



The effects of changes to the post-socialist urban planning framework on public open spaces in multi-story housing areas: A view from Nis, Serbia



Ljiljana Vasilevska^a, Petar Vranic^{b,*}, Aleksandra Marinkovic^c

^a University of Nis, Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture, Aleksandra Medvedeva 14, 1800 Nis, Serbia

^b Faculty of Occupational Safety, University of Nis, Carnojeviceva 10A, 18000 Nis, Serbia

^c High Technical School of Professional Studies, Aleksandra Medvedeva 20, 1800 Nis, Serbia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 February 2013

Received in revised form 21 August 2013

Accepted 12 October 2013

Available online 30 October 2013

Keywords:

Public open space

Multi-story housing areas

Urban planning framework

Post-socialism

Nis

ABSTRACT

This study considers how changes to the post-socialist urban planning framework have affected the treatment of public open space in the transformation of existing mass-housing areas and newly developed multi-story housing areas for the city of Nis, Serbia. The study focuses on quantitative and qualitative changes as well as the physical characteristics of public open spaces, evaluating environmental comfort, safety, accessibility, privacy and intensity of social interactions. The investigation is based on a comparative analysis of three case studies in Nis, which are representative of different developmental, institutional and planning periods. The research indicates a regressive approach in the planning for and treatment of public open space. It also suggests that within the limited economic capacity of local authorities, investors and buyers, the market-oriented post-socialist urban planning framework can lead to spatial and functional fragmentation in housing areas and the degradation or disappearance of not only the public spaces but of open spaces in general.

© 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

In recent decades, the Central and Eastern Europe region (CEE) has undergone dramatic structural transformations that have been studied and analyzed intensively, with a prominent focus on political restructuring and economic development (Andrusz, 1996; Hamilton, Dimitrovska Andrews, & Pichler-Milanovic, 2005; Tosics, 2004), institutional and spatial changes (Nedovic-Budic, 2012), land restitution (Blacksell & Born, 2002; Valetta, 2000) regional growth and territorial conceptualization (Dingsdale, 1999; Enyedi, 1996), social economic changes (Enyedi, 1998; Vujošević & Nedovic-Budic, 2007) and socio-spatial changes (Sykora, 1999). Because post-socialist changes have affected trends in urban planning and policy, many CEE cities have been subjected to considerable adjustments to spatial organization, which have been extensively influenced by a redefined real estate market and property ownership rights. Therefore, many studies have focused on understanding patterns of spatial restructuring (Brade, Herfert, & Wiest, 2009; Nae & Turnock, 2011; Tosics, 2007; Waley, 2011), urban periphery growth (Hirt, 2006; Nuissl & Rink, 2005; Rudolph & Brade, 2005; Sýkora & Ouredničec, 2007; Tammaru, 2001), development of the inner cities (Golubchikov & Badyina, 2007; Haase, Grossmann, & Steinführer, 2012; Temelová, 2007) and the spatial imprint of urban consumption and commercial real estate (Kreja, 2007;

Makhrova & Molodikova, 2007; Sýkora, 1998). New legal and institutional arrangements have been introduced, leading to profound and unprecedented spatial changes. Under continuous pressure and without a well-prepared institutional infrastructure, urban development has been influenced by short-term visions, which inspired debates and criticism at the early stages of transition (Kemeny, 1995). As a result of local legislative differences, these processes have varied in their spatial manifestations. Stanilov (2007b, pp. 352) argues that the introduction of partial area plans, which has become a widespread practice, has undermined the development of regulation and stimulated “haphazard patterns of urban development, subverting the implementation of unified plans therefore overloading the existing infrastructure, and creating tensions between new and old uses.” This trend has emerged from numerous spatial patchworks and asymmetric development on all urban scales.

One of the most frequently discussed issues in the transitional period has been the role and impact of urban planning on the housing sector. A major challenge regarding the transformation in housing has drawn the attention of scholars, who have conducted research into housing sector policies and reforms (Buckley & Tsenkova, 2007; Djordjevic, 2004; Petrovic, 2001; Pichler-Milanovich, 2001; Tosics & Hegedüs, 2003; Tsenkova, 2000, 2005). These reforms have had noticeable consequences on current housing conditions in the post-socialist cities and, indirectly, on the social cost of the transformation process, which now experiences different forms of gentrification, poverty and segregation. (Badyina & Golubchikov, 2005; Deda & Tsenkova, 2007; Hirt,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: pvranic@yahoo.com, petarvvv@gmail.com (P. Vranic).

2008; Marcinczak, 2012; Medvedkov & Medvedkov, 2007; Temelová, Novák, Ouředníček, & Puldová, 2011). The debate about redefining property rights in new housing developments (Hirt & Stanilov, 2007; Kim, 2007; Marcuse, 1996) has become more prominent in the post-socialist discourse. Changing housing policies, driven toward deregulation and privatization by the disintegration of the East European Housing Model (Hegedus & Teller, 2006; Hegedus & Tosics, 1996), have had a profound influence on urban planning, policies, spatial reorganization and management of the existing housing estates and the development of new housing areas.

