

THE CONCEPTS ON QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE MARIBOR POST-WW2 HOUSING ESTATES

PREDSTAVE O KAKOVOSTI ŽIVLJENJA V MARIBORSKIH STANOVANJSKIH
NASELJIH PO 2. SVETOVNI VOJNI

izvleček

Paradigma kakovosti življenja v stanovanjskem prostoru je odvisna od različnih funkcij z vlogo medsebojnega povezovanja, ki ne zadovoljujejo le potreb stanovalcev, ampak tudi prebivalcev mesta v celoti. Poleg tega je bistvenega pomena, da stanovanjska območja vsebujejo lahko dostopne in primerno oblikovane javne in zelene površine. Poglavlje se osredotoča na vplive, ki jih ima načrtovanje stanovanjskih naselij na kakovost življenja prav z ozirom na takšne površine. V zdajšnjem času se javne in zelene površine v stanovanjskih naseljih zgrajenih po 2. svetovni vojni pogosto uporabljajo v druge namene, predvsem zaradi velikega števila avtomobilov, ki je privedlo do velikanskih problemov s parkiranjem. Dve desetletji po privatizaciji stanovanj je vprašanje lastništva zelenih površin ter s tem povezanega vzdrževanja pogosto vzrok zelo hudih sporov, ki nastajajo zaradi napačne uporabe javnih prostorov. V nadaljevanju bom predstavil poseben fenomen, namreč vpliv visoko kakovostnih skandinavskih stanovanjskih modelov na slovensko urbanistično načrtovanje in oblikovanje stanovanjskih naselij v obdobju po 2. svetovni vojni. Pregled večdružinskih mariborskih stanovanjskih naselij iz tega obdobja oblikuje nov pristop h kakovosti življenja, zlasti z ozirom na odprt javni prostor.

abstract

The paradigm of quality of life in housing depends on various interconnectedness functions, which satisfy not only the needs of dwellers but also the inhabitants of the city, in general. In addition, it is essential that the residential areas incorporate well accessible and appropriately designed open public space and green areas. In regard to that, the chapter focuses on the impacts of housing estate planning elements on quality of life. Currently, open public space and green areas in the post-WW2 housing estates are often used for other purposes, largely as a consequence of number of cars that has led to enormous parking problems. Two decades after the housing privatization, the question of the ownership of green areas and related maintenance is often the cause of most adverse conflicts, arising from the misuse of open public space. Further, a special phenomenon, the influence of high-quality Scandinavian housing models on Slovenian urban planning and design of housing estates in the post-WW2 period will be presented. The overview of multi-family housing estates in the city of Maribor from this period raise new approach on the quality of life particularly in regard to open public space.

ključne besede

kakovost življenja, stanovanjska naselja po 2. svetovni vojni, odprt javni prostor, zelene površine, Maribor, arhitekt Ljubo Humek

key words

quality of life, Post-WW2 Housing estates, Open Public Space, Green areas, Maribor, Architect Ljubo Humek

Characteristics and Models of Post-WW2 Housing Estates

During post-war renovation in Europe in the 1950s housing development mainly reflected the view that housing is the fundamental right of the citizens and society. With time, residential complexes became increasingly larger, buildings taller and the building density higher, in turn spurring population density in urban areas. This issue has been dealt with by many expert and research studies and been the subject of many discussions, consultations, competitions and exhibitions. As a rule, Slovenian urban planners and architects were looking for models of modern approaches to housing estate planning in social-welfare Scandinavian countries and mainly found them in the social housing models of housing estate predominantly in Sweden. In general, Sweden was an interesting destination for experts of all nationalities to study since it had not been affected by WW2 and was able to continue its course of development in the post-war period. It also became a model for Slovenia in terms of understanding and solving social housing issues as well as putting them at the centre of societal concern. Similarly as in the majority of countries of Europe of that time, the most typical indicator of the population's needs was the shortage of housing and the resulting dependence on the profit-making sector. As a counterweight, Sweden found the most powerful tool in collective housing organised in the form of non-profit housing co-operatives. A well-known urban planning concept advocated the outward directed growth of towns, chiefly along the subway transport axis where new suburbs were added. Every suburb

