BULC RADU CIPRIAN

QUALITY OF LIFE IN COLLECTIVE HOUSING

The present article addresses the quality of urban life in the collective living from the current European cities. Starting from the 21st century comfort needs of families and evaluating the typologies of buildings, neighborhoods and cities used today, we can say that the thinking and the way of being of human is positively and negatively alike influenced. The society is in continuous evolution and for any problem that appears, a solution can be found. Taking the right decisions followed by the right implementation process, the next generations will be able to beneficiate of improved conditions for collective housings.

BIENALA TIMIȘOREANĂ DE ARHITECTURĂ

1.1 The issue with quality of life in collective dwellings.

Living is closely linked to human existence. There is a scale of values, which belongs to every nation, generations, families, and last but not least, to every individual. He creates his world around the living. The permanent trend of population growth put pressure on modern society: 1850 to 1.35 billion inhabitants, 1950 to 1.65 billion, 1950 to 2.51 billion, 1970 to 3.69 billion, 1987 to 5.00 billion, 2002 to 6.21 billion, 2018 - 7.6 billion

Collective dwellings have been used since ancient times in all urban agglomerations. This type of habitation appears as a necessity generated by the very large population compared to the very limited space to use for living. Cities have grown faster, due to the migratory wave from the village to the city and from the poor areas to the richest regions. The Eastern European area remained in Soviet influence after World War II, has benefited from accelerated housing-building because it was also the desiderate of the communist ideology: „tool man" in „bedroom neighborhood" with a minimalist living. In capitalism, there was a similar concept of „dwelling car" or „dwelling plant".

Thus, the forced industrialization of the cities has created the need for labor and, implicitly, the states have started extensive programs for building entire neighborhoods in a very short time. The living spaces were undersized, rooms in a row, minimal spaces for bathrooms and kitchens, prefabricated thin walls, in many places the heating was made with individual apartment stoves, there were no storage rooms or storage areas (to discourage private initiative), no parking places, insufficient play and leisure space and facilities. Besides these problems, the concept of living together generated a type of home that could not be disconnected from common utilities: there were no water meters on the apartment, only at block level and the consumption was paid according to the number of members of the family, the central heating was also common and paid according to the surface of each apartment. However, the working class accepted the lack of privacy, storage space, the lack of the right to become

the owner and was pleased that the city offered them or their children hope for a better future.

They were not able to build each one their own home, and the commute was difficult. Nevertheless, the payment of a rent for apartment is not a problem and offers several advantages: they are close to the workplace in the industry, have access to utilities (water, sewerage, gas, electricity, public transport), space is sufficient for young families without pretensions, there is an increased comfort compared to rural areas.

The end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the 21st century brings a recurrence trend for the human scale, to assure the illusion of individual living even if it is part of a collective houses. Also, the spaces from the ground floor are used for complementary functions: public catering, services, education, culture, storage. It is mandatory the green yard, which can be in interior or in lateral. In fact, it tends to reinvent the human relationships lost in modernist architecture. Buildings need to be closer, with few levels, with meeting places or discussions for neighbors, practically a small community of owners of all ages, as well as a village where everyone knows each other. Schumacher's conclusion: „man is small, so small is beautiful". The human scale thus becomes a measure of ethics, equity, identity and belonging.[1]

Increasing the quality of life in terms of collective living is a current issue for the major metropolises of the world. The effects of agglomeration are reflected in: diversity increasing (- origin, social class, education, lifestyle, etc.), decreased accessibility and availability of services, decreased social mobility, personal affirmation focus. This, in some urban centers, is also due to the lack or poor understanding of the need and use of public spaces. These are social contact points, direct human interaction. Such common spaces where there is no physical discrimination (including for people with disabilities) or social (access free to everyone), placed in areas where there is mobility and activity, increase interaction between the different social classes, leading to communities linking.

[1] http://www.fundatia.ro/en/blog/scara-suprauman%C4%83-locuirii-moderneo-perspectiv%C4%83-critic%C4%83 – Lorin Niculae 15 apr. 2014 Scara supraumana a locuirii moderne_o perspectiva critica_

The quality of life, seen as a balance between the opportunities offered by the urban environment and its disadvantages, is increasingly difficult to assure. In order to maintain a high standard in parallel with density increasing, major investments in utilities, transport infrastructure, public spaces, etc. have to be made. When these costs become too high to be supported by the administration, the city loses its productivity and quality of life decreases.