Mass housing constructed between 1960 and 1990 comprised between one-half and two-thirds of the total housing in the CEE region, with approximately 100 million residences (Stanilov, 2007a, pp. 177). These areas were good examples of the socialist political ideology and centralized planning system. During the socialist period, urban planning and design standards were subordinate to a leading principle and fundamental value of the “common interest” society, which was particularly noticeable in mass-housing areas. Mass-housing areas inevitably included a wide range of public open spaces (POSs). Based on a mixture of rigid socialist planning and CIAM-inspired design, the POSs initially suffered from over-scaling, uniformity and an absence of adequate content and equipment. Gehl (1987, pp. 48, 51) explains the capacity and use values of the spaces. He comments, “It was thought that the extensive open areas between the buildings would be the obvious location for many recreational activities and a rich social life.” But criticism of the socialist mass-housing function was primarily “directed towards neglected, destroyed and missing public spaces.” Although the housing areas could be criticized in terms of economic, social and spatial sustainability, their spatial capacity to support various types of social interactions and the improvement of functional and environmental characteristics could not be neglected. Because public spaces have contributed extensively to citizens’ overall quality of life, understanding the transformation of open spaces during the post-socialist transition period and their treatment within the contemporary urban planning framework is important.

Property rights reformation and the advancement of market-oriented urban policies have led to significant changes in the management of open public spaces. These changes have been reflected in rapid degradation, particularly for open public spaces that lack profit potential. A transformation in the planning framework during this transition has allowed new modes of open space to emerge.

Although open public space greatly contributes to the overall quality of life in multi-story housing areas (Vasilevska, 2012), it undeservedly remains marginalized in the post-socialist discourse. This observation has been further confirmed by the rarity of discussions of lower spatial levels while mainstream research remains greatly focused on housing policy and its significant spatial implications at a strategic level. Therefore, the objectives of this study are: (1) to analyze the effects of changes to the post-socialist urban planning framework on POSs in multi-story housing areas and (2) to analyze at a lower level spatial changes caused by the current urban planning practice within a particular context, whereby criticism and understanding of the pros and cons of changes will become clearer and a more reliable guide for the improvement of urban planning frameworks and approaches.

Methodology

This study includes a literature review and an analysis of official planning and legislative documents at the national and local levels. The research is based on comparative analysis of three cases chosen based on two criteria: (1) construction occurred in different

periods and (2) sites had a similar initial spatial conditions. The first case is a typical socialist mass-housing area, whereas the other two are exemplary cases of current multi-story housing areas. Together these cases offer an appropriate example for studying the effects of changes to the post-socialist urban planning framework and the treatment of open public spaces.

To evaluate the characteristics of POSs, the study relies on a total of four criteria: (1) environmental comfort, (2) safety and accessibility, (3) privacy, and (4) intensity of social interactions (Milic, 1995; Vasilevska, 2012). The criteria reflect the causal relationship between physical elements of urban composition and the characteristics of POSs (Fig. 1). The evaluation method was partly created by Marinkovic, Vasilevska, Miric, and Peric (2012) and further developed for the purpose of this study by the authors. Based on measurable physical characteristics of space, each parameter is evaluated as low, medium or high. Scores indicate the degree to which a parameter contributes to a particular criterion and, consequently, to the quality of a particular POS. Each criterion is analyzed through the Detailed Regulatory Plans (DRP) on a case-by-case basis and scored as direct (D), if a plan is treated as a requirement, or indirect (I), if a plan is treated as a recommendation.

The intensity of social interactions is analyzed based on observation during a period of nine months. The main focus of the observation is how people interact and use POSs compared to its spatial characteristics. The observation approach departs from the concept of a causal relation between quality, content and capacity of the outdoor space and the rate of outdoor activities (Gehl, 1987). Observed activities are scored with respect to main activities: necessary activities are scored as low, optional activities as medium, and social activities as high.

POS treatment – Case study

Nis – Urban brief

Although Nis is the third largest city in Serbia and has a considerable share in Serbian economic and social development, similar to many other second-tier cities, scholars have neglected it. Research remains focused on Belgrade (Hirt, 2009). However, Nis is an exemplary case that reflects how shifts in development trends and urban policies in Serbia influence spatial changes and physical structures. In socialist Serbia, the development of Nis was fueled by the rapid growth of industry and urbanization. Nis experienced intensive population growth from 122,100 residences in 1953 to 232,563 in 1981, followed by the expansion of mass-housing areas as a main model for responding to the growing housing demand.

Nis is still perceived as an important regional center, but it is increasingly losing its production capacity because of inconsistencies between its potential and contemporary development processes. The city has experienced difficulty repositioning itself during the post-socialist transition and finding alternatives to urban models imposed by market-driven development. Nis has not yet managed to establish a strategic vision, and it has consequently experienced a prolonged identity crisis that is obvious in its urban landscape. Nis has suffered from a continuous economic downturn since the mid-1980s, with a peak unemployment rate of approximately 40% today and noticeable stagnation in population growth. In this period, Nis has undergone a constant strengthening of the private sector’s role in the decision-making process and an intense transformation process that has focused on short-term economic and political decisions. Private capital has initiated maximum utilization of real estate, which is particularly noticeable in residential areas and their POSs. The current treatment of those areas of Nis has been influenced by numerous systemic changes, two of which have had considerable influence. The first was the replacement of a

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات