Chapter 2
Trends in New Multi-Family Residential Development in Serbia: Overview by Local Urban Professionals

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ABSTRACT
The field of housing has undergone significant changes during the challenging post-socialist transition. Serbia has been a somewhat different case in the way that its transition was postponed and more complex. Conversely, its housing also carries the legacy of the more developed former socialist Yugoslavia. This dichotomy can easily be observed in the case of the newly-built, “transitional” multi-storey housing. However, the data relating to its characteristics is rare and insufficiently accurate. The aim of this chapter is to improve the research of the urban dimension in newly-built multi-family housing in Serbia, regarding housing planning in the new master and detailed urban plans for Serbian cities. This has been researched by analyzing the professional knowledge and experience of local experts. Therefore, the method used in the research was survey, in which urban experts had participated. It had been carried out in May 2015.

INTRODUCTION
The urban dimension of housing as a research topic can be studied through several relevant aspects. First, housing is often considered as a spatially-prevalent land use, occupying the major area in an urban settlement. Second, housing is also known as the most sensitive general urban function, because it is
strongly related to the private sphere of human life. Finally, every flat or house is also a commodity, i.e. housing is also a market-dependent urban function. Thus, the complexity of housing can be easily observed (Petrović, 2004).

This complexity especially comes to the fore in the periods of sudden and tempestuous changes, when it is difficult to balance between all the mentioned aspects. A good example of this phenomenon is a post-socialist transition from a centrally-planned economy to a capitalist market economy in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This transition has been usually described with less or more negative attributes: sudden, dramatic, hard to understand, etc (Hamilton, Dimitrovska Andrews & Pichler-Milanović, 2005; Pickvance, 2008; Hirt & Stanilov, 2009). The post-socialist transformation has brought the myriad of new socio-economic changes (and challenges) for states in Central and Eastern Europe. All such great changes mirror in urban space (Stanilov, 2007). Considering these attributes, the qualitative transformation of urban housing in Central and Eastern Europe has been one of main challenges during the transitional period (IUDK, 2013).

In the case of Serbia, these post-socialist changes in housing have been more severe due to postponed and more complex transition. On the other side, the uncommon model of qualitative socialist housing in the former socialist Yugoslavia has left a positive legacy to present-day situation. Hence, Serbian post-socialist housing has some unique features comparing to other post-socialist countries (Antonić, 2016). This uniqueness is reflected in the ongoing development of Serbian housing, too. A good illustration is a newly-built, “transitional” multi-storey multi-family housing as a dominant type in local typology after the fall of socialism (Jovanović Petrović et al, 2013).

Despite the dominance of this type in situ, there is the general lack of adequate and accurate statistical data. For example, there is no clear division between homes and flats in statistical data – the division is made on the number of dwelling units per building1 (SORS, 2013), regardless if it function as a single- or multi-family housing. The general shortage in the housing statistics is consequently followed by a shortage of adequate scientific and research analyses and projects. Therefore, the main problem is how to observe the macro-urban characteristics of housing, especially those which are crucial to general urban development.

In addition to statistical data, it is necessary to include the other resources based on the irreplaceable knowledge and experience of local urban experts. Many indicators point that their role in has become (even) more challenging since the start of the post-socialist transition (Hirt & Stanilov, 2014). This can also generally apply to Serbian urban experts, but the fact is they are generally pretty aware about ongoing urban processes and their actors, including those related to housing planning and its numerous problems (Vujović & Petrović, 2007). This is the reason why the research interlocutors are Serbian experts in the field of urbanism. To interpret objectively their professional views and opinions about the main issues of urban dimension in newly-built multi-family housing in Serbia, a survey and questionnaire have been chosen for methodological approach.

The findings of this research should present which characteristics of newly-built multi-family housing are crucial for general urban development. In accordance with the expected findings, the contribution of this research is directed to the formation of guidelines for the general improvements of the urban planning and practices in housing sector in Serbia. Final contributions are how they can apply to international level, to add a value for housing planning in its essence.