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Relation Between Private and Public Spaces of Collective Housing at the Example of Bratislava and Tbilisi

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Relation Between Private and Public Spaces of Collective Housing at the Example of Bratislava and Tbilisi

Andrea Bacova ¹, Daniela Majzlanova ¹, Katarina Bergerova ¹

¹ Faculty of Architecture STU in Bratislava, Námetie slobody 19, Bratislava 812 45, Slovakia

majzlan.daniela@gmail.com

Abstract. This paper stresses the importance of semi-private and semi-public spaces of the residential areas. The social aspects are defined in the contrasting example of the iconic settlement from Bratislava and representative settlement of the socialist period from Tbilisi. The research explores the different approach of inhabiting semi-public spaces which comes out of the local context. The main factors are based on typology which have the influence on the quality of life in the residential buildings.

1. Introduction

To understand the importance of semi-private and semi-public spaces we have to look at the realized projects. The transition between public and private spaces has more layers when we look at this problematic from the sociological point of view. Newman identifies also semi-public territories which do not appear to have an owner or belong to someone and semi-private territory that is owned privately and shared privately by its residents, [1]. This transition of spaces is represented in different use of typology. How does the same typological element work in different architectural and cultural context? Even if the typological element is the same, the collective housing example from the beginning of modernist movement from Bratislava suggest different social interaction as the example from the late modernist collective housing from the Republic of Georgia. In our research we focused on the use of open-porches and loggias which are differently inhabited in both case studies and at the main factors which influence the way of use of this typology.

2. Shared space in collective housing

In this paper we focus on the shared social space in residential buildings, specifically in collective housing. Shared spaces are integral part of the collective housing and they are more relevant nowadays then before. For livable and functional public and living space it is necessary to analyze the character and factors leading to successful and unsuccessful shared spaces. Physical appearance of shared space can have different architectural typology. Although the typology implies certain use of the shared space according to specific social habits and cultural context of inhabitants we can experience various use of it. In some cases, the same typological element, for example porch and loggia, is occupied by its inhabitants and offering effective social interaction while in the others the social meaning and potential of the space is unused. In two comparative case studies we research and describe process of adaptation of inhabitants and current state in collective housing Unitas built in 1931 in Bratislava as an initial project of collective housing in Slovakia and panel construction housing from Nutsubidze Plato, settlement from Tbilisi, capital of Georgia. In the Republic of Georgia the process of construction and



adaptation of collective housing reached its peak in 80s which led to extensive interventions from the inhabitants. Both projects are part of an urban residential structure and involved different levels of accessibility of shared spaces as well as represented social ideals of collective housing.

It is important that within these processes we can distinguish and use the natural tendencies evoked by social activities, but at the same time to apply professional tools to regulate positive development in existing spaces. By researching we recognized the inevitable requirement for regulation of public spaces is the necessity of clear ownership. Subsequently it is possible to apply strategy of residentialization of housing environment which purpose is to provide residential identity to settlements through the influence of the ownership of public space and with the use of new spatial distribution as seen in the example ‘figure 1’, ‘figure 2’. The aim is to identify the inhabitants with their housing environment, [2].



Figure 1. Stefan Froster Architekten - Residential Building Oleanderweg 21-45, Neustadt, Germany, [3]



Figure 2. Atelier Villes & Paysages – rehabilitation of Le Val Fouré, Mantes-la Jolie, France, [3]

2.1. Collective housing project Unitas, Bratislava

Seven open porch houses in linear urbanism are oriented perpendicular to Šancová ulica. Since the beginning the architects Fridrich Weinwurm and Ignác Vécsei intended the urbanism as almost symmetrical structure with the system of changing open and semi-open courtyards ‘figure 3’. The architects enforced project Unitas which denies the ideal model of traditional housing block and at the same time they used the principle of semi-open spaces which they considered the inevitable part of collective housing. This type of space should be used for various functions from vegetable gardens, recreational functions, to children's playground. Of original intention eight houses were built. Current state of public space created in between houses represent changing of green surfaces and parking without any significant differentiation according to activities. Not only linear urbanism itself but also specific type of open-porch houses was an important part of the concept. According to architects, in the sense of the disposition and hygienic development, open-porch house is the only possible and economic construction solution. This typological form was not related only to economic reasons, but it should reflect the fundamental change and new society which was not bound to traditions and therefore traditional housing, but rather a new model of hotel-form of housing. This assumption was connected also with typology of housing units which was focused on equality of requirements of individual inhabitants, where „single man has no other requirements then the other“, [4].