Fig. 1 Overcrowding in big cities.



Fig. 2 - The cent of the speed at 10 km / h

Contemporary human perception is that the living space must contain separate rooms for each activity, leaving the two large areas of the day and

night with the subdivisions of each. Living area: entrance hall, dressing room, bathroom, kitchen, dining room, living room, office, pantry, laundry, garage, terrace. Night area: bedroom, dressing room and bathroom for each family member if possible.

In collective dwellings an apartment has an average of about 50 sqm. This space should usually accommodate a family of 3 members, which, following a simple calculation, means about 17 square meters for each member, where both day and night activities are to be carried out. Reduced costs are the main advantage of this type of housing, therefore, because of savings, the quality it is generally compromised.

Due to these simple volumes, have been developed rigid geometry compositions that had nothing to do with land or human dimension. The creation of 30-meter rectangular fronts of gray (or worse-yellow, pink, green) is a little less elegant solution that negatively influences city life creating corridor streets that require a sense of obedience and repetition.[2]

Because of these physical characteristics, collective housings had a psychologically negative impact on both occupants and outsiders. Due to the lack of sound insulation, individuality and the possibility of expressing individuals is impaired. Lack of space influences the individual. He is pleased with a little, failing to reach his potential. Living in the block can lead to alienation and even breaking contact with fellow humans. In most cases, residential complexes feel an acute lack of green spaces, for recreation. In cases where they exist, they are generally dominated by the volume of buildings that always have the foreground, removing man from the natural.

Most collective housing units look about the same: cubic volumes of different sizes surrounded by parking area, systematized and relatively equal. Repetition is one of the greatest frustrations of modern human. The

[2] http://www.bucurestiivechisinoi.ro/2013/06/calitatea-vietii-in-spatiul-urban-contemporan-din-romania. Studiu de caz – Locuirea colectiva in București 23 iunie 2013 Adrian Majuru Antropologia urbana, Antropologie

habit, is decreasing the creativity and individuality. These, actually are the effects of a monoton life, lived in monoton blocks. Probably, the biggest failure of collective housings is at social level. Although it was an attempt for social alignment, with the purpose to link the social classes, the effect was not the one expected. It was not considered the need of human for privacy, a basic need, failure which had lead to serious consequences. In most of the cases, we can not speak about communities when we refer to the occupants of a block. They are aggressive in keeping their privacy in case of high density. They are suspicious and prefer to avoid contact with their neighbors. No one wants to know too much about him (when your child is making a noise, you prefer not to know it, to avoid reproaches). High density leads to separation (in a bus, the strangers do not speak to each other, but in the mountain where passers-by are rare, they greet to each other). This high density also leads to lower responsibility. When you are alone, you know you have to act, but when there are more, you generally rely on someone else to react. At block, this is transmitted through the poor quality of common spaces that do not interest anyone, as well as the lack of interest in common goods. To all of this we can add the „war" for the parking spaces and we can understand why most people living in the block look at their neighbors as enemies.

Although physical, psychological and social disadvantages are well known and felt by the majority of the inhabitants of Romanian cities, paradoxically, the trend is to create more and more such housing units, because in the capitalist system the demand is the one which creates the market. Even costs are not much lower than individual dwellings, and because of their low quality, their maintenance costs as much. They also have no advantages in terms of land use, because high density creates only agglomeration and can not take advantage of the high speed that is possible nowadays (in Bucharest the average speed at peak hours is less than 10 km / h when the car can reach a maximum speed of over 150km / h). Large-scale collective dwellings are outdated in many ways, but due to their popularity, they still have the highest demand. Perhaps it is only through legislation that this greed of developers can stop, which are the only ones to gain from these living quarters and will be able to move to

another kind of habitation that will bring greater satisfaction and better conditions of live.

People / family	Rooms / House	Useful surface	Built area
no.	no.	mp	mp
1	1	37,00	58,00
2	2	52,00	81,00
3	3	66,00	102,00
4	3	74,00	115,00

Fig. 3. Minimal surfaces according to Romanian law 114/1996 [3]

Like any law, it can be improved in the context of future socio-economic changes. However, minimal areas can be considered by many to be quite small and the natural tendency would be to increase these limits.

