



Places and Technologies 2015

KEEPING UP WITH TECHNOLOGIES TO MAKE HEALTHY PLACES

Nova Gorica, Slovenia, 18.–19.6.2015

PT2015

BOOK OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

A healthy city is one that is continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and developing to their maximum potential.
Health Promotion Glossary (1998)

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**KEEPING UP WITH
TECHNOLOGIES TO MAKE HEALTHY PLACES**

BOOK OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Editors:

Alenka Fikfak, Eva Vaništa Lazarević,
Nataša Fikfak, Milena Vukmirović, Peter Gabrijelčič

Nova Gorica, Slovenia



Contents

INTRODUCTION	10
HEALTHY CITY - TECHNOLOGY AND URBAN RESILIENCE EVA VANIŠTA LAZAREVIĆ	11
A PLACE FOR PLACES: LIVE AND STAY NATAŠA FIKFAK	13
NOVA GORICA MATEJ ARČON	14
HEALTHY CITY - TECHNOLOGY AND URBAN RESILIENCE RUŽICA BOŽOVIĆ STAMENOVIĆ	17
INNOVATING AT LISBON'S WATERFRONT PLACE, THE "TAGUS PLATFORM" PROJECT PEDRO RESSANO GARCIA	19
TOPIC I: Architecture and Health	19
HEALTHY BUILDINGS: THE ICF CLASSIFICATION AS A DESIGNING TOOL ALBERTO ARENGHI, DANIELE MALGRATI, MICHELE SCARAZZATO	20
THE HEALTH ASPECTS OF SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE KOSARA KUJUNDŽIĆ	26
UNIVERSITY AND DWELLERS' ASSOCIATIONS TOGETHER FOR CREATING SUSTAINABLE AND HEALTHY URBAN ENVIRONMENTS LUCIA MARTINCIGH, FRANCESCO BIANCHI, CECILIA DE MARINIS, MARINA DI GUIDA, GIOVANNI PERRUCCI	32
"VERTICAL" CITY DAMJANA LOJANIČIĆ	39
HEALTHY WORKPLACE: UTOPIA OR REALITY OF MODERN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TIJANA VUJIČIĆ, TANJA TRKULJA	45
SUSTAINABLE DESIGN FOR IMPROVEMENT OF HEALTHY BUILT ENVIRONMENT ALEKSANDAR PETROVSKI, OGNEN MARINA, GEORGI DIMKOV, DIMITAR PAPASTEREVSKI	52
HEALTHCARE DESIGN REVISITED – NEW APPROACHES TO USER – CENTRIC, EFFICIENT AN EFFECTIVE DESIGN EVA VANIŠTA LAZAREVIĆ, JELENA MARIĆ, MILENA VUKMIROVIĆ, GORAN RADOVIĆ	59
BUILDING MATERIALS AND HUMAN HEALTH: DESIGNERS' PERSPECTIVE SAJA KOSANOVIĆ, ALENKA FIKFAK, MIRKO GRBIĆ	74



TOWARDS A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTHY PLACE SAJA KOSANOVIĆ, EVA VANIŠTA LAZAREVIĆ, SLAĐAN TIMOTIJEVIĆ	80
ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES OF BUILDING MATERIALS OF TRADITIONAL OHRID HOUSE AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO ITS HUMAN DESIGN RADMILA TOMOVSKA, ANA RADIVOJEVIĆ	86
HEALTHY ARCHITECTURE AS A RESULT OF BALANCED INTEGRATION OF ARTIFICIAL AND NATURAL RULES DŽENANA BIJEDIĆ, RADA ČAHTAREVIĆ, SENAJDA HALILOVIĆ	93
HEALTHY ARCHITECTURE FOR CHILDREN JULIJA ALEKSIĆ	101
MEDICINE AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY ILKA ČERPES	107
MARGINALISATION OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES ALONG THE STRAIT OF SINGAPORE MAGNUS NICKL, VERENA STECHER	115
THE SCALE OF ACUTE CARE HOSPITALS IN SERBIA - THE NEED FOR RETHINKING MARKO MATEJIĆ	121
ARCHITECTURE AND HEALTHY LIVING SPACE GORAN RADOVIĆ	127
TOPIC II: Physical Planning and Quality of Place	140
DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS OF URBAN STRUCTURE THROUGH REGISTRATION OF CHANGES OF SEGMENTS OF URBAN COMPLEX VELIMIR STOJANOVIĆ	141
THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SQUARE CARICA MILICA IN NOVI SAD (SERBIA) IVANA SENTIĆ, KSENIJA HIEL	147
VARESE LIGURE: AN ITALIAN RURAL MUNICIPALITY WHICH HAS IMPLEMENTED AN EXEMPLARY MODEL OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GIOVANNI SERGI, CARLO BERIO, GIULIA CANTON, GIACOMO CROVO	154
CYBERPARKS CHALLENGES - NEW DIGITAL MEDIA FOR ATTRACTIVE URBAN OPEN SPACES INA ŠUKLJE ERJAVEC, CARLOS SMANIOTTO COSTA	163
MEDIA ARCHITECTURE AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT JASNA ČIKIĆ-TOVAROVIĆ, JELENA IVANOVIĆ-ŠEKULARAC, NENAD ŠEKULARAC	171