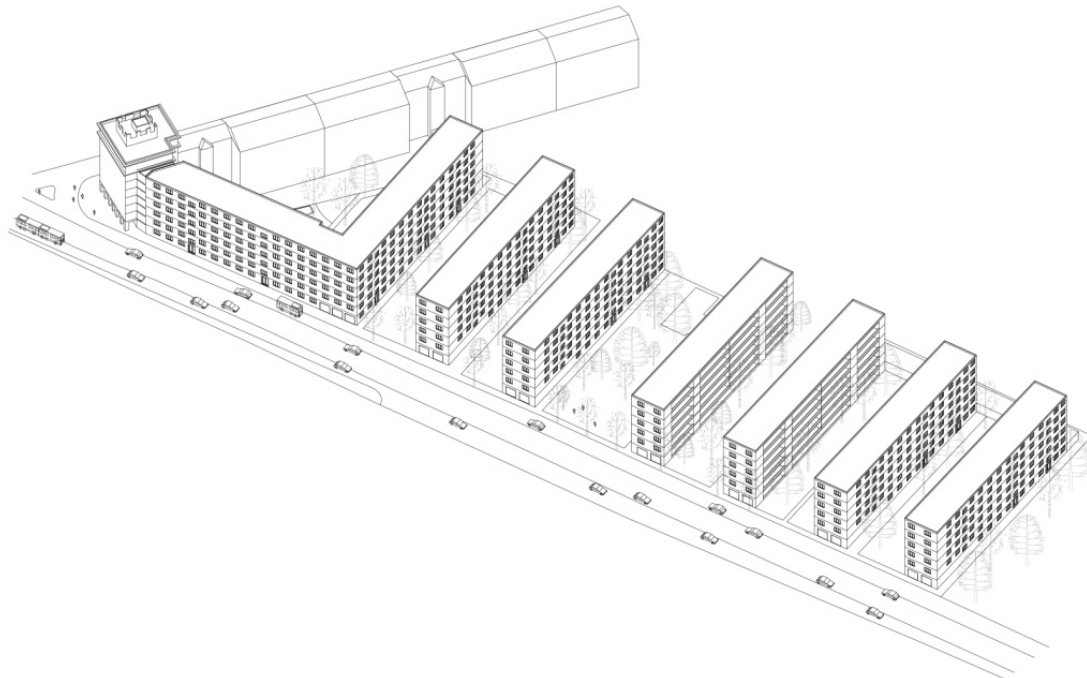


Figure 3. Urban structure of Unitas, Bratislava. (scheme: Bergerová, K.)

2.2. *Tbilisi loggias example, Nutsubidze Plato*

On the other hand, Georgia's capital Tbilisi developed a different approach of livable shared space emerging from the local cultural context. In residential housing there are present very strong individual interventions, ranging from minimal social architecture to the complete extensions on the blank facades of panel housing. Model example of residential panel houses located at the Nutsubidze Plato, a big settlement of panel housing blocks from the soviet era. The first prefabricated housing blocks were built in 1957, but the planning era culminated in the late 80s which led to the additional constructions called „kamikadze loggias“, ‘figure 4’. It is an additional steel construction attached to one of the facades of the house which should enlarge the existing housing units, figure 5, figure 6. The construction was left to the inhabitants to complete. Therefore, nowadays it consists of different extension typologies of diverse materiality and quality of construction. It was the result of the unfulfilled yearly plans for the missing floor area which was criticized for the low quality of construction. To formally fulfil the yearly plan, the Gosstroy (State Construction Committee) of Georgia came with the solution to build additions to their houses and encouraged them to complete the constructions on their own costs. Later the process became uncontrollable and after the fall of the Soviet Union the technical state of the additions became a problem. Mostly it is used all the space of the facade leading to diverse typological forms, from empty balconies, full length loggias, completely built apartment units and their typological variations, [5].

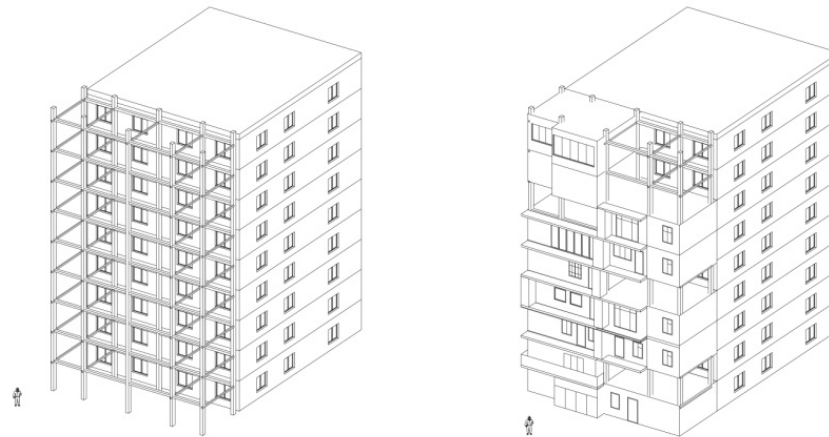


Figure 4. Kamikadze loggias, Nutsubidze Plato, Tbilisi (scheme: Bergerová, K.)