was designed as a complete housing estate linked to public transport and equipped with its own social programmes, whereas individual estates were separated by green spaces and parks. This model has become a model for many European countries and cities, and the Scandinavian housing culture continued to serve as such for Slovenian urban planning and architectural practice due to its aesthetically perfected but simple design of close to nature environment determined by modern man's everyday needs. Thus very early on Slovenian architects have been enthusiastic about Scandinavian architecture, design and lifestyle, i.e. qualities in which they could draw parallels with Slovenia [Malešič 2008]. As a result of their study trips, living and working in Sweden they introduced the Swedish housing culture models into Slovenia, as well.

The Scandinavian approaches to quality of life gained ground thanks to a broader, interdisciplinary approach, which manifested itself in a changed attitude to open public space. One of the first architects to transpose the Scandinavian planning principles was architect Ljubo Humek, who visited Scandinavia already in 1951. Among others, Marta and France Ivanšek introduced the idea of low-rise, high-density housing and the Scandinavian kitchen design system architects Mitja Jernejec, Niko Bežek, Lučka and Aleš Šarec, Edvard Ravnikar formed a colony of Slovenian architects in Sweden [Pirkovič 1982]. They generally published their considerations, ideas and proposals in the Arhitekt magazine, issued between 1951 and 1963, and mainly edited by France Ivanšek. Inspired by his impressions gained

during a trip to Sweden, Humek emphasised the successful blending of buildings with nature and the environment and the construction consistency, while highlighting the thriving co-operation between the architect as a generator of ideas, and sociologists, geographers, economists, statisticians, engineers, doctors, pedagogues, teachers, traffic experts etc. Attention was turning to quality of life, which, among Swedes, is principally felt as care for the individual in the midst of society. Besides the spatial approach, he mainly focused on the programming and sociological approach to the centre of a residential district [1952]. Already in the early 1950s, Humek and Ivanšek emphasised certain quality criteria in urban planning which are still valid today, namely interdisciplinarity, the blending of buildings and the natural environment, consistency in construction complexity, a programming and sociological approach to residential development, a diversity of building typologies, public green spaces as the focal point of housing estates and the subordination of the whole to the principle of maximum sun exposure and a communication network [Humek 1952, Ivanšek 1955]. Humek also emphasised concern for human being as an individual and a member of the community, while also relying on quality of life [1952]. Ivanšek attributed Swedes with a refined sense for research into the environment and the artistic value of architecture, unmatched sensitivity in choosing materials as well as a strong social consciousness. In his conclusions, Ivanšek described Scandinavia as a role model for a humanistic approach to housing development [Malešič 2008]. Soon, along with criticism of the domestic housing situation, some ideas emerged in Slovenia about how to organise housing estates according to the Scandinavian principles, which, in contrast to the monotonous settlements of that time, linked people of different ways of life while enabling them to realize it accordingly. The arrangement of open public spaces thus joined the key elements of housing estate planning and construction relatively early on as such areas are crucial factors in preserving and improving the living environment's quality.

Impacts of Housing Estates on Quality of Life

When speaking of housing estates one usually refers to large residential complexes in suburbs or on the edge of cities. Housing estate planning focuses on introducing buildings with regard to built public spaces, green spaces and traffic areas. The abovementioned urban planning elements are denoted by the term "open space", in its current sense, which is playing an increasingly important role in housing estate development in terms of space morphology along with identity and quality of life.

