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Common Areas in Multi-family Housing in Serbia: Case Study of Cerak Vinogradi, Belgrade

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Abstract

Multi-family housing as opposed to individual housing is recognized as a model for solving multiple problems as an intensification of social changes and changes in the demographic picture of the population and increase in the number of inhabitants in cities. Need to change and adapt is one of the key determinants of modern life in the city. However, the special focus of this paper is on common areas as collective spaces of multi-family housing. The research examines the use of common areas by guidelines/propositions for overall housing design given by Milenković: the examination of hierarchy, the relationship between the individual and the collective sphere, the need for the built space to provide an active relationship of planned and spontaneous. The paper researches case study of Cerak Vinogradi housing complex as one of the recently protected sites and only protected site in its entirety from the second part of the 20th century. The paper shows that the proper common areas can led to multifunctional spaces for activities and it can be a more sustainable and livable space.

Keywords

Multi-family housing, 20th century, common area, common area, Belgrade, Cerak Vinogradi.

1 Introduction

The direct need for new mass housing starting with the 1960s and after was not only characterized by the need to answer to housing shortages caused by war or overpopulation and poor conditions in cities, but shifted from universal solutions to a more user-oriented way of designing. Socialist housing in Yugoslavia had in mind that the design concepts should allow the change in residential space considering future resident's needs and changes of family members. Mostly typology of multi-family housing was focused on providing more adaptable solutions to residents and trying to perceive new ways in using common areas.

Because of that the second half of the 20th century can be considered the period of significant change of multi-family housing. Spatial concepts are not only seen as a response to social demands and went beyond what was necessary to become the base of a new kind of life. This paper focuses on common areas as spaces for neighborhood gathering for different events.

2 Development of multi-family housing

The development of multi-family housing follows modernist themes and principles, however the housing in post-socialist countries experimented with uses and well-being of spaces including common areas.

Multi-family housing in Serbia in the period of the 1960s was followed by a number of architectural competitions. The competitions tended not only to address the shortage of housing stock but also to improve the housing for users, with the ability to adapt to different habits and functions (Marušić, 1975).

These spaces provided not only necessary services but were also meeting places for the residents. This paper focuses on common areas of the Cerak Vinogradi housing estate as one of the significant residential complexes in Belgrade from the 1980ies. Dynamic and unplanned changes of many residential complexes from the second half of the 20th century in Belgrade included changes in common areas. Cerak Vinogradi, on the other hand, has been a unique example of "clean" and quite "intact" space because of the struggle of its architects and residents to preserve the values of the initial project.

2.1 Common areas and different uses

Common areas in this paper are considered as semi-public areas in multi-family housing. Rabinowitz defines them as secondary segments in residential complexes and names them residual residential spaces that are owned and managed collectively by the community of owners (Rabinowitz, 2012). These spaces include the common property and this paper focuses on built common spaces in the residential complexes that can be a part of a specific residential building or separate structures – focusing on neighborhood and community levels.

One significant point of common areas is that they are used together and owned together, the second point is that these spaces can and should accommodate various temporary activities.

3 Methodology

Common spaces are neglected compared to the individual dwellings. However, authors such as Milenković point out significant propositions/guidelines in the domain of housing that can be seen as a tool to address the issue of semi-public spaces in multi-family housing. Three points can be highlighted considering the semi-public spaces in multi-family housing:

- the examination of hierarchy,
- the relationship between the individual and the collective sphere,
- the need for the built space to provide an active relationship of planned and spontaneous.

Milenković states in his guidelines that at all this the technical and technological problems, which were in that time often pointed out, should be understood only as a means to an end (Milenković, 1979). Considering that specific guidelines, the paper examines the study of Cerak Vinogradi residential complex. The paper intends to show how this project defined the quality of common areas with these three points and until today stayed a livable housing estate.

4 Case study of Cerak Vinogradi

Belgrade development was significant in the second half of the 20th century, especially during the (1) period 1960s and the (2) period in the 1970s and 1980s. Cerak Vinogradi is a multi-family housing complex where besides creating customizable private apartment spaces, architects focused on the issues of community, common areas and their role in the well-being of the whole neighborhood. Cerak Vinogradi originally consists of two

parts: Cerak 1 and Cerak 2 (overall 67 buildings and 3650 dwellings).

It was designed starting 1977 and with the construction finished by 1987. The complex was designed by the architects Darko and Milenija Marušić and Nedeljko Borovnica. The project was done in the Institute of Architecture and Urban&Spatial Planning of Serbia (Docomomo Serbia, 2003). It is the first and for now only housing complex from the second half of the 20th century that is protected as a cultural property - Spatial cultural and historical entity, in the Republic of Serbia and one of two project permanently exhibited in Museum of Modern Art in New York (Belgrade City Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, 2019, RTS, 2019).

The paper will focus on the first project - Cerak 1 and its contemporary state. Common areas were one of the main differences to other previous multi-family housing projects in Belgrade. Architects wanted to get back to the neighborhood values and to emphasize the ambient, not to force the feeling of living in a big housing block.

Through the guidelines presented by Milenković, the concept of Cerak Vinogradi serves as a study that uses these elements in the design of the common areas.