Figure 5. Kamikadze loggias, Nutsubidze Plato, Tbilisi (photo: Majzlanová, D., 2015)



Figure 6. Kamikadze loggias, Nutsubidze Plato, Tbilisi (photo: Majzlanová, D., 2015)

Community porches as well as loggias are the main traditional elements of residential buildings in Georgia. In Tbilisi's Old Town there are numerous courtyards inside the 19th century houses. It is a traditional communal living space called „ezo“. [6] It has a specific atmosphere of semi-private communal space which consists of organic mixture of wooden balconies, loggias, open and closed porches, different construction methods and materials, 'figure 7', 'figure 8'. It is possible to access the space from the outside from the street and sometimes they are hosting public services like bakeries, exchange spots or winery. This space is adapted by its inhabitants, different families who place and use different common furniture, facilities also on the open porches. It creates liveable shared space and brings urban socialization in positive, but sometimes also conflicting ways. Providing them with needed social interaction that is an integral part of Georgian culture. The typology is also connected to the mild climate, especially warm climate during summer which encourages people to spend more time outdoors. It is obvious that this approach is present also with the mass housing settlements from soviet era. Private and public space easily blends together because of the transformation of blank facades of panel houses. Attached steel construction is adapted by users, resulting in „vertical courtyard“ used similarly as the traditional town courtyards.



Figure 7. Courtyard “ezo”, Tbilisi
(photo: Majzlanová, D., 2015)



Figure 8. Courtyard “ezo”, Tbilisi
(photo: Majzlanová, D., 2015)

3. Results and discussions

In our research we tried to understand and describe the impact of social interaction on shared space by analyzing the possibilities of use of semi-private and semi-public spaces of collective housing structure of Unitas in Bratislava. The rate of successful architectural proposal is the use by the inhabitants. The initial concept of Unitas housing counted with the active use of semi-private spaces. System of communal gardens was not realized and instead of gardens nowadays spaces are undifferentiated green areas, ‘figure 9’, ‘figure 10’.



Figure 9. Courtyard Unitas, Bratislava
(photo: Bergerová, K., 2016)

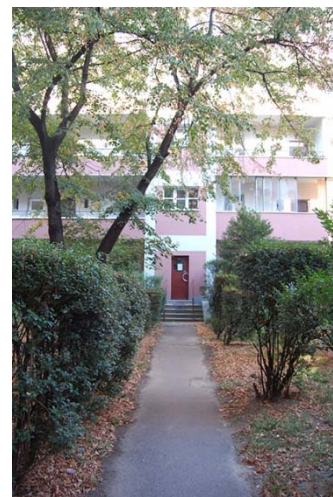


Figure 10. Courtyard Unitas, Bratislava
(photo: Bergerová, K., 2016)

The original collective construction was intended for the working class who came after 1931 to Bratislava. The new settlement was situated rather at the city border but today it is the preferred living space, especially for young people. Changed social structure was not adapted to the public space that currently does not offer enough impulses to enable the population to identify themselves with the environment. This proves that residentialization as a recovery method requires a comprehensive approach. The insulation of facades in this case becomes only aesthetical layer which does not activate the semi-private space of open porches towards the semi-public courtyards, ‘figure 11’, ‘figure 12’.



Figure 11. Open-porch facade
Unitas before restoration, Bratislava
(photo: Bergerová, K., 2016)



Figure 12. Open-porch facade
Unitas after restoration, Bratislava
(photo: Bergerová, K., 2018)

Different approach of socialization through typology of porches and loggias is present in the Nutsubidze Plato in Tbilisi. The process of „self-made participation“ of inhabitants has led into a variety of aesthetic forms. Although the aesthetic could be questionable it formed a specific working semi-private spaces fulfilling the social requirements of the inhabitants. If the element of architecture is strategically placed, sometimes a banal piece of wood is functioning as well as well-designed chair. It can become a successfully integrated part of the public space. This approach of adapting semi-public space is present in the spaces in between houses, back courtyards and even on the facades of panel housing.

The key factor for the future interventions is the definition of quality of the spaces by inhabitants themselves. One of the possible methods is the participation process. Participation of inhabitants can be defined as an active engagement of individuals at the problem solving and public actions. This process is situated in our case in a local community. Public participation is not limited only to individuals interested in public actions in private, but it suggests their input into public space through specific actions [7-12]. Involvement of architects into participation process would be a significant advantage according to the social and architectural importance of this housing. At the one hand the spontaneous adaptation and differentiation of spaces by Georgian inhabitants could serve as an inspiration for architects and planners and at the other hand it is the participative approach formed in western countries which offers a practical methodology for architects. Bratislava's example of collective housing is placed somewhere between the two concepts mentioned above and has now the opportunity to evolve its own model for creating quality in-between spaces.

4. Conclusions

Even if the consequences of collective housing are the heritage of former socialist countries, the later development has shown different movement in both countries. The uniqueness of architecture lies in the specific cultural context of the country. For the assessment of the residential area it is important to know, in addition to the quantitative values, the social structure of the inhabitants, the overall economic functioning of the residential environment and also the system of ownership. On the one hand, some participation models of internal organization of residential structures as well as residential public space, are applied. On the other hand, under the influence of the increasing demands of society, there are obvious strong tendencies leading to the pursuit of diversity, the origin of forms, including unconventional solutions. At the given examples we can see that an individual contribution of inhabitants is an inevitable precondition for successful adaptation of public space and for creating

strong relationships with their environment [8] The functioning public space should be dynamic; it should evolve with users while responding to their changing requirements.

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