IMPLEMENTATION OF NORWEGIAN EXPERIENCE TO SLOVENIAN HOSPITAL SECTOR	179
ALENKA TEMELJOTOV-SALAJ, SVEIN BJOERBERG, SIMON VRHUNEC, ANDREJ BARIČIČ	
TOWARDS OPEN, THERMODYNAMIC CITY P&T 2015	186
MARIJA BOJOVIĆ, IRENA RAJKOVIĆ, SANJA PAUNOVIĆ ŽARIĆ	
INTERWEAVING OF BANJALUKA'S URBAN AND RURAL LANDSCAPES	194
DIJANA SIMONOVIĆ	
AN APPLICATION OF THE "ENVIRONMENTAL ISLAND": A PRESCRIPTIVE TOOL TO CREATE HEALTHIER URBAN ENVIRONMENTS	201
LUCIA MARTINCIGH, CECILIA DE MARINIS, JANET HETMAN	
DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC SQUARES IN NORTH WESTERN EUROPEAN CITY CENTRES	209
BOB GIDDINGS, JAMES CHARLTON	
MUSIC AND SOUND AS A TOOL INTO DESIGNING HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT	216
ANJA KOSTANJŠAK, MORANA PAP, TENA LAZAREVIĆ	
DESIGNING PARKING STRUCTURES IN SERVICE OF PUBLIC HEALTH	225
TANJA TRKUJA, TIJANA VUJIČIĆ	
DESIGNING THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT WHEN PLANNING BUSINESS ZONES	232
GREGOR ČOK	
FOUR PARADIGMS FOR THE VENETO REGION'S CENTRAL AREA	240
ENRICO ANGUILLARI	
MUNICIPALITY POLICY AS KEY FACTOR FOR THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTURE AND TECHNOLOGY IN PUBLIC HEALTH	248
DEJAN VASOVIĆ, NATAŠA ČUKOVIĆ IGNJATOVIĆ, DUŠAN IGNJATOVIĆ	
INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE IN ALBANIA AND THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGENERATION AND ADAPTIVE RE-USE	255
FLORIAN NEPRAVISHTA	
THE POSSIBILITIES OF THE APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF HEALTHY CITY IN ILLEGAL SETTLEMENTS IN SERBIA	266
BRANISLAV ANTONIĆ, BISERKA MITROVIĆ	
URBAN REGENERATION AS A TOOL FOR POPULATION HEALTH IMPROVEMENT	272
FILIP PETROVIĆ	
URBANIZATION OF METROPOLITAN AREAS – THE IMPORTANCE OF NEW SPATIAL DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS	281
HANNA OBRACHT-PRONDZYNSKA	



AQUAPONICS BASED ARTIFICIAL BIOSPHERE INCLUDED IN ARCHITECTURE: FROM
MITIGATION OF NEGATIVE IMPACTS TO POSITIVE ADDED VALUES OF URBAN
SPATIAL STRUCTURES ON LOCAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SCALE 288