For comparison, I will present the minimum floor space of new homes in the UK.

Number of bedrooms	Number of bed spaces	Minimum GIA (m^2)			Built-in storage (m^2)
		1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	
1b	1p	39 (37)*			1.0
	2p	50	58		1.5
2b	3p	61	70		2.0
	4p	70	79		
3b	4p	74	84	90	2.5
	5p	86	93	99	
	6p	95	102	108	
4b	5p	90	97	103	3.0
	6p	99	106	112	
	7p	108	115	121	
	8p	117	124	130	
5b	6p	103	110	116	3.5
	7p	112	119	125	
	8p	121	128	134	
6b	7p	116	123	129	4.0

Fig 4. London Standard of Homes - March 2016 [4]

[3] http://www.avocatura.com/ll600-legea-locuintei.html#ixzz4h6ZW1Yx9

[4]https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/housing_standards_malp_for_publication_7_april_2016.pdf

So, the square meters of Romanian law are relatively equal to the recent regulations in the UK. We suspect that in the Western world these minimal indicators have been conceived from reality ascertained in practice. It can be said that although they have evolved into separate worlds (socialism - capitalism), there have been similar needs for space for collective living.

The vast majority of collective houses have to relate to a determined urban context. The ideal situation would be the planimetric and volumetric development in accordance with the different neighborhoods, respecting the urbanistic regulations of the area. Development in the depth of the construction site, between two blind walls and the presence of interconnected volumes along the entire length of the stradal tram are difficult constraints imposed by the context. Being in principle multi-storey buildings, respecting the street tramline configuration, related to the height and cardinal orientation, the main rooms can be oriented only to the street or to the inner courtyard. In some cases, the inner courtyard is directly connected to the ground floor with street spaces that can be used as semi-public space to open balconies. We can have successive courtyards or even volumes that mimes neighboring buildings and roofs. The dark mass of concrete is partitioned by the inner open space courtyard, generating the appearance of a canyon, straight from the entrance. Multi-family dwellings provide the benefits of a single-family home: small number of occupants, four-sided orientation, relationship with green spaces (garden). As a general trend there are two ways of integrating the architectural object into context: by similarity or by contrast, depending on the architect. [5]

[5] A Critical History of Contemporary Architecture: 1960-2010 , Elie G. Haddad si David Rifkind , editura Ashgate 2014

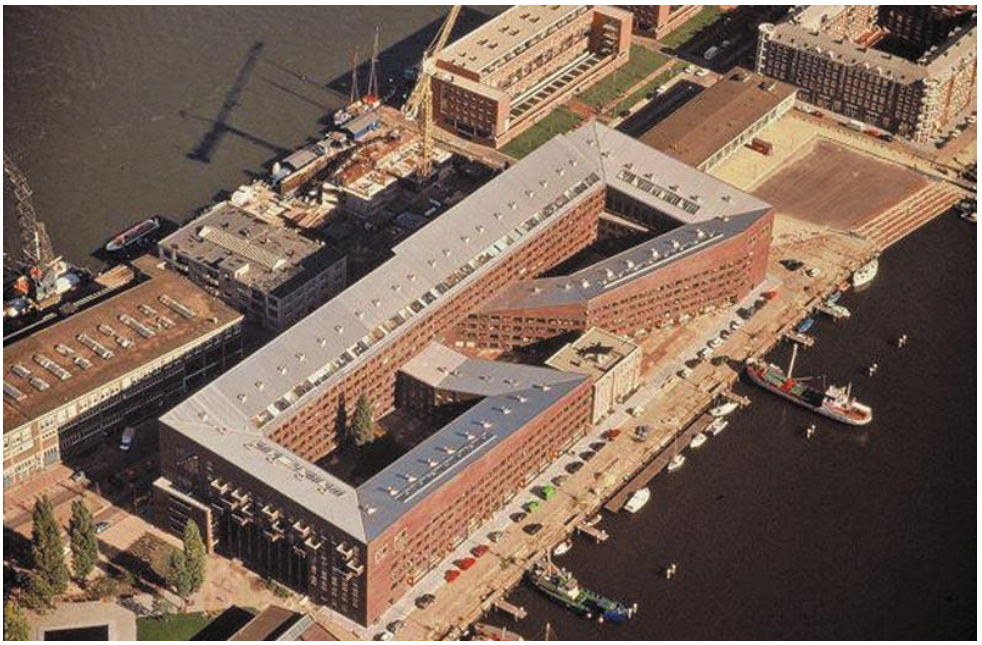


Fig. 5. Superblock "proposed by architects Hans Kollhoff and Christian Rapp in Levantkade 8, Amsterdam in 1994 [6]