4.1 The examination of hierarchy

Usually, housing blocks consisted of two levels of community centers and areas: small areas inside of the each building (for assemblies of tenants) and the local community centers. However, the idea in Cerak 1 that led to common areas hierarchy was that the exterior spaces were represented through the method of multiple sociological-spatial levels (Marušić, 1979, Marušić i Marušić, 1987):

- level of residential pedestrian *streets* - a series of buildings of 4 and 7 levels (including ground floor)
- neighborhood level is the second level –with the North, East and South neighborhoods
- community settlement is the third level consisted of the three neighborhoods

Following that the common areas were developed in three layers motivated to find the subset of the community level focusing on the neighborhood (Fig. 1) (Marušić, 1979, Marušić i Marušić, 1987):

- street councils were the first level of common areas
- neighborhood centers were the second level
- local community center was the third level

The street councils were a substitute for tenant assemblies that were in every building and usually occupied 0,5m² for every dwelling. Street councils thereby had bigger areas. The neighborhood level as a medium level consisted of three centers in Cerak 1 (up to 450m²). The neighborhood center had cultural, social and other use (Marušić i Marušić, 1987). The local community center was designed as an individual space in the complex and the intention was to be a central spot, however that space was never built. Neighborhood centers stayed as the highest ranking common space and prevailed with their activities until today.



Fig. 1 Cerak Vinogradi's (Cerak 1) map of common areas (Source: Author)

4.2 The relationship between the more individual and the more collective sphere

The architects point out that the household council spaces are most common on the ground floors of each building. These spaces are usually reduced and with the fact that these small volumes make it impossible for different functions to be accompanied beyond the ones on the level of a single residential building (Marušić, 1979). The main idea is to move the home council space from the premises and to create a common space within the neighborhood centers, also besides architects kept some in-between common spaces as street councils (not in every building).

As the hierarchy separated three levels of gathering in the residential complex, also that three levels had different intensity and use for the residents. Local community center is the most public area of them with more official space concerning the community assembly. The neighborhood center has the most diverse use and combines cultural, social and trading spaces/stores. Street councils are pure technical ones, considering that the

architects intended them for more gatherings that were intended for maintenance sessions. Smallest spaces don't have much to offer and were not intended to facilitate activities except regular meetings. On the other hand, the local community center has activities that exceed the neighborhoods in Cerak 1. Neighborhood centers have the ideal semi-public quality and its variety of uses. When we take into consideration that the local community center was never built, we have two common areas that one is more technically based and other spaciouly generous to different uses.

This bigger common area provides opportunities for different and more flexible arrangements (event halls, youth clubs, and shops) (Fig. 2, 3) concerning individual home council spaces, which, by their dimensions and location, are limited to the range of activities and the number of users.

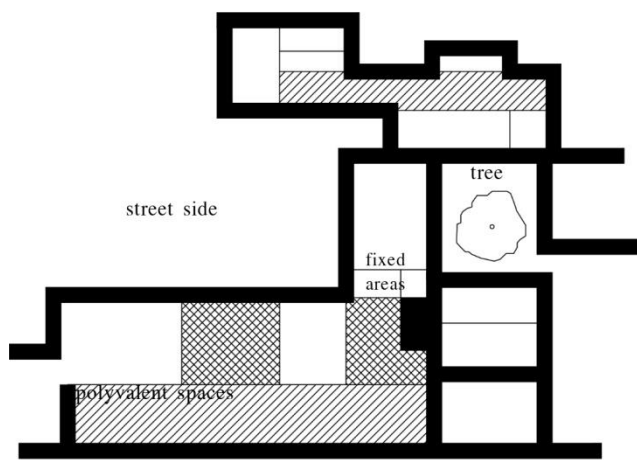


Fig. 2 Cerak Vinogradi's common area (Source: Author)

4.3 The need for the built space to provide an active relationship of planned and spontaneous

Change can be perceived as a momentarily change by the users or possibility to change and have temporary uses in later time due to new needs and interests of its residents.

This planned-spontaneous part is the most variable one. As the architects write about the use of the spaces they note that neighborhood centers consisted of smaller venue for gatherings, clubs for youth and the elderly, exhibition space and the office along with the small shops (Fig. 3).



Neighbourhood center

Fig. 3 Cerak Vinogradi's neighborhood center at the ground level – different spaces for multiple uses (Source: Author)

The life of those spaces initiated their dynamic temporary use already in the first four years of usage. It showed that these spaces were the only ones for various activities in the whole complex. Until the school was built in 1985, the neighborhood center rooms were used as classrooms. In the South neighborhood center spaces were used for a ballet school for the children from Cerak. However, the initiative for the reestablishment of the institution Culture center Cerak, was established in 2019 (Superste, 2019).

5 Conclusion

Demonstrating the new ways of designing with an accent on common areas in Cerak Vinogradi shows the value of shared spaces as an integral part of the living areas.

Although Rabinowitz deals with common areas as a general group using the guidelines, Milenković notes guidelines that can facilitate the design of common areas to have a proper relationship to each other and the residents. That leads to the better organization of the whole residential complex, with gradually growing semi-public spaces.

Hierarchy of spaces and their collective intensity are parallel to each other. Planned and spontaneous use criteria is somehow more separated and has multiple factors. Medium spaces - the neighborhood centers are the ones that are used the most. Rentability of these spaces was provided within the building cost of the residential buildings. On the other side the local community center was physically and financially separated unit and that resulted as a failure.

As the whole complex of Cerak Vinogradi was proclaimed a cultural property it shows that these

residential complex was recognized as valuable and necessary to preserve in the future

One of the problems that this paper did not examine the question of ownership. How can residents/owners coordinate common areas, when they feel the space as their own and see value in common areas? That however, can start with proper design and architects' anticipation of usage.

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