PIOTR MAREK SMOLNICKI

INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES IN THE URBAN PLANNING
WATER SENSITIVE PLACES 297

VIŠNJA SRETOVIĆ BRKOVIĆ, MATIJA BRKOVIĆ

TOPIC III: Lifetime Communities and Participation 308

COHOUSING FOR BUILDING REUSE 309

ADOLFO BARATTA, FABRIZIO FINUCCI, ANNALISA METTA, LUCA MONTUORI

HOW TO DESIGN HEALTHY BUILDING FOR HEALTHY LIVING? 315

ANJA JUTRAŽ, SANJA ŠTIMAC

PARTICIPATORY URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC POLICY 326

VIŠNJA KUKOČ

TOPIC IV: Cultural Patterns and Sensitivity 332

SENSE OF PLACE IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN:
TOWARDS HEALTHY PLACES P&T 2015 333

EGLÉ NAVICKIENÉ

HOLIDAY HOMES IN THE VICINITY OF SPLIT, CROATIA, DESIGNED
BY FRANO GOTOVAC – CONTINUITY OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE 341

VESNA PERKOVIĆ JOVIĆ

ARCHITECTURE AND ITS AFTERLIFE; GREEN URBANITY 347

GABRIELLA MEDVEGY, GÁBOR VERES

INVESTIGATION OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE
OF THE INHABITANTS AND QUALITY OF HOUSING 353

ANA ŠPIRIĆ, SANJA TRIVIĆ

UTOPIAN PROJECTS DRAWINGS AS INDICATORS
OF MODERN SOCIETY NEEDS 361

VLADIMIR KOVAČ

YOUTH AND THE FEELING OF SAFETY IN PUBLIC SPACES 368

SVETLANA STANAREVIĆ, STEVAN TATALOVIĆ



TOPIC V: Health Intensive Care 375

OPTICAL COHERENCE TOMOGRAPHY - GUIDED PRIMARY PERCUTANEOUS CORONARY INTERVENTION IN ACUTE MYOCARDIAL INFARCTION	375
IGOR KRANJEC	
FRACTAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE CORONARY ARTERY TREE	386
MATJAŽ KLEMENC	
HUMANIZATION OF DIALYSIS: GREEN AND COZY	392
JADRANKA BUTUROVIĆ-PONIKVAR	
CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND AN ACTIVE APPROACH TO OVERCOME THEM	397
MARKO VUDRAG	
ANALYSIS AND CONTEMPORARY APPROACH OF SPACE DESIGN OF INTENSIVE PSYCHIATRIC CARE UNIT	406
NEVENA DUTINA, ALEKSANDRA DUTINA	

TOPIC VI: Inclusive and Accessible Environment 413

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE FIRE SAFETY DESIGN	414
VALERIA TATANO, ELISABETTA CARATTIN	
INCLUSIVE AND THERAPEUTIC URBAN ENVIRONMENT: INVOLVING USERS IN THE DESIGN PROCESS	422
ILARIA GAROFOLO, BARBARA CHIARELLI	
DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE SOCIAL HOUSING TO FOSTER INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES	429
SILVIA GRION, PAOLA COLONI	
URBAN PUBLIC SPACES ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL: A CASE STUDY IN A HISTORICAL DISTRICT OF ROME	436
LUCIA MARTINCIGH, CECILIA DE MARINIS	
ECOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE, PHYTODEPURATION AND MANMADE WETLANDS IN MAGOK LAKE PARK, SEOUL	445
CRISTIAN SUAU, CARMELO ZAPPULLA	
ADVANCED SYSTEMS FOR IMPROVING COMMON HEALTH	458
URŠKA KALČIČ, JANEZ PETER GROM	
INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE ENVIRONMENT: PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE	466
SANKALP SHUKLA, APOORVA GANGRADE, ANSHULA GUMBER	
FACTS4STOPS – USER NEEDS REGARDING PUBLIC TRANSPORT STATIONS AND ENVIRONMENT	472
CHRISTINE CHALOUPKA-RISSER, DANIEL BELL	



TOPIC VII: Environmentally Friendly Transport 478

SHIFTING TO MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY MODES IN LONG-DISTANCE TRANSPORT	479
ALEKSANDRA NEŠIĆ, IVANA ČAVKA, OLJA ČOKORILO	
ASSESSING PUBLIC TRANSPORT EFFICIENCY IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT	485
EVGENIA YOSIFOVA	
THE ROLE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT PRIORITY IN SUSTAINABLE URBAN MOBILITY	492
DINO ŠOJAT, DAVOR BRČIĆ, MARKO SLAVUJ	
APPLICATION OF PV MODULES ON NOISE BARRIERS	498
BUDIMIR SUDIMAC, ANDJELA DUBLJEVIĆ	
PLANNING OF ELECTRIC TRANSPORTATION IN THE KRŠKO REGION	505
ANA TIVADAR, STANKO MANOJLOVIĆ, SIMON PODKORITNIK	
INTELLIGENT TRANSPORT SYSTEMS FOR SMART CITIES	511
BIA MANDŽUKA, LJUPKO ŠIMUNOVIĆ, MARIO ĆOSIĆ	

TOPIC VIII: Building Technologies 518

RETROFITTING OF MULTI-FAMILY BUILDINGS TOWARDS HEALTHIER SETTLEMENTS	519
ALEKSANDRA KRSTIĆ-FURUNDŽIĆ, ALEKSANDRA ĐUKIĆ	
FERROCEMENT ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURES FROM THE ASPECT OF SOCIAL WELL-BEING	526
ALEKSANDRA NENADOVIĆ	
DAYLIGHT ANALYSES OF "READY-MADE" FAÇADES WITH MODULAR OPENINGS - CASE STUDY LOCATION IN PODGORICA	532
SANJA PAUNOVIĆ ŽARIĆ, IRENA RAJKOVIĆ, MARIJA BOJOVIĆ	
ACTIVE SOLAR SYSTEMS – STUDY OF POTENTIAL FOR APPLICATION IN THE MATERIALIZATION OF TOURIST FACILITIES IN MONTENEGRO	539
IRENA RAJKOVIĆ, SANJA PAUNOVIĆ ŽARIĆ, MARIJA BOJOVIĆ	
PREFABRICATED PASSIVE HOUSE VENTILATED FAÇADE PANEL SYSTEM WITH RECYCLED CONCRETE	548
LJUBOMIR MIŠČEVIĆ, IVANA BANJAD PEČUR, BOJAN MILOVANOVIĆ	
POTENTIAL ANALYSIS OF DYNAMIC, THERMAL BUILDING SIMULATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF MEASUREMENT AIDED SIMULATION TECHNIQUE	556
ISTVÁN KISTELEGDI, BÁLINT BARANYAI, BÁLINT BACHMANN	



TOPIC IX: Adaptive Reuse and Urban Renewal 561

COMPARISON OF THE SUSTAINABILITY OF DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES
FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF REINFORCED CONCRETE SLABS 562

TANYA CHARDAKOVA, MARINA TRAYKOVA

SYSTEMS FOR THE REQUALIFICATION OF NON-LISTED ARCHITECTURE:
THE "ADAPTIVE EXOSKELETON" 569

FRANCESCA GUIDOLIN

RECONSTRUCTION AND REVITALIZATION OF THE COMPLEX SENARA, WITHIN
THE MONASTERY HILANDAR, IN ORDER TO ADAPT TO MODERN TRENDS AND
SOCIAL CHANGES 575

JELENA IVANOVIĆ-ŠEKULARAC, JASNA ČIKIĆ-TOVAROVIĆ, NENAD ŠEKULARAC

RENEWAL OF JUGOMONT PREFABRICATED RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS JU-61 582

IVAN MLINAR, LEA PETROVIĆ KRAJNIK, TAMARA MARIĆ

BROWNFIELDS AS PLACES AND RENEWABLE ENERGY SYSTEMS
AS TECHNOLOGIES: POTENTIALS AND RISKS IN CASE OF SERBIA 588

ANITA STOILKOV-KONESKI, ZORAN KONESKI

LANDFILL JAKUŠEVEC IN ZAGREB – POTENTIAL FOR NEW SPACE
IDENTITY AND ENHANCEMENT OF QUALITY OF LIFE 595

LEA PETROVIĆ KRAJNIK, DAMIR KRAJNIK, IVAN MLINAR

TOPIC X: Active Living and Health 601

OPEN PUBLIC SPACES FOR HEALTHIER CITIES 602

ALEKSANDRA STUPAR, ALEKSANDRA ĐUKIĆ

RESPONSIBILITY TO THE EMPLOYEES' HEALTH UNAVOIDABLE
IN THE CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE DESIGN OF OFFICE SPACES 610