Fig. 6. Balena, the building designed by arch. F. Van Dagen, Amsterdam 2001 [7]

[6] http://www.archdaily.com revista de arhitectura on-line

[7] http://www.archdaily.com revista de arhitectura on-line

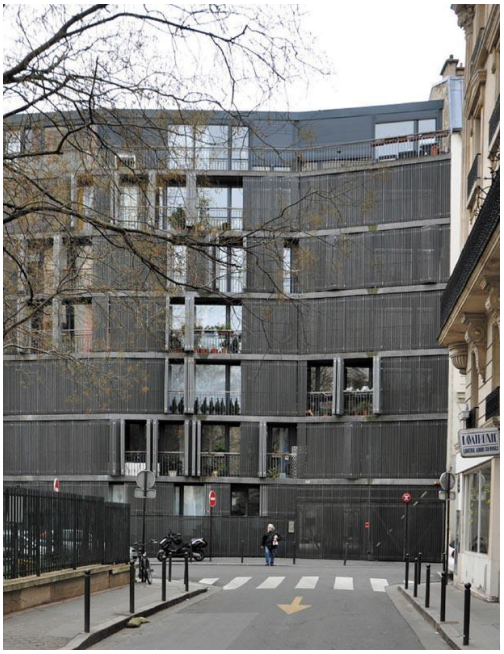


Fig. 7. Arch. Herzog & De Meuron, Rue de Suisses, Paris, 1996-2000 [8]



Fig. 8. SWECO Arkitekter, Tango Building, Malmo, Suedia 2003[9]