According to Ogrin, open space is a common term for parks and recreation areas, green spaces and promenades [Draksler after 2009]. Open space is designed for leisure time, recreation, sport, assembly, socialising etc., whereby the offer and accessibility of it are vital as they facilitate the well-being of different age groups. It is important that it facilitates several activities and related experiences, which, in terms of their location in the area and the diversity of the programmes, are decisive factors in satisfying human needs in a well-arranged and maintained environment. Consequently, residents can spend their active and passive leisure time in the immediate vicinity of their homes and satisfy their socialising needs with other dwellers, all of which considerably influences their attitude to the housing environment [Polič 1996]. A viewpoint that is increasingly taking hold is that

open space is designed – besides for internal use by residents – for public use by visitors and general public.

The concept of open space design within housing estates substantially influences the quality of life in the sense of ensuring the residents' safety, a feeling of belonging and the estate's ecological integrity. On one hand, the building typology itself dictates different types of open space, its size and user accessibility and, consequently, the possibility of control over the area as one of the crucial elements of open space quality [Newman 1996]. On the other hand, poor accessibility of a housing estate can result in a feeling of isolation which happens in cases where arterial roads and other infrastructure systems literally cut the housing estate off from the rest of the town. One-way to rectify this is to improve public transport so as to help the estate evolve from a strongly isolated to an easily accessible location [RESTATE 2007]. The importance of public functions within a housing estate should also be mentioned as they facilitate specific services while also stimulating contacts between people by providing space for conversing and socialising. In this way, the residents engage in everyday activities and do not succumb to a feeling of monotony, boredom and seclusion. It helps an individual become aware he is an indispensable member of society [Trstenjak 1984].

The living environment satisfies our basic needs as it enables our regeneration, offers protection and security, enables privacy, creates communication possibilities and facilitates identification. To ensure a high quality living environment, the housing estate planning designs intertwine the elements of residential building design with those of a public programme, an open public space and green spaces that, together with the traffic network and stationary traffic areas, make up an inseparable whole. Many definitions describe the quality of a housing estate by the architectural and urban planning elements of dwellings, residential buildings, public buildings and outdoor spaces, i.e. all those spaces where residents move every day, cater to their needs and carry out various activities [Sendi 2000]. Physical attributes of a housing environment include the character of the area, its flexibility, diversity, readability, accessibility, building density, and possibilities for combining different uses since all of these attributes are linked to the quality of open public spaces. According to the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, high-quality architecture significantly contributes to cities' and other urban areas' competitiveness by creating quality open public spaces, green systems and functional solutions for a specific housing environment [2007]. Typical quality indicators include criteria such as the relation between the building and the open space, the availability of services, schools, kindergartens, health and other institutions, the traffic network, the free movement of pedestrians on pavements and in squares, the stationary traffic arrangement, public transport accessibility, access to town hinterland and recreational areas, access to and the provision of utility infrastructure, well-designed green spaces, children's playgrounds, sports fields or courts and built open public spaces. Moreover, the criteria can be classified by different spatial levels – the level of the dwelling, the level of the building and the level of the entire housing estate [COST 2010] constitute the levels which, in accordance with typical criteria, co-define the quality of life and, indirectly, the attractiveness of individual city districts. A high quality living environment, which also depends on maintenance of a housing estate, contributes substantially to preventing districts becoming socially excluded.

Yet it should be noted that any degradation in the physical sense of the word decreases the quality of the entire area.

Renewal Principles for Improving Housing Estates

In the last few decades the issue of the renewal of existing housing estates has in many European countries, regions and cities been at the forefront of endeavours to implement sustainable development principles. Developmental documents and strategies focus on the quality of the living environment which is an important factor in efforts of individual areas and city districts to compete with other locations in terms of the work and living opportunities and advantages they offer. The urban-planning and architectural characteristics of the housing stock, which dates to the post-WW2 period, mainly fail to meet contemporary residents' expectations and needs. Some housing estates have deteriorated from a hypothetically carefully designed "ideal" living environment seeking to combine the basic functions of housing, child care, education, recreation, supply etc. into areas generally characterised by decaying physical structures and unsuitable functionalities. The physical separation of individual functions has led to conflicts and pressures within housing estate, then associated with the poor condition of these areas. Open public spaces are most burdened by a growing number of private cars causing traffic jams and parking problems. The consequences of the deteriorating built and green spaces include negligence, dissatisfaction and even perils, which considerably decrease the quality of life and satisfaction of those residing in housing estates [Van Kempen 2007].

The quality of the living environment is central to endeavours to comprehensively renew and revitalise large housing estates in particular. In Slovenia no such comprehensive renewal has yet been undertaken, whereas individual instances are more a result of the greater awareness and efforts of individuals than any organised approach to renewal as part of a sustainable development policy. The fact is that Slovenia has not adopted a comprehensive strategy to renew its existing housing stock, even if the issue of maintaining worn-out buildings and infrastructure is considered a priority by professional circles, politicians and civil society.

For several decades, many European countries and cities have been intensively testing different approaches to the sustainable renewal of the existing housing stock and the result is different strategies aimed at improving the quality of life. The principles of sustainable renewal are generally inherent to sustainable renewal goals, as, among others, [i] an improvement of living conditions and ensuring user-friendly living in terms of residents' current and future needs; [ii] better flexibility of the design of a dwelling, building or entire residential area through economically favourable and innovative measures; [iii] a reduction of energy consumption, the use of environmentally-friendly materials and renewable sources; and [iv] cutting the costs of operating buildings [Sitar et al. 2005].

A comprehensive renewal of housing structures reshapes the entire housing estate, thereby guaranteeing its recognisability, which is one of the main quality of life criteria. The quality of the living environment is influenced by various factors such as high-quality architecture and design, also incorporating a high degree of functionality at all levels of environmentally-friendly urban planning, construction and use. This brings to the fore the efficient management of resources, including land and materials, as well as the costs of use. A special role is played by

open public space design which should be tailored to residents' needs, while also encouraging – via integral project solutions – the formation of housing estate and broader communities in terms of communication, self-assistance etc. It is particularly important to permanently integrate different types of residents' direct involvement in management and maintenance.

Slovenia: Influences of Social Changes on Development of Housing Stock

In Slovenia, a sufficient and qualitative housing supply has traditionally been one of the most indicative criteria for welfare policies. As part of that, housing provision was one of the strongest central government policies of the former system. For decades, housing development was characterised by reforms and instruments adopted in line with the specifics of economic and social development. In the 1950s and 1960s, industrialisation triggered intensive urbanisation processes with a permanent need for new housing being connected to a strong rural-urban drift from the countryside to places of employment. Ongoing development followed during the 1970s and 1980s when so-called societal housing in the form of multi-family housing estates reached its peak. The expansion of public [social] housing construction was accompanied by governmental financial arrangements. The locations were mostly in suburban areas and on the outskirts of towns and larger cities.

Year	Total	- 1918	1919 -	1946 -	1961 -	1971 -	1981 -	1991 -	2001 -
Number	830,047	119,892	61,463	87,920	132,435	185,349	127,497	54,964	60,527
Percent	100	14.4	7.4	10.6	16.0	22.3	15.4	6.6	7.360.52

Razpredelnica 1: Število stanovanj po letu izgradnje v Sloveniji. [Vir: Nacionalni stanovanjski program za obdobje 2012-2021. Osnutek, 2011]

Table 1: Number of dwellings by the year of construction in Slovenia [Source: National housing programme for the period 2012-2021. Conception, 2011]

After 1985, the production of housing started to decline due to changes in the system of financing and organising of housing provision [Sitar, after Rebernik 2008]. In the 1990s, the new independent state of Slovenia minimised its housing production due to the new market conditions. However, the very ambitious National Housing Programme that followed for the period 2005 to 2015 has largely not been realised. As a result, the existing housing stock in Slovenia is relatively outdated today, with 70% of flats being older than 30 years, which is the maximum age for renewal.