NIKOLA Z. FURUNDŽIĆ, DIJANA P. FURUNDŽIĆ, ALEKSANDRA KRSTIĆ- FURUNDŽIĆ

HEALTHY PLACES, ACTIVE PEOPLE 617

KATARINA ANA LESTAN, IVAN ERŽEN, MOJCA GOLOBIČ

THE IMPACT OF QUALITY OF PEDESTRIAN SPACES ON
WALKING AS A MODERATE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY 623

MILENA VUKMIROVIĆ, EVA VANIŠTA LAZAREVIĆ

TOPIC XI: Health Promotion, Protection and Prevention 638

OUTDOOR GYMS: "NO MORE EXCUSES FOR PEOPLE WHO CANNOT
AFFORD MEMBERSHIPS. GET OUT AND GET IN SHAPE!" 639

ANNE-KATHRIN WILL



STUDENT PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR HEALTHY LIFESTYLE ALEŠ GOJJA	646
KEY POINTS OF HUMAN AWARENESS AND EMERGENCY PLANNING. SCHOOLS AS A CASE STUDY MADDALENA COCCAGNA	655
ANOTHER SIDE OF THE COMFORT OF LIVING – ELECTROMAGNETIC POLLUTION NEBOJŠA ARSIĆ, JORDAN RADOSAVLJEVIĆ, NATAŠA FIKFAK, SAŠA ŠTATKIĆ	661
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNIVERSAL DESIGN OF OUTDOOR LEISURE AND RECREATIONAL AREAS LARA SLIVNIK	667
TOPIC XII: Social Networks and Human Basic Needs	673
VISUAL REPRESENTATION AND EXPERIENCE OF PLACE: CASE STUDY ALHAMBRA IN GRANADA ISIDORA KARAN, VEDRANA IKALOVIĆ	674
BEYOND THE QUANTIFIED SELF: A LOOK AT THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF HEALTH SVEA HEINEMANN	680
SKYSCRAPER'S PUBLIC AREAS: THE IMPACT ON SPACE AND SOCIAL LIFE ALICJA STEFAŃSKA	686
THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS USE ON REDUCTION OF DEPRESSION IN CANCER PATIENTS LEILA HABIBI, HAMID REZA FARPOUR	691



FERROCEMENT ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURES FROM THE ASPECT OF SOCIAL WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

The examples of use of ferrocement architectural structures are more numerous in recent years, with the aim to realize efficient and economically viable solutions. This paper analyzes the ferrocement architectural structures from the aspect of social well-being. The ferrocement structures are analyzed as subsystem of the building, whose behavior is directed towards the aim of system – building - ecological quality. The present analysis pointed to the advantages and disadvantages of ferrocement structures from the aspect of social well-being during the use phase of a building, that is, to the necessity of a complex and systemic approach to quality of building structures, in function of achieving the ecological quality of buildings.

Keywords: *sustainable building, ecological quality of buildings, ferrocement structures, social well-being.*

INTRODUCTION

Raising the level of sustainability of building refers to the "reduction of negative environmental impact and resource consumption due to construction, use and dismantling of constructed facilities, with a simultaneous increase in life quality of and health and safety in the built environment" (Working Group for Sustainable Construction, 2001). In this process, it is important to assess the ecological quality of buildings (Nenadović, 2014), which includes quality assessment on the basis of indicators within the criteria of social well-being¹.

The building structure, along with other elements of architectural space, determines the performances of the building. The building structure should be designed and evaluated as a sub-system of the building, whose behavior is directed toward the aim of system-building, which within the criteria of social well-being refers to the realization of building performances that meet the needs and expectations of its users during the use phase of a building (Nenadović, 2014).

¹ The indicators for integrated assessment of ecological quality of building are classified by the interrelated and conditioned sustainability criteria into three groups: indicators within the environmental criteria, indicators within the criteria of social well-being, and indicators within the criteria of economic well-being (Nenadović, 2014).



