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MULTIFAMILY HOUSING IN THE VILLAGES OF SERBIA: FROM INAPPROPRIATE SPATIAL APPEARANCES TO POSSIBLE ELEMENTS OF URBANITY

Abstract:

Rural housing is directly linked to agricultural work, so the organization of space in the yard is fundamentally different from the functional characteristics of urban housing. In the villages of Serbia, over the years and after the Second World War, multi-storey residential buildings were erected for service to non-agricultural population. By their basic manifestations and visual manifestations, as well as functional characteristics, these objects never fit into the image of the village, and their users do not enter into the habits and customs of life in the environments in which they are built. Semi-agricultural and non-agricultural population in rural areas is predominant today, so the question arises as to the relation of the profession to multi-family housing in villages.

Keywords: multi-family housing, rural context, non-farmers, relationships, adaptation

ВИШЕПОРОДИЧНО СТАНОВАЊЕ У СЕЛИМА СРБИЈЕ: ОД НЕПРИМЕРЕНИХ ПРОСТОРНИХ ПОЈАВА ДО МОГУЋИХ ЕЛЕМЕНАТА УРБАНИТЕТА

Сажетак:

Становање у селима је непосредно повезано са радом у пољопривреди, па је организација простора на дворишту суштински различита од карактеристика урбаног становања. У селима Србије су током времена, а након Другог светског рата, грађени вишеспратни стамбени објекти, намењени услужном непољопривредном становништву. Како основним појавним и визуелним манифестацијама, тако и функционалним карактеристикама, ови се објекти нису никада уклопили у слику села, а њихови корисници у навике и обичаје живота у срединама у којима су грађени. Полуаграрно и неаграрно становништво у селима данас преовлађује, па се поставља питање односа струке према вишепородичном становању у селима.

Кључне ријечи: вишепородично становање, рурални контекст, непољопривредници, релације

1. INTRODUCTION

The main issue discussed in the text is the problem of spatial and social integration of the phenomenon of multi-family housing in collective multi-storey buildings into rural settings in rural areas. Through many years of research in the field of architecture and urbanism in rural areas, especially in the problem of urbanization of rural settlements and the organization of their centers, the authors point to the existence of an inappropriate form of housing in such environments. The text highlights some of the many spatial and sociological problems that the construction of these types of housing has created. The text intends, through the observed spatial - social conflicts, to point out the breadth of problems in the urbanization of such environments, bringing to the same plane of observation other similar cases with regard to the treatment of objects of urban character in rural milieus.

Using theoretical knowledge about the villages and their habitation, previous researches on the genesis, stages and motives of construction of the objects in rural settlements, the method of observing and noting the phenomena, relations and contrasts in the behavior of users in the area, some general conclusions are stated in the text and in principle recommend moves to further treat the artifacts in the surrounding environment. The entire rural space of Serbia, without statistical and factual data, was taken as the framework for the article and its findings, since the paper does not seek to deepen and solve specific named problems, but to its general perception and attempt to point out the need for its careful professional solution.

Given the large number of cases (almost in every village of rural character), the paper tends to offer one possible point of view regarding the direction of further urbanization of rural settlements and their centers, with the aim of making more rational use of the content needed in the rural area, but were not appropriate. A considerable number of these buildings and those of a public character are being abandoned and left to devastation due to the demographic emptying of the village. One of the aims of this text is to recall the possibility of their re - use, in the context of socio - demographic developments, and not infrequently economic - state - political needs. There is no need to lose sight of the constant need for further appropriate urbanization of the village, which should not have the character of disaster and coincidence.

2. HOUSING AND RURAL ENVIRONMENT

Living in villages implies a pronounced individuality and the existence of smaller communities in a (depending on the type of village) sometimes larger and sometimes smaller area. Such a community is usually represented by a close or broader family, or (formerly) a family cooperative, or a gathering by close relatives of relatives, to the broadest extent of gatherings of a diverse and agrarian population. Rural settlements in the predominant centers of agricultural land to which they are referred, and mutually reasonably linked in a hierarchical sense, are the predominant type of organization of life not only in Serbia but in most countries of the world. The main reason for such distribution of the population is its agrarian character, and its tendency to have a direct connection with the area of its basic activity - agricultural land.[1] This connection of life and work in one place, led to the creation of a specific organization of space in the village yard, where clearly interwoven work and other spaces can be clearly observed. As a rule, these relationships are also a generator of the morphological structure of a rural settlement, where, depending on the size, organization and interrelations of the yard, the basic units of the rural settlement, the village and its spatial character are formed.

