residential zones in Serbia (New Belgrade), for instance, were built on the basis of the complex, rational, responsible and systematic approach of the experts.³ The upgrading of the spatial standards and standardization of the production process were presented by different profiles of experts: architects, sociologists, economists, psychologists and construction engineers. The task of "putting things in order" was to translate the problem into common units - the professional terminology means and establish adequate urban parameters for achieving a high quality way of housing.

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

Consequently, the problems and issues in new social order are related to establishing a common set of goals. Values and questioning their ideological background occur, in the same way as these issues occurred during the adaptation of actors, who lived in the city during the industrial era. However, there is a whole new aspect of the problem in post-industrial era, because of a

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

In analyzing the need for spatial standards, it may be noticed that architecture and urban planning refer to social groups that are guided by certain social values. Because of that, theory and practice cannot ignore ideology that provides convictions and values. That is why, according to some authors, all the problems addressed in the architectural profession should include the application of standards in building. These problems mainly have a technical dimension of output, but are essentially a political issue and represent a result of social value dilemmas. Because of this, this paper will try to interpret the importance of spatial standards in architecture, through the prism of social ideology. This paper will also try to answer the question: why it is not insisted 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: "Is modern time dominated by social reality, or technical rules? Is the communication between individuals based on economic interests more important? Are procedures and evaluation of architectural work, often devoid of context? "What about standards?"

Architectural design standards may be defined in two ways: The first is the specification of objects, manifested by an agent, intended to accomplish goals in a particular environment, using a set of primitive components, satisfying a set of requirements, subject to constraints.⁴ Another connotation is a kind of roadmap or a strategic approach for architects, in order to achieve a unique

effect. This roadmap is described by the specifications, parameters, costs, activities, processes and legal aspect, political, social, environmental, safety and economic constraints in achieving that objective.⁵

It is, therefore, found that the main disagreement exists on how theoreticians of architecture define standards. The Rational Model of interpretation of standards (based on a rational philosophy) was developed by Simon, Pahl and Beitz⁶. It posits that they are means by which the architects attempt to optimize a design, by known constraints and objectives. The so called Action-Centric Perspective model of defining standards is related to the collection of concepts: designers use creativity and emotion to generate design, the design process is improvised. No universal sequence of stages is apparent – analysis, design and implementation are contemporary and inextricably linked. The Action-Centric Perspective is, thus, already based on an empiricist philosophy, so there is no need to apply rational constraints - architectural standards.

Thus, all the schools of architecture are centrally concerned with the methods of designing (i.e. defining architectural standards).⁷ User-centered design is focused on the needs, wants, and limitations of the end user of the designed artifact. Methods of designing, by a rational definition, include redefining the specifications of design solutions which can lead to better guidelines for traditional design activities (graphic, industrial, architectural, etc.)

In modern philosophy, the noun “design” refers to a pattern with a purpose. It is contrasted with purposelessness, randomness, or lack of complexity. But, nevertheless, often a designer (especially in commercial situations) is not in position to define purpose! For example, Eisenman’s focus on “liberating” architectural form that was notable from an academic and theoretical standpoint, but resulted in structures that were both badly built and hostile to users. The Wexner Center was recognized as the first major public deconstructivist building has required extensive and expensive retrofitting, because of elementary design flaws (such as incompetent material specifications, and fine art exhibition space exposed to direct sunlight). It was frequently repeated that the Wexner’s colliding planes tended to make its users disoriented to the point of physical discomfort.

Now, what is the ideological background of the problem described? Neo-liberal orientation (which relies on poststructuralist philosophical discourse⁸) and neo-Marxist orientation (relied on the structuralism’s point of view), 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.⁹ 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.¹⁰

As concluded above, capital has the selective effect on urban development. The fastest-growing sectors in the city are business and retail. The importance of housing and related services is not given, because those are not profitable activities, so the application of housing spatial standards in practice is missing. The result of this investigates the economic development that enforces “land speculation, instead of improving the conditions of a given territory”. The basic idea of neoliberal change lies in the fact that “the process of financing urban development is the market-based and the instruments used are applied more than the public intervention and the state apparatus”. Therefore, in regard to spatial standards, it is visible that “the dynamics of evaluation, which sharply increases the gap between employees in the primary sector, and overestimated employees in the sector of the economy and the media [...], which is marked by many types of useful activities as unnecessary, even and when they represent a real stake in the leading internationalized sectors”.¹¹ These arguments indicate the reduced use of standards, particularly in designing dwelling units or residential areas related to public services (hospitals, schools, etc.).