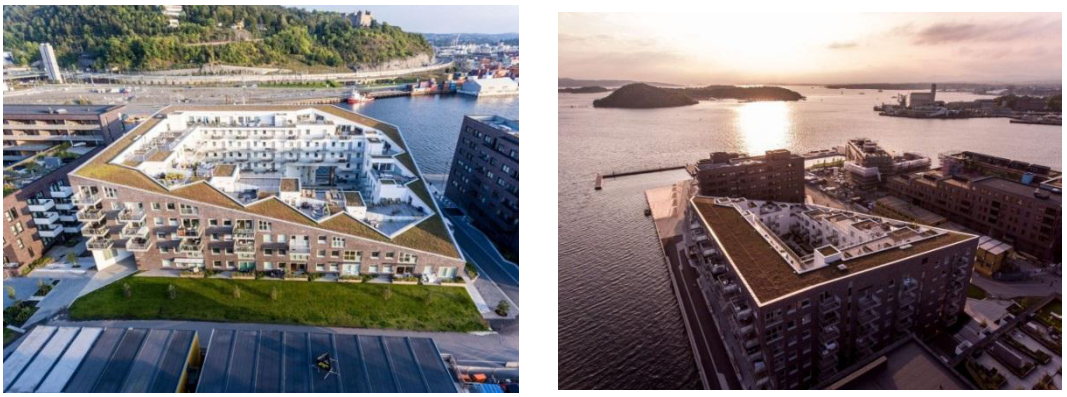


Fig. 9 Sørenga Block 6 / MAD arkitekter 2016

[8] http://www.archdaily.com revista de arhitectura on-line

[9] http://www.archdaily.com revista de arhitectura on-line

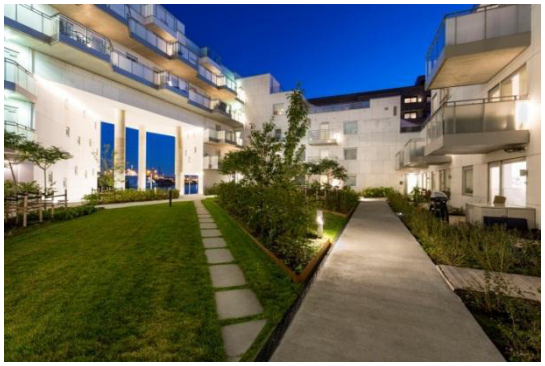



Fig. 10 Sørenga Block 6 / MAD arkitekter 2016

1.2 General assumptions for the improvement of collective housing

Both the structure of the house and the structure of the city have proved, over time, capable of taking over all social, cultural, economic or political changes, remaining functional. The 19th century industrial revolution has sharpened mature structures for centuries, forcing them to operate improperly. Moreover, new structures of people's houses and settlements have been imposed to meet the new demands on labor productivity, but have come in a clear disagreement with the needs of the people. Alienation and the high rate of criminality seemed necessary sacrifices on the altar of technological progress. The 20th century housing patterns proved too rigid to provide valid answers and turned the new settlements (or old mutilated settlements) into true social bombs.

As a result of troubles faced by living in multifamily / collective houses and its unexpected social effects - a series of reformulations of the idea of habitation, centered around the idea of a small community (street, neighborhood). These are seen as transition formulas between the private and public domain.

The studies that architects have carried out, revalorizing in the process the existing structure elements of the village, fair and medieval city, have highlighted the existence of alternative formulas to live in neighborhoods with enclosures, with their own social / sacred space, autonomy in relation to the city, but taking part - of public life.

Sheltering, a defining element in the evolution of mankind, is in modern and contemporary coordinates a space for safety, relaxation and individual health. Although sheltering apparently means meeting the same basic needs, the occupancy of residential buildings is currently changing. Architecture tends to solve new types of problems: communities, collectivities, relying on accepting cultural and taste differences, and emphasizing the importance of human emotions and perceptions.



Fig. 11 PHD Architectes -Nantes 2015 [10]



Fig.12 PHD Architectes -Nantes 2015

[10] http://www.archdaily.com revista de arhitectura on-line

1.3 Conclusions

The experiments and solutions of the 20th century, have shown that humanity can cope with an explosive increase in population. Architects find solutions to the needs of society and family. Collective living can be brought to a satisfying standard for most users if people's needs are always taken into account. The current comfort is much more complex than the requirements had 100 years ago. Factors such as: minimum required space, economic efficiency, reliability, privacy and independence, distance to points of interest, connection to nature, access to transport; should be taken into account when proposing collective living. People choose this form of cohabitation for a number of reasons: they do not afford to live individually, they want to stay in cities with fewer lands, the ease of maintaining such a home, etc. There are already the generations of the 60s who have lived all their lives "in the block" and can see that they have a normal life. Of course, for retired old people, collective housing offers very few leisure choices, but this can be corrected.

Local authorities and even developers are pursuing a diversification of recreational modalities for young people under 14 and elderly over 65. Thus, besides playgrounds between blocks, small promenade parks or meeting venues. The active population benefits only at the end of the week. The eternal problem of parking is solved through underground parking lots that may have the disadvantage that they are more expensive than the overground ones. Lack of privacy can only be solved by better isolation between the apartments and related to the „indiscrete eyes” in the neighboring block can only alleviate disturbance by limiting the minimum distance of 30 meters between buildings. Also, another factor that disturbs relations between neighbors is dependence on common spaces and facilities.

Collective living must be designed so that any individual unit can be completely disconnected from the utility supply without affecting the rest of the occupants. This means that the common spaces (corridors) are crossed by utility networks and the individual connection is made from the common space to each apartment. Thus, a bad debt will be disconnected and will not generate costs for other tenants.

Another problem is the lack of storage space in the apartments that is now solved by the old owners by expanding into enclosed balconies. But by design it is possible to provide satisfactory solutions for increasing the storage surface. Also, many people have bicycles (two adults and one child). These bicycles can not be climbed on the upper floors eternally, and a specially designed space is required, individually divided into the ground floor of the blocks for such families.

Housing assemblies with complementary functions on the ground floor of the buildings are a beneficial solution for the comfort of the tenants.

The need for belonging to one place (my block, my neighborhood) can be satisfied by the diversification of the external architectural forms and their individualization. The more volumetric the inhabitants will feel a closer connection with their whole. Providing private and green interior courtyards also leads to intriguing community ties.

The more collective houses will offer conditions that are more like a traditional village, the more they will be looked for by a wider population. That is, an enclave in diversity.

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