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Building	48.1	48.4	48.5	54.2	52.2	49.6	54.0	56.6	54.7	50.9	51.4	50.2
New Const	27.7	28.1	30.3	34.3	34.3	31.1	36.6	40.7	40.8	38.2	38.2	39.0
Enlargement	3.3	2.3	1.4	2.7	1.9	3.6	2.6	2.3	1.5	1.5	1.0	0.6
Reconstr. works	9.9	4.5	5.0	4.5	4.7	8.7	8.2	8.0	6.9	6.4	7.0	5.7
Main and New invest.	3.7	10.7	9.7	10.0	10.5	4.9	5.8	1.1	4.4	3.7	4.0	3.6
Main. works	3.4	2.8	2.8	2.7	0.8	1.4	0.9	1.1	1.0	1.1	1.2	1.1

Razpredelnica 2: Delež novogradenj in prenov obstoječih zgradb od 1998 do 2009 v Sloveniji v odstotkih. [Vir: Nacionalni stanovanjski program za obdobje 2012-2021. Osnutek, 2011]

Table 2: Share of new construction and refurbishment of existing buildings from 1998 to 2009 in Slovenia, in percent. [Source: National housing programme for the period 2012-2021. Conception, 2011]

The deteriorating quality of life in the old housing estates is closely associated with the privatisation of so-called "social flats" in the early 1990s. As much as 92 percent of the old

housing stock is privately owned, posing a major hindrance to decision-making on the maintenance and financing of renewal works that aims to improve the quality of the living environment [Sitar et al. 2005].

Slovenia has so far not adopted any comprehensive strategy on renewing the existing housing stock, even though the maintenance of worn-out buildings and infrastructure is one of the most topical issues. The notion of renewal and regeneration is among the priority goals of a single spatial development document that Slovenia has adopted since its independence [Spatial Development Strategy of Slovenia, 2004]. Namely, renewal within this strategy mainly envisages measures aimed at reducing excessive pressures and inappropriate land use. Released for public discussion before the end of 2011, the draft National Housing Programme for the 2012–2021 period is the first document planned to define renewal officially as a main developmental priority. Even though this draft document has been harshly criticised by professional circles, it is still a big step towards a systematic approach to reviving degraded areas and improving the living and working quality of existing housing estates. Slovenia thus follows the European guidelines that support those measures aim to renew especially problematic residential areas characterised by physical deterioration and social exclusion [2011].

A good two decades after social housing was privatised, a reason for the abovementioned situation is closely associated with management of the housing stock, in regard to the bulk of problems arising from the issue of ownership of common open spaces. Consequently, particularly in older housing estates, green spaces are deteriorating, illegal or unregulated parking is increasing and people occupy open public space for private purposes, e.g. they put a fence up around their garden plot etc [Gazvoda 2001]. All of these phenomena reduce the ability to identify with and the efficiency of the relationship between residents and the open public space. Thus, public spaces are nowadays often used for other purposes, particularly to make up for the lack of parking spaces. Consequently, free spaces are scarce and the building density is increasing to the detriment of green spaces.

Post-WW2 Housing Estate in The City of Maribor

The city of Maribor is perhaps the most significant example to illustrate Slovenian housing development at the local level. With 112,153 inhabitants and an area of 147.5 sq. km, Maribor is the economic, administrative and cultural centre of the Podravje region and its 310,743 inhabitants [Urban Audit, 2005]. Due to a population both generally declining and ageing, Maribor is currently on the very end of indicators of demographic characteristics of Slovene towns and cities. The population's stagnation is also reflected in a decrease in the number of households [Sitar 2008]. However, one advantage of Maribor is its exceptional traffic position. Accessible by road, rail and air, the city has a favourable position at the crossroads of transport corridors linking Central Europe with Balkan countries and the Mediterranean area with Eastern Europe. Besides, Maribor airport is located 5 km from the city centre, close to the motorway to Ljubljana.

In the past, Maribor was an important industrial centre in the north of Yugoslavia. In the 1990s when Slovenia gained its independence it experienced a deep economic recession as a side-effect of the change in the economic and political system.

Recently, the city and region have considerably improved their urban, social and cultural image. Shopping malls, Cineplexes and entertainment facilities highlight the new suburbanisation trends on the outskirts of and settlements around the city. New developments are defining the borders of a functional urban region of approximately 170,000 inhabitants [Drozg 2006]. Every day about 25,000 people commute to Maribor for work, education, shopping and other activities [Sitar 2008, after Urban Audit 2005]. Maribor also is the second biggest university city with approximately 22,000 students. The City Municipality of Maribor is administratively divided into 11 city districts and 6 local communities. The main political body at the local level is the city council, with the mayor representing the competent authority in the areas of city planning, housing policies and provision of infrastructure and public services.

The first post-war residential area in Maribor were characterised by a rigid urban planning concept whose realisation was accompanied by a shortage of materials and equipment, poor quality construction and craft works and utility infrastructure as well as the remoteness of the housing locations from urban centres. The new housing estates first emerged in the immediate hinterland of industrial plants; an example is the housing estate of the TAM factory built in 1947 and designed by Maribor-based architect Ljubo Humek. On Humek's initiative, the Maribor Architectural Design and Planning Office was established in 1952 where the architects Branko and Ivan Kocmut, Magda Kocmut and Bogomir Ungar worked from the outset. Their number one task was to conduct an analysis of the housing problems facing the city of Maribor. Their urban planning and architecture concepts followed the example of Sweden where multi-family residential construction was part of a broad social system [Pirkovič 1982]. Thus, from the post-war period until today some housing estates of exceptionally high quality have evolved in Maribor and are presented below, with an emphasis on open public space elements.