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

APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM: CRITICAL (NEO-MARXIST)	APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM: NEO-LIBERAL
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 housing¹². That is the reason of taking focus of this approach on standards. The emergence of urban and regional movements increasingly insists on collective equipment and public spaces in the project, and opposes the logic of global capital and neoliberalism. Construction of housing units in such manner, guarantees the integration of the social life of residents in urban tissue.¹³ 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 dogma¹⁴.

Naturally, it is worth mentioning that both attitudes must be considered in the architectural practice. The choice of these two different approaches must be given equal importance, while architects and the students of architecture should gain insight into their advantages and disadvantages, following the arguments presented (some of them will work for private clients, and some will engage in the public sector, where they will have the task of defending the concept of public realm).

Inspired by 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 have been omitted. Arguments supporting the application of standards were given long time ago in the late nineteenth century. The Philosopher, Božidar Knežević, 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.” This author also claimed that “to some things tied into an organic whole, everything must take its rightful place among other things [...] They must have limits of its value, size and intensity.” Prof. Branislav Milenković agreed with this finding, and said that the most appropriate way of determining the limit values is by using standards. This contains basic considerations and the solutions to the planned use/content, and activities in relation to urban space and architectural design¹⁵.

However, neoliberal attitude opposes 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, additional



Figure 1 The glass curtain wall of the Wexner Center was overhauled to restore light to galleries darkened by an earlier quick fix.



Figure 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/>



Figure 4-5 Kitchen blocks in residential buildings in Skenderbegova Street in Belgrade, built in 2004 and 2007, in the period of social transition in Serbia. Complete absence of empirical architectural criteria –architectural standards can be seen here. Source: Author



Figure 6-7 Kitchen and dining blocks in residential buildings in 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



Figure 3 Margarete Schütte Lihotzky - Frankfurter Küche, year 1929. Kitchen designed according to architectural standards. It makes it possible to meet the needs of more different profiles of customers. The furniture can be mass - produced inexpensively, in the industry. Source: http://www.artvalue.com/image.aspx?PHOTO_ID=2458588

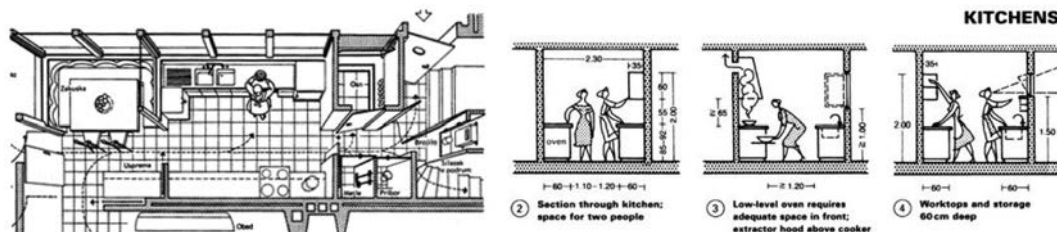


Figure 8 Architectural standards for kitchen design, guided by rationality, efficiency and effectiveness Source: The Handbook of Building Types: Neufert Architect's Data <http://thedesignersassistant.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/neufert-kitchen.jpg>

criteria/standards may be derived: rationality, efficiency, effectiveness, cost-effectiveness. One must agree with both point of views, but one should decide, which to favor? And how to agree about priorities?

Structuralistic context in manufacturing 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”¹⁶. Therefore, the legacy of structuralistic methods suggests respecting the context, empirical criteria / standards, and all the cultural archetypes in relation to the *genius loci*.¹⁷

Nevertheless, the author Rem Koolhaas completely negates and denies urban context in his book “S, M, L, XL”. According to his post-structuralistic and deconstructivistic point of view, one of the most important aspects of the architectural project is the entity of size. This position does not stand as a lonely and new concept. Historical parallels can be made, for instance with the discourses of The City Beautiful movement, which also has its utopian, ideological roots. The main representative of this movement, Daniel Burnham said: “Do not make small plans. They have no magic, and probably will not be realized. Make big plans, aim high [...]”¹⁸. In the presence of architectural and urban design there is the tendency expressed in “preoccupation with formal design considerations in creation of money and personal situation, much more than to serve the potential users”. 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 the structuralists. They did not seek to discover the basic order of language, pattern and attitudes of the inhabitants in the city, supporting the concept of application of standards in architecture. According to the poststructuralists claim, which refers to the contemporary new order in the world, information networks and the globalization of capital (as the main reasons for favoring the pure design and the size as a main entity of the form), leads to the negation of architectural standards. The theorist Kenneth Frampton said that “the monopolized economy aims to reduce the architecture practice and urban design for a large scale”. Therefore, the task of 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”¹⁹.