Due to the connection with work, and as a rule agricultural, the organization of space on the housing of the rural population is very different from the functional characteristics of urban housing. Apart from being spacious and in the image it provides, rural housing in its most general form is clearly grouped into the character of a rural settlement, which over time creates a traditional, inherited attitude towards the ideal and appropriate apartment and garden, the relationship between private and public, feel intimacy and degree of connection with the neighbor, aesthetics and design of objects and their associated usable objects and spaces.[2] Regardless of whether they are in the plain or in the mountains, whether they are compacted or scattered on the slopes of the hills, whether they have more or less begun to take on the character of small towns, urbanize themselves, rural settlements of Serbia (but also other areas) have received in recent times, a discreet atmosphere, which, by the first impression of the observer, has classified them as less prosperous, yet recognizable rural milieus.

By its nature, the village is a closed and conservative environment, mostly a society of like-minded people and acquaintances and neighbors. As such, it is very difficult to adapt to any type of innovation. The established lifestyles practiced by one environment are difficult to change and it takes decades to infiltrate new ideas, customs and ways of thinking into everyday life. In spatial terms, in terms of urbanization of rural areas, the greatest difficulties were encountered in understanding and trusting the villagers, not only in terms of adopting new solutions in landscaping the village, but also in adapting to new architectural forms and objects.[3] The full realization of the advanced visions and plans that the rural areas were to turn into small towns, with recognizable character and peculiarities of specific places did not, as a rule, occur. Instead, the first steps in the design of the village in the form of built public or multi-storey residential buildings are merely attempts, which, as they testify today to the vision of the future, are gloomy to prove the futility and flaws of urban visions of that time.

3. BUILDING CHRONOLOGY AND BUILDING MOTIVES

A radical cut in the construction of facilities in villages was made immediately after World War II, when in rural areas, fueled by a wave of new ways of thinking and new social and productive relationships, buildings began to emerge with the task of symbolizing a new age. Thus, in the economic sense, larger cities and centers are equipped with factories and industry. The construction of industrial plants and factories in the more developed parts of Serbia was not accompanied by adequate construction of workers' flats and dwellings. At least this happened in the villages, which in the post-war period were also an uninteresting space for the development of new social relations. The village, by its agrarian structure and less inclination towards the newly proclaimed social rules, was considered as a backward environment, not to invest, but only to divert resources and drain potential labor for the needs of industry in cities. As poor agricultural districts, the villages provided their needs for new housing in personal management, as before.

After World War II, in many places in Serbia, architecture was built without the obligation to achieve aesthetic reach, or without a visual imperative.[4] Cooperative Homes, Administration Buildings, Workers and Servants Homes and other functions have been built. Known as the socialist realist, this phenomenon tended to rationalize, to completely simplify the form, to clean objects from any decoration, even to the border of the ugly, and not infrequently beyond. In the villages, such architecture was very applied, as it was necessary to quickly break with the tradition in construction, and to impose new relationships through various spatial manifestations. Municipalities were also built in this manner. Although all of this is evidenced by their rational socio-realistic appearance, these buildings are not without a certain aesthetic. What attests to a much greater extent to the social relations of the time is their position in relation to the settlement, where the buildings dominated by squares, are symmetrically placed in the center of the settlement and, by their existence, permanently emit symbols of power.



Figure 1. *Cooperative home in the village Donja Kamenica near Knjazevac, built by type design and Soviet model in the 1940s, after the Second World War.*

The first wave of buildings that came into the village by directive were not residential. Primarily, typified cooperative homes were built, similar to the Soviet ones, intended to unify consciousness and opinion and to bring together villagers around socialist innovations dictated by cities and higher

places. These buildings still exist sadly in the rural areas of Serbia, to a lesser extent brought to some rational purpose (shops, warehouses ...), testifying to the unnecessary neglect of objects of solid architecture and condition, in a modern transition time without a rural development strategy.[5]



Figure 2. *Multi-family buildings of the first wave of construction in the years after the Second World War. (Kalna settlement below Stara planina in eastern Serbia)*

In the 1950s, the second wave of construction in the countryside began the practice of building homes for non-agricultural dwellings, which were increasingly growing in anti-agrarian times. These minimal collective residential buildings with a maximum of 4 apartments, usually constructed in displaced locations from village centers, were intended for working families (health, education, culture, administration ...). They were classic apartment buildings and the architecture of social-realist times, with max. two-bedroom apartments sufficient for a small family. The flats are designer-packed in a tract - a panel system of rigorous rectangular building bases, in which storefront or post office and police rarely appeared on the ground floor, rarely ambulance. The model of such construction proved, although forced, to be a long-lasting and poor solution, since, from the point of view of comfort and aesthetics that these buildings now provide to the population and appearance of the settlement, it would be better if they were not built.[6]