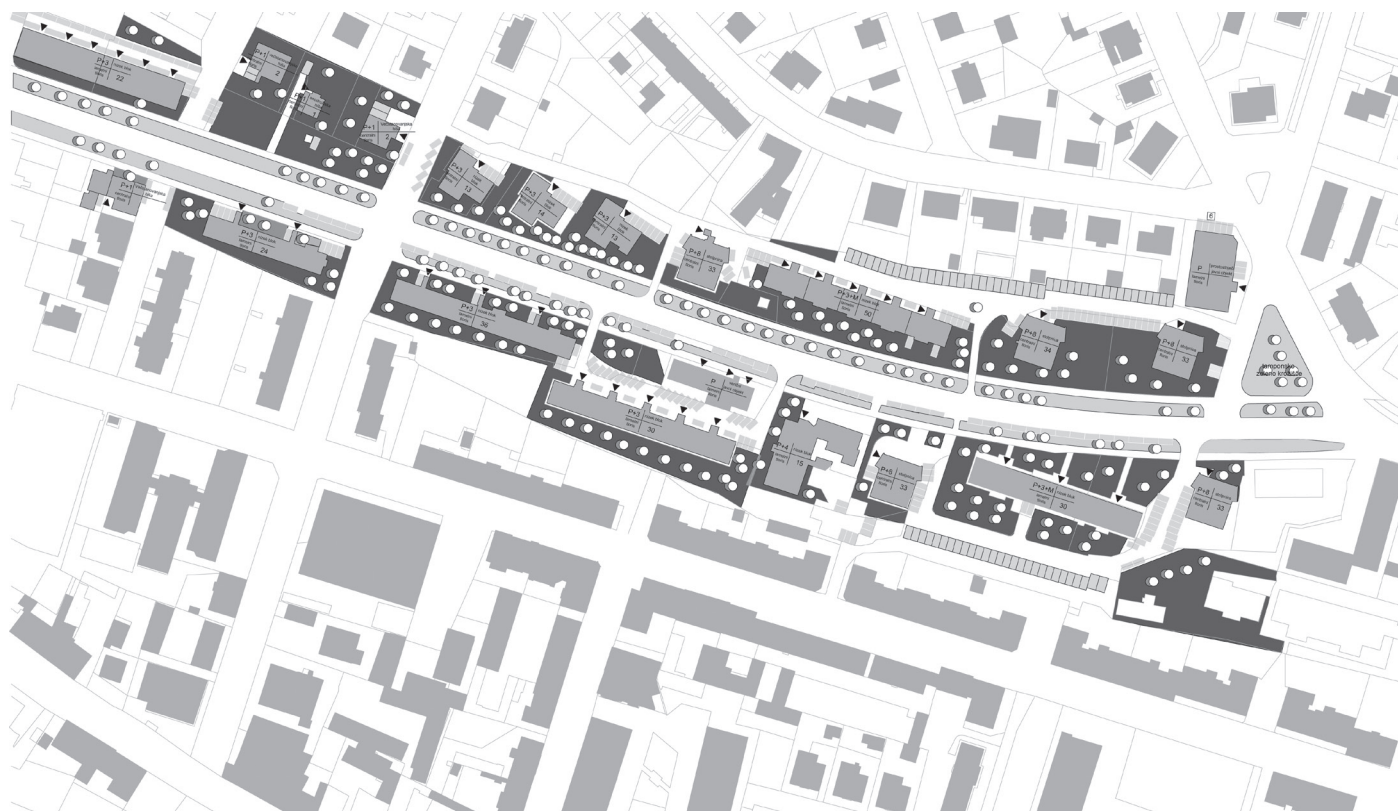
Housing Estate in the 1950s

Housing Estate Gosposvetska cesta

An example of an interesting urban concept for a high-quality multi-family housing construction is the housing estate along Gosposvetska cesta, planned by Ljubo Humek in 1954, followed the Swedish model and is as such the first example of the housing-estate concept in Slovenia [Pirkovič 1982].

It is located in the western part of Maribor, about 1 km from the city centre. The area boasts exceptionally high quality in terms of the urban planning approach as it emphasises the relationship between the built structures and the green areas. This estate represents a major milestone in the development of collective housing in Maribor, mainly due to its services such as a community health centre, shopping pavilion and later also a kindergarten – all of which saw theory being turned into reality. The housing estate's skeleton comprises basic housing structures, i.e. high-rise tower blocks and apartment blocks which together with the services form a homogeneous composition of buildings located along the curved street and in the midst of greenery. We can say that the architecture of the high-rise tower blocks designed by Branko Kocmut, another architect from Maribor, also followed the Swedish model.

The traffic axis plays a dual role of a residential street and a city road leading from the city centre westwards. Due to small amount of traffic at the time, such a composition is excusable



Slika 1: Situacijski načrt stanovanjskega naselja Gosposvetska cesta, Maribor.

Figure 1: Site plan of Gosposvetska cesta Housing Estate, Maribor

although today the road is a strong source of noise. Outdoor garages are located on the inner side of the blocks and high-rise tower blocks in the eastern part of the housing estate. The estate features 74 garages in total, representing just 0.15 of a parking space per flat. The green spaces between the buildings contain relatively neglected sandboxes and other items of urban equipment. The estate is easily accessible by public transport [bus] and meets the standards of distances to kindergarten, primary school, recreation activities and green hinterlands. The estate also features several supply and service activities.

Housing Estate from the 1960s to 1980s

Borova vas Housing Estate

A major landmark in the development of multi-family estates was the 1965 housing reform resulting in the complete decentralisation of special-purpose funds for financing housing development, which was taken over by commercial banks. The distinctively economic logic involved soon demonstrated its shortcomings such as extreme overuse of areas and diminishing interest in the construction of services. For example, to

maximise the use of building land, the objects had more storeys than originally planned at the expense of open public spaces, without any influence or participation considering their wishes and expectations by the residents. The sheer need for accommodation was thus satisfied, but there were no cultural, recreational and educational institutions, which have since led to the residents' feelings of isolation and alienation.