There are numerous examples of applications of ferrocement architectural structures in recent times in the world, with the aim to realize efficient and economically viable solutions². Ferrocement as a special form of thin-walled reinforced concrete³, along with the economic viability, offers a wide range of functional and shaping possibilities. Compared to the conventional reinforced concrete, it is characterized by „enhanced elasticity, fine cracks, lower permeability to water vapor and gases, higher ductility and durability“ (IFS Committees 10, 2001). Various structures and their elements can be built from ferrocement, including the elements of complex geometry, with the ability to build without formwork. Building the architectural structures in ferrocement is not to demanding, from the technological point of view, neither it require special equipment.⁴

This paper analyzes the ferrocement architectural structures from the aspect of social well-being, on the basis of following indicators: protection and safety; aspects of comfort; electromagnetic field levels; quality of spatial organization; space adaptability; ease of building maintenance; visual aspects.

FERROCEMENT ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURES FROM THE ASPECT OF SOCIAL WELL-BEING

Protection and safety

Ferrocement monolithic structures have proved as reliable and durable, when it comes to the safety of people during the natural disasters. The robustness of this type of construction is based on their continuity and ductility. The limiting factor in the application of this type of structures is limited possibility of precise numerical analysis of the load-bearing capacity for different loading cases, or the necessity of laboratory testing of physical models in order to perceive the behavior of the structure. Ferrocement is noncombustible material that has adequate fire resistance. However, during the fire action the degradation of mechanical properties of ferrocement elements can be observed. On average mechanical resistance to fire of ferrocement load bearing elements, that are not part of the composite assembly, is only 30 minutes, which represents a small fire resistance. Satisfactory values of mechanical resistance to fire can be achieved within the composite and sandwich structures.

² Since recently, ferrocement is applied in Serbia in a modest extent (Milinković, 2009). The first technical recommendation for ferrocement in Serbia was published by Federal institution for standardization in 2002.

³ Ferrocement is made of a thin layer of cement mortar within which there is a high percentage of reinforcement, in form of multiple layers of continuous light network, which is made of closely spaced wires of relatively small diameter. The thickness of the elements is 1-3 cm, which is practically impossible in the case of classical reinforced concrete.

⁴ Production of ferrocement elements is challenging in terms of expenditure of labor, which limits the application of this material in countries with high labour cost.



Aspects of comfort

Ferrocement surface elements, since they are very thin, have low thermal resistance, so it is necessary to incorporate additional layers of thermal insulation in the area of the building envelope. Monolithic ferrocement structures are favorable in terms of air sealing, minimizing the air leak. In order to ensure an adequate heat capacity and thermal inertia of the entire assembly, it is necessary to incorporate additional layers of materials with appropriate thermal characteristics. Ferrocement has a low permeability for water steam and gases and does not participate in the processes of humidity regulation. When it comes to the internal air quality, ferrocement can be considered as harmless material, practically with no emission of harmful gases, particles and microfibers. Due to the low air permeability of ferrocement, the possibility of air changes through the building envelope is reduced, which increases the risk for moistening the elements and mold growth. Single-layer ferrocement surface elements, given the small thickness, are characterized by high sound conductivity, i.e., a small insulating power. Studies have shown that the sound reduction index of ferrocement thin walls increases with the addition of stiffeners and that it further rises with addition of insulating filling⁵. When it comes to the impact sound insulation, ferrocement ceiling constructions imply additional floor layers, which reduce impact sound trans-mission. Satisfactory sound insulation properties must be ensured through the installation of floating floors which reduce vibration within ceiling element, in addition, through the installation of suspended ceilings, as well as through the adequate design of structural elements' connection details in order to avoid sound leakage, that is, the occurrence of sound bridges. Ferrocement structures and elements are suitable when it comes to the realization of assemblies in accordance with the desired acoustic qualities, since they can be freely shaped. The sound field phenomena: reverberation time, diffusivity and early reflections can be managed by designing the texture and shape of ferrocement elements.

Electromagnetic field levels

Ferrocement structural elements, especially those with a high percentage of reinforcement, can create unhealthy environment for users. Ferrocement surface elements can enhance the effect of electromagnetic radiation in the indoor environment, due to reflections and the superposition of electromagnetic waves.