Figure 3. *Second wave of residential architecture construction in settlement / little town Crna Trava in eastern Serbia. Buildings form a row around the central plateau. The buildings were subsequently upgraded. At the bottom of the series and in the middle were the contents later built.*

The housing problem seemed to be seemingly solved for a short period, so after a few years of break, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the third wave of housing construction in rural areas continued. These buildings were constructed in a socio-realistic manner, but were of slightly larger capacity. Designed for a little more (about ten) families, with spaces for grocery and colonial goods on the ground floor. In general, orientation to the use of social housing could hardly be realized in the villages of Serbia in those years. Many then went on permanent rural living conditions because of the housing problem. Buildings built in the 1960s in rural areas could not satisfy the agrarian-industrial population in the housing-working sense, accustomed to owning a piece of arable land and some little livestock in their daily lives, regardless of the primary work they do. In addition, cramping in a 40-50 square meter apartment and the lack of a garden, porch and yard, contact with the ground, was not the right model for accustoming the population to new housing tendencies. A serious problem was also the threat to privacy, both in the absence of the comfort of a separate entrance and a piece of territory, and with regard to the realization of any investment in the

maintenance of the common facility. The disadvantage of these investments is their social character or feature of the common good, instead of private property, which the conservative rural population did not readily accept.



Figure 4. Facility constructed for the purpose of housing workers in an industrial facility in Vlasina Lake recently. A building was formed in the background for the needs of doctor and teachers much earlier. (Vlasina Okruglica)

In the 1970s (4th wave), residential buildings were mostly built in the villages of Serbia, mostly in areas where economic or other public facilities appeared, which required accommodation of additional workforce. At the time, it was mostly built in regions that were assisted by the state as underdeveloped areas. The expansion of activities in villages and the increasing need to keep up with the more developed areas, and often to mitigate the migration of the population through the construction of industrial plants, created the need for new housing. In the eighties and early nineties of the 20th century, the buildings of the last 5th wave of collective housing construction were being built in the villages of Serbia. Any subsequent construction was an exception, but not the appearance of a new wave. [7]

These facilities are more contemporary and formatted fully urban-designed facilities, usually taken from urban experiences, which are planned to help urbanization of rural centers. Buildings are of different functional concept. Almost all contain smaller (up to two bedroom) apartments. In addition, the floors are slightly larger (up to four floors). The systems for fitting apartments and concepts are different: three apartments per floor, disposition with a three-sided orientation, the appearance of a half-level, then two apartments per floor, with a separate entrance for each apartment (foreign experience in preserving the intimacy of the entrance), etc.



Figure 5. The facility for the needs of health and child care workers, built in the 1980s. Urban architecture in a rural landscape. (Crna Trava)

The right to an apartment, in the conditions of obtaining social property at the time, was of interest to users of rural multi-storey and multi-family buildings in two ways:

- as a first step in furthering their progress and moving to larger centers, or finally evicting rural and, in their view, passive environments, and

- as a definitive solution to the housing problem without further ambition, or as a way of rejecting touch and connection with agrarian work.



Figure 6. *Multi-family residential building where each apartment has a separate entrance. Foreign experiences in the late 1970s in Crna Trava.*

The so-called services - non-agricultural population (administrators, traders, workers, artisans, postal workers, police officers, teachers, doctors, veterinarians, educators, and many more) had to be attracted to the apartment and provided with livelihood (higher pay). so that, in the general trend of satanizing the countryside as an environment, they agree to live in the villages and serve the rural population. Beneficiaries of socially owned apartments received these for use while serving in one of the activities, but this was most often converted into a permanent use practice, with a right of inheritance, thus transforming part of the population into rural residents with urban habits. The temporality of their stay in the countryside and the urban habits they brought with them to these underdeveloped areas was reason enough to offer them as flats facilities and housing unsuitable for the village, with no yard and no working alternative.

Decades before the construction of the objects (until World War II), with more or less success, but always charming and spontaneous, created the character of rural areas and created the spirit of a place in rural areas. In that character, the traditional image of the village, the conservative habits and customs of life in the neighborhoods where they were built, multi-family housing facilities, and especially their immediate occupants, never failed to fit.