The problem in understanding the spatial standards may also be recognized in the conflict between the neo-liberal and neo-Marxist orientation. Economic crisis and conflict are present between self-proclaimed architects of the so-called “non-architects”²⁰. There is a feeling among architects that all the rewards are compatible with disdain, but respected by critics and architects. Such comments about architectural standards may be seen in the case of the house which was designed by Laurinda Spear and Bernardo Fort-Bescia (Bureau Arquitectonica): “Located on the north Miami coast, The Pink House with a large ship-like window, caused depreciation in the neighborhood, but it is widely accepted in the magazines”²¹.

After the wide offer of space with an attractive form and incomplete program on 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”²². In his work, he refutes the myth of the architectural standards and function on the one hand (stating that the most suitable areas in Britain for various purposes are abandoned industrial buildings), while on the other hand examines the technology standards and industrialization that is focused on the alliance of profits and power. This approach is identified as a lack of connection of the social groups and the build environment. “Individual and collective are not in the same sphere, although it is shown the necessity of survival”²³. Today the same finding can be applied to the reality in architectural practice in Serbia.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION - ONE PROPOSAL FOR CONSIDERING THE PROBLEM

The key question in every architectural theory is how to build a design form in terms of a society, topology, and typology / urban context. Therefore, the architectural form should be realized by certain rules or, as Aldo Rossi said, towards the principle tested in similar neighborhoods 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”²⁴. Because of that, architectural theory and practice represent the most common moments and places (especially in Serbia). It neither represents the originality and relation to context, nor makes the response to customer needs, no matter how strong the motivation of the author may be.

Therefore, the uniqueness of theoretical and practical work is the requirement that develops 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 Milenković, "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 the population as a primary measure of impact." These statements indicate the hypothesis at the beginning of this consideration, that 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 town-building – the investors. No matter what, the investors must also take into account the needs of clients and the costs from the primary business sector for whom it is 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. These regulations would include:

- Standards in area, number of rooms, use/function;
- Standards in concentration or dispersion of use/functions on location or an object;
- Standards in construction and utility equipment;
- Standards in maintenance and usage

In defining the problems of standards analyzed in this paper, one may agree with the theorist David Harvey, who defines the essence of the problem of a modern man in an urban community in the introduction to his book, entitled "Right to the City": "The question of what kind of city we want cannot be separated from the question of what kind of people we want to be [...] and what the moral values we hold." The main objective, according to Lefebvre, was to generate a concept "with the social, economic and spatial characteristics, which will allow human existence in all its aspects".

Finally, the system is based on those who produce the urban space, not on investors who speculate with it. It does not matter what kind of social order it is, and what kind of ideology it is driven by.

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, thus it is necessary to constantly review and adapt them to the new, current needs (M. Bobić, 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>. In the recent years (since 2007) the Serbian Chamber of Engineers has launched an initiative to review the existing and to establish the new recommendations for residential buildings standard. It is recommended to amend the existing documents on designing the dwellings and residential buildings in Belgrade (*Sl. list grada*

- Beograda*, br. 32/IV/83 and 5/88). This document was used only for housing projects initiated by the public sector and represented the basis for the development of new technical regulations. Source: http://www.ingkomora.rs/glasnik/06/cl06_071.pdf
- 2 Milica Milojević: *Re-conceptualization of the Idea of Neighborhood in Post-socialist Belgrade*. Serbian Architectural Journal No. 1 (Belgrade: Faculty of Architecture, 2009)
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 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) pp. 103–136
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Herbert A. Simon: *The sciences of the artificial* (MIT Press, Cambridge, 1996)
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau: *S,M,L,XL* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998)
- 9 *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>
- 10 Rem Koolhaas, Bruce Mau: *S,M,L,XL* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1998)
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- 12 Manuel Castells: *City, Class and Power* (New York: MacMillan; St. Martins Press, 1982)
- 13 Sreten Vujović: *Urbani pokreti i socijalne borbe*. Istraživanje prostora, Ed. Urbanologija, sveska 1 (Beograd: Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, 1992)
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- 18 Charles Moore: *Daniel H. Burnham, Architect, Planner of Cities*. “XXV “Closing in 1911–1912””. Volume 2. (Boston, Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin, 1921)
- 19 Elin Nan: *Postmoderni urbanizam* (Beograd: OrionArt, 2002):163.
- 20 Ibid., 209.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Peter Blake: *Form Follows Fiasco* (Atlantic, Architectural Forum, 1977)
- 23 Branislav Milenković: *Urbani prostor i arhitektonsko projektovanje*. Istraživanje prostora, Ed. Urbanologija, sveska 1 (Beograd: Arhitektonski fakultet, 1992)
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