The architectural design is characterised by the typical monotony of built structures, often contradicting the prescribed norms and standards. Even if influences from abroad were still there, the realisation was substantially poorer than planned and, more importantly, less in harmony with the natural environment and human measure. After 1970, in reaction to the problematic situation a social campaign was launched to amend the housing policy. Theoretically, the housing estate should – apart from residential buildings – also include buildings of public interest, a traffic scheme as well as recreational and green spaces, all of which are determined by the size of the estate and the housing unit typology. In practice, this is manifested in different approaches to the design of previously uniform residential blocks that are

becoming increasingly fragmented. However, from the point of view of quality of life, this fragmentation should result in putting more emphasis on public open spaces [Pirkovič 1982]. The Borova vas housing estate was built between 1985 and 1988 in the suburban area of Maribor. The blocks of flats, shaped as rectangular lamellae, four- to eight-storeys high. A cross-shaped access road divides the housing estate into four units. The buildings are oriented so that the longer side of the buildings faces the access road, whereas all shorter sides form a half-open atrium. The result is that open green spaces are separated from motor traffic areas and the housing estate is internally divided into noisy and quiet sections. The cross-shaped access road is on a different level from the entrance and parking areas, adding to the separation of motor traffic areas from other estate sections.

Outdoor parking spaces covered with green roofing are arranged around the block entrances above the access road. Pedestrians use the pavements along the access road where, regrettably, cars are illegally parked. A kindergarten and primary school are located in the immediate vicinity of the housing estate. Public services within the housing estate include a retirement home, a hairdresser, a pub and a tailor's shop. The opening of the large shopping centre on the housing estate's western side has ruined some small local shops. The walkway is interrupted by a slip road, which literally cuts the estate off from the green hinterlands, while also linking it to the city centre and rerouting transit motor traffic to the city edge.

A small-scale survey was conducted among the housing estate's residents who seemed to be generally satisfied with the quality



Slika 2: Situacijski načrt stanovanjskega naselja Borova vas, Maribor.
Figure 2: Site plan of Borova vas Housing Estate, Maribor.

of life, despite some deficiencies. According to the results of the survey the most appreciated qualities of the housing estate include the safe and quiet neighbourhood, the good condition of the environment and regulated public transport as well as the high proportion of green areas which should nevertheless be better maintained. The reasons for the deteriorating open public spaces include the residents' low level of participation in activities organised within their housing estate, especially those related to keeping the environment neat and tidy. Children's playgrounds for different age groups are located at several points of the housing estate, and have to be renewed or their range of activities expanded. Similarly as in other housing estates, the residents find the missing parking places to be the biggest problem. Accordingly, a shortage of parking areas due to the number of cars exceeding the parking capacity seems to be a major indicator of degradation of urban area.

Conclusion

Improving the quality of the existing housing stock is crucial for all of society and can also be understood as one of many ways to achieve a more socially sustainable society of the future [Caldenby & Wedebrunn 2010]. In Slovenia, the analysis of the quality of life of housing estates built after World War revealed that the urban planning concepts manifest some shifts in terms of quality of housing constructions. Slovenian architects were mainly influenced by Swedish approaches to the development of housing, with an emphasis on Swedish models which radically changed the views of the housing culture and the related attitude to open public space. However, there is a vital difference between the Scandinavian and Slovenian cultures which should not be overlooked. In Scandinavia quality of life is maintained through a continuous renewal process which, in Slovenia, has not taken hold in view of systematic approach. In Slovenia, one cannot talk of a continual process because the area of renewal has not yet been comprehensively regulated. Alternatively, due to additional problems caused by a shortage of dwelling and the poor condition of the housing stock, the need for a broader horizon when it comes to solving housing issues has only intensified. This calls for a wide discussion that requires new views and instruments for resolving the issue of renewing the housing estates; in the coordination processes, apart from owners and users, other stakeholders should also be included. Last but not least, given the current situation in Slovenia, some well-known Scandinavian models featuring a comprehensive, integral approach to the renewal of housing and other degraded areas are recommended, with an emphasis on improving the quality of open public space.

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