Figure 7. *Different types of residential architecture in the center of Zlot, near the town of Bor.*

4. ADJUSTMENT IN THE RURAL MATRIX AND RELATIONS WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

From the point of view of urban regulation, these buildings are, since they are multi-storeyed, dominant in height in terms of ground floor or slightly higher mileage (max. Ground floor, first floor and under the roof). As such, they erroneously accentuate the silhouette of the environment, and unjustifiably assume the role that, at a time of thoughtful space and settlement planning, had a church (religious) or possibly some other object of general importance. In the horizontal sense, these facilities do not, as a rule, respect the existing settlement regulation and the principles of placing the

objects in the existing matrix. This happened due to the demanding size of the dimensions of the buildings, and to the village with inappropriate functional characteristics (access surface, entrance, surrounding space, distance from the surrounding physical structure). Satisfying only the needs of a certain part of the population for living space, they in the inherited morphological matrix of space create confusion, and disturb the established rules of spatial behavior, without bringing the essential quality in urbanization of the environment, which as a consequence of such radical visual and physical intervention in the space would have to expect.



Figure 8. *Horizontal and vertical urban confusion at the site of Kraljeve Vode on Zlatibor Mountain. (Western Serbia)*

At the turn of the century, the emergence of the construction of overall inappropriate accommodations in rural areas, occur in locations of investment interest. The law of profit, has found its origins in spas and tourist sites and localities, which still have the visual character of rural agglomerations or quite small towns.[8] This phenomenon finds its reasons in the interest that the tourist accommodation capacities (apartments and studios, belonging to the type of contemporary temporary residence) are located in the immediate centers of the settlement, close to the existing attractions, where there is not enough space for construction, so that the desired capacities are achieved through their development in height. Such tricks, and distorting the spirit of the place, or disregarding the context and traditional image of localities with a predominantly rural character, have negative effects in the experience of a space where users are essentially deluded, leaving urban areas for relaxation in pseudo-urban environments.

A particular problem with such residences is their lack of location in the ground floor. Designed for urban environments, such structures require adequate treatment in surface treatment. Whether a multi-family dwelling is to be found in its natural urban milieu or in landscaped areas depends on the degree of urbanization achieved. The occurrence of incompleteness of the environment in which the object is located is one of the important reasons for its non-alignment within miles. Access to the construction of structures, which is not accompanied by the arrangement of the ground floor areas around it, and to fit with existing landscaping if any, is a common occurrence in rural areas, and not infrequently in cities.[9] However, while in urban areas such deficiencies are resolved over time, planned or spontaneous, in the villages these buildings remain on untreated soil for a long time, giving the impression that the construction is just finished or that the building is not being used, which is often true.



Figure 9. *Contrasts of traditional and urban in the tourist site of Kraljeve Vode on Zlatibor Mountain.*

Quite especially in relation to the urban - architectural and sociological aspect of this problem, there is a psychological moment, both in the tenants and in the environment. Although aware of the specific occupations of the beneficiaries of these housing collectives in a highly individualistic environment, the surrounding agricultural and semi-agricultural population is nevertheless subject to a distorted idea of their way of life and sincere affiliation with the village.



Figure 10. *High-altitude contrasts on the lake at Kraljeve Vode tourist site on Zlatibor mountain. Architecture has elements of traditional construction in hilly and mountainous areas.*

On the other hand, the situation in which the occupants of such buildings are located presents a certain psychological pressure. Constantly exposed to critical judgment by communities in an environment that can hardly be quickly urbanized and thus mitigate the strangeness of their lifestyles, they resort to adapting to rural habits and thus bring the space in which they live and themselves as users of that space to the limit of the absurd.

5. CONTRASTS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND HOUSING CULTURE

From the point of view of the character of a multi-storey dwelling, where its urban moment could never be related to the rural environment, contrasts can be seen and expressed in the behavior and experience of the premises of the users of these buildings and the objective possibilities that were designed and built in a given place. The population with urban habits tends to adapt to the rural environment and, in many areas of behavior, embraces the habits of rural life. Regardless of the non-agrarian profession, marginally engaging or merely relying on the peasant economy, this part of the population needs additional space and those specific amenities that an apartment in multi-storey buildings is not even designed to satisfy.

Thus, the common space of these buildings (staircases, huts, eaves, storerooms, laundry rooms and council house rooms) will, as a rule, be transformed into improvised facilities, which in the countryside satisfy the space and contents of the yard around the house (firewood, porches and stables, meat-drying facilities, cellars and summer kitchens). The spaces in front of the entrance to the apartments will become an integral part of the private space of the apartment, and not infrequently, the scarce courtyard around the apartment buildings will be used as a small plant, winter heating stock or, in the worst case, for some of the economic buildings (chicken coop, pig building...).