⁵ In the case of ferrocement partition made of two layers of ferrocement, between which there is a layer of air or porous absorbent material, the insulating power of partitions is better (for 2db and more) than in the case of solid wall of the same thickness („Award-winning Project: Treelodge@Punggol“, 2012).



Quality of spatial organization

Ferrocement monolithic structures are suitable from the aspect of their adjustment to the form of space which is required by the social action (Figure 1). Structural elements can be shaped in such way that they occupy only the cross-sectional areas of social spaces, with the aim of creating "the most efficient structure for a given system of space" (Alexander, Ishikawa and Silverstein, 1977). The building structure can be optimized in accordance with the people and their needs (Kiesler, 1939).



Figure 1: Javier Senosiain, The organic house, Naucalpan, Mexico, 1985. The preliminary sketch and the interior. <http://www.arquitecturaorganica.com/casa-orgaacutenica.html>

Space adaptability

By adequate shaping of ferrocement elements (beam elements of complex cross-section) or the whole structures (ribbed ferrocement shell) and by the formation of composite assemblies made of ferrocement and other construction materials (classical concrete and steel), a long span load bearing structures can be constructed, i.e., the higher net usable surface area can be achieved. This increases the possibility of space functioning for multi-purposes. In addition, important characteristic of ferrocement structures, when it comes to the space adaptability, is their durability and possibility of easy repair and maintenance, based on the application of readily available materials. But, in the case of space reconstruction, ferrocement elements can be limiting, because of the reduced potential for subsequent formation of openings within elements and because of difficulties in achieving the connection between new structural elements and existing structure. However, compared to the much thicker reinforced concrete elements, ferrocement elements can be considered favorable in terms of space adaptability.

Ease of building maintenance

Ferrocement structures enable effective maintenance over the expected service life, with a minimum investment of human, material and financial resources, provided that they are designed in accordance with specific conditions in the macro and



micro environment and properly built. Given the durability of ferrocement, i.e., taking into account that first ferrocement structures, built in mid-nineteenth century, are still in good condition (Pemberton, 1998), it is necessary to avoid the assemblies in which ferrocement is combined with less durable materials if the separation of individual materials is prevented.

Visual aspects

The ferrocement, as a composite material whose structure, texture and colour are designed and thus the degree of reflection, as well as the ferrocement structures which allow a high degree of freedom in their shaping and in shaping of openings with the aim of light manipulation (Figure 1), can contribute the quality of light in the interior space, that is, affect the level of brightness, propagation of light and light intensity and colour. Ferrocement in its "natural" color ("non-color"), which is determined by the color of cement and aggregate whose base is gray, is assessed as "cold" from a lay person (Rutkin, 2005). On the other hand, if it is made in warm colors it can be perceived significantly different, primarily as "warm" (Benz and Rambow, 2008). Ferrocement structures can take "soft, non-aggressive forms, without sharp edges" that "cause pleasantness of touch and stimulate the subconscious to repeat the same experience" (Božović-Stamenović, 1997). Ferrocement, in the visual sense, can be experienced as a concrete with fine structure or as a rough mortar. In this context, in Europe ferrocement is associated with the mass usage of concrete or mortar within the buildings of different purposes, making it a "neutral" material, suitable for composing the spaces of different associative values. Ubiquity, standardicity, uniformity, availability, simplicity, steadiness, dynamism, freedom...ferrocement can "hide" many ideological backgrounds, i.e., take many meanings (Nenadović, 2014).

CONCLUSIONS

The paper analysed the ferrocement architectural structures on the basis of indicators of social well-being for users during the use phase of the building. The ferrocement structures were analyzed as subsystem of the building, whose behavior is directed towards the aim of system – building - ecological quality. The analysis pointed to the advantages and disadvantages of ferrocement structures from the aspect of social well-being, that is, to the necessity of a complex and systemic approach to quality of building structures, in function of achieving the ecological quality of buildings. In this context, it is necessary to further develop the legal framework for planning and construction, as well as to further improve the education of designers, by including the complex and systemic assessment of impact of buildings and their subsystems, within the general framework for the assessment of ecological quality.



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