Collectivity in the character of certain functions of multi-storey residential buildings, which implies discipline and a certain degree of urban housing culture, in rural areas is transformed into a set of more or less harmonized individual claims to public space, whereby a high degree of mutual understanding of different users is achieved. In other words, what is almost unimaginable in the usurpation of common spaces is becoming a reality in rural settings and enjoying the tacit mutual consent of users. Housing in buildings of a collective character, in smaller rural areas, has inevitable consequences in terms of radical contradictions in the housing culture and the demands that collectivism places on tenants. The stairways and public spaces in front of these facilities are thus converted into winter pantries, with wood leaning on the stairs next to the front door. A lot of things are kept in front of the door and the rooms in the apartments are inadequately used.

In this way, such objects, spontaneously adapted to the environment by the user, lose their basic designed sense. On the one hand, the function of space is being grotesquely altered, and on the other hand, the new individual comforts achieved are far from the essential and truly comfortable life in the countryside. If, for example, the vast majority of rural residents living in multi-storey buildings are heated by wood (which is logical given the cost and affordability of fuel), the question arises as

to the justification of designing and constructing a common heating system from a boiler room or rarely a hot water system.[10] Conversely, if the aforementioned and other elements of collective residential buildings in the villages are not realistically used, then the question of the justification of planning and construction of such housing facilities in them is raised.

The rural behavior of tenants in the private or public spaces of urban buildings is an appropriate topic for deeper sociological analysis. The results of such an analysis would further deepen the doubt about the quality of this approach to urbanization of space.

6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are several general findings regarding the consideration of the issue of multi-family housing in rural areas of Serbia:

- this type of housing in rural areas is resorted to in order to solve the housing problems of servants, workers, in any case non-agricultural population in villages
- the right to inherit an apartment, always looking for housing again, because those who are no longer in service in the settlement stay in the apartment
- in the face of crises and difficult living conditions, the population resorts to their own agriculture; this is where the gap between living in an apartment building and working on a farm property arises
- not always, and not everywhere, but in the vast majority of rural households, the problem of heating is solved solely by supplies and the exploitation of solid fuels (coal, wood), which is completely logical and reasonable; common living spaces inside and outside buildings are a kind of heating storage
- there is and will be a visual, ordinary, sociological, cultural and other disparity between dwelling in collective buildings with multiple dwellings, and living in the countryside along the land and in the yard
- the possibility of effectively incorporating these structures into the rural milieu is observed, especially later constructed structures and necessarily under the expert guidance of urbanization.

The less agricultural the settlement, the smaller the disparity and vice versa. Agrarian practices, especially in the centers of settlements, are becoming less pronounced. Economy functions and auxiliary facilities with livestock have long since disappeared from rural centers. Almost a small amount of arable farming remained, mostly hidden from the public, behind backyard houses and removed from public areas of the village.

For many reasons, the relative possibility of incorporating collective residential buildings into rural settings can be noted, a phenomenon that has long been nothing new in settlements, and which can fit into the image of many places characterized by the beginnings of urbanization. This inclusiveness must now be supported by the actual exploitation of all content created, so that by reviving settlements through affirmation of different approaches to creating new surplus value, many of the resources will be re-appreciated and sought after.[11] It can be assumed, however, that in an attempt to revitalize rural settlements, where undertaken, existing architecture will fit into new concepts.



Figure 11. *The Crna Trava Center aims to reconcile the contrasts and continue urbanization of the premises at the municipal headquarters.*

The fact that mixed (semi-agricultural) population in the villages of Serbia has begun to prevail, and that these processes will continue in the future, indicate an inadequate approach to the construction of housing for the population whose agriculture is secondary, but as a rule always present in supplementary provision of funds for life. Alienation and discouragement, and even dissatisfaction with the way of life, which is created over time by tenants in multi-family housing estates in the countryside, is a good reason to approach the provision of housing for the servant population of the village in a more appropriate way, more appropriate to the rural environment.

The problem of urbanization of villages, which by its characteristics will grow into smaller cities, is the most important framework of action for experts of different profiles, precisely because of the very negative experiences that the rural space of Serbia has in the current practice of urbanization. [12] The current state of multi-family housing in villages is one of the problems that must be addressed with respect to the various disciplines and aspects whose experts are also called upon to deal with the spatial planning of neglected and lay-treated rural areas.



Figure 12. Arc - a fountain in the center of Crna Trava. In the background is the Municipal Building from the early 1950s. To the left at the end of the residential block is a multi-functional facility (Bus station with accompanying facilities, bakery, restaurant and apartments) as a symbol of the transformation of space in the transition period.

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