

RANKO RADOVIĆ'S APPROACH TO THE PLANNING AND DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES THROUGH PROJECTS FOR CITIES IN FINLAND AND SERBIA

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Ranko Radović (1935-2005) was one of Serbia's most notable architects, urbanists, and professors, with a prominent influence on European scholarly discussions on planning urban centers and public spaces, which have come to light not only through his research design proposals but also through numerous publications, seminars, conferences and lecture notes. The importance of Radović lies in his profound and early understanding of urban issues that became common across Europe in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. He focused on the composition, ideologies, traditionality and innovation of cities, while striving to create paradigmatic shifts in urban design with the parallel retainment of strong cultures. Radović, strongly influenced by his European experiences, created urban schemes based on his strong ideals that were a product of deep urban perception and collective criticism deriving from his experiential research. As a result, this paper seeks to show and discuss how his time and practice in Finland, and particularly his research designs for the areas of Herttoniemi and Vuosaari in Helsinki (1995-1996), shaped how he perceived the concepts of urban spatial identification, geometry, and historicity, and how these elaborations evolved through his urban planning and design schemes in Serbia's northern province of Vojvodina (1997-2000).

Key words: Ranko Radović, urban planning and design, public spaces, historic centers.

INTRODUCTION

Ranko Radović (Podgorica, 1935 – Belgrade, 2005) was a notable architect, urbanist, and professor, primarily active in Europe through his practice and academic career. Additionally, he was a council member of the International Union of Architects (UIA) (1984-1990), and was elected four times as President of the International Federation of Housing and Planning (IHFP) (1984-1992). Furthermore, Radović's architectural and urban design activities involved more than 29 completed buildings and more than 50 urban planning and design projects. While his projects in the 1970s and 1980s focused on cities in Sri Lanka, Algeria, Luxemburg, and Yugoslavia, his projects of the 1990s and 2000s involved cities in Finland and Vojvodina – Serbia's northern province.

Ranko Radović's urban planning and design projects achieved a common strategic theme, whereby the architectural narrative was continuously connected with the attributes of the house and qualities of the shelter inside urban settlements, as he strived to place individual objects within their context, and integrate architectural typologies that abide by the broader and localized issues of the corresponding urban morphology (Radović, 2005b). Particularly in his later work from the '90s, working on public spaces, Radović led a large number of projects in which he focused on the objects of urban design and their relevance to his wider ideas on urban habitation. These ideas were inspired by the urban planning and design subjects of influential urban thinkers and authors including Lawrence Halprin, Gordon Cullen, Jean Castex, Jean-Charles Depaule and Philippe Panerai, and also the writings of Rob Krier, Aldo Rossi, and Nan Elin – these were concepts that Radović continued to develop in his theoretical work and analysis throughout his career (Gubić and Leontiadis, 2018).

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In 1996, Radović arrived in Novi Sad to found and head the Department of Architecture and Urbanism at the Faculty of Technical Sciences at the University of Novi Sad, later working with local governments to come up with new urban planning and design proposals for different public spaces that belonged to historic urban centers. Before this move, he lived in Finland, where he held the privately funded 'Elieel Saarinen' Professorship at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at the Helsinki University of Technology (1991-1996), and was also a consultant to the Urban Planning Office of Helsinki. This consultancy involved the development of urban studies in Helsinki and other Finnish cities, characterized by their high degree of development compared to global standards, together with a high degree of urban culture.

This paper's main goal is to highlight some fundamental categories of consideration that characterize Ranko Radović's ideas for urban planning and design, influenced by the relevant historicity of cities, for example in the new parts of Finnish cities and the towns of Vojvodina, Serbia's northern province. The choice of these two countries with diverse national identities was directly associated with Radović's experience and affiliation with them, borrowing elements of his philosophical urban design evolution and applying them to these two different national contexts. Therefore, it is critical to study and analyze how his evolving concepts of what is important in an urban core were applied to these two different urban backdrops (Finnish and Serbian), studying the types of semiological elements that were borrowed in each case. The aim is to ultimately study how the environmental spatial elaborations of concepts offer both a sense of thematic reference (i.e. 'belonging') and architectural elements that aid the ability to identify a foreign space that has not been visited before, creating a memory through those spatial elements (Leontiadis, 2015b). Consequently, the incentive for this study is in the realization of the importance of Radović's studies and urban projects for cities both in Finland and Vojvodina in Serbia. One result of this paper is that projects are documented and preserved for further evaluation and debate on city centers, which is how Radović expected his work to be used: as a platform for future processes within more detailed studies, plans and projects for cities in Finland and Serbia, as an evolution of his contribution (Gubić and Leontiadis, 2018). More particularly, this paper discusses Ranko Radović's urban planning and design schemes for the areas of Herttoniemi and Vuosaari in Helsinki in Finland (1995-1996), and Sremska Mitrovica (1997), Kula (1999), Apatin (2000) and Zrenjanin (2002) – all found in Serbia's northern province of Vojvodina.

THE GEOMETRY OF URBAN SPACE; LINES AND SHAPES

Radović's concentration on the geometry, patterns, shapes and lines of urban spaces is evident throughout his work, both through how he expressed his drawings and what he wrote about in his contemplations on existing conditions and proposed designs. For example, when writing about the city of Helsinki, he chose to emphasize the configurations of lines and shapes created by the 'complex patterns' of the streets. Radović translated these into a "double relevance, as traffic arteries and social spaces support the functions and

activities of the capital", creating a variety of streetscapes that provide "an inspiring testimony to the rich texture of urban life" (Radović, 2000c, p. 85).

Holding on to the use of the word 'arteries' and the existential description of urban objects becoming essences of communicative processes within the city, it is crucial to mention Radović's anthropomorphic handling of architecture, expressed through his careful and detailed wire-frame drawings of urban contexts that seek to 'nude' the urban geometry. In fact, he described Figure 1 below as "the precise urban anatomy of the fabric, because 'we can love only what we know'" (Radović, 1996, p. 122) – a paraphrase of Leonardo Da Vinci's justification of his extensive and scrupulous anatomical sketches and drawings of the human body. This anatomical curiosity is strongly evident in Radović's drawings and projects for the city centers in Finland and Serbia presented in this paper.

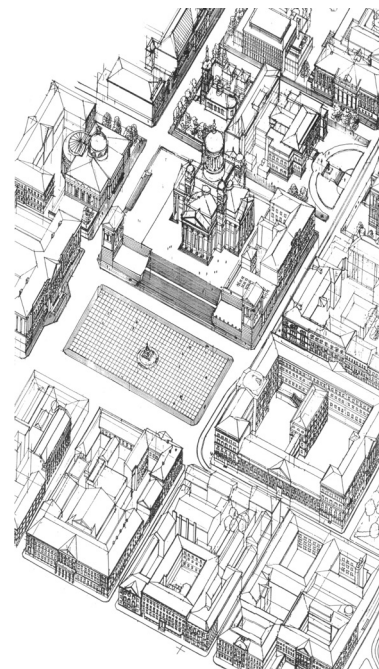


Figure 1. Ranko Radović's isometric drawing of Central Helsinki
(Source: Ranko Radović 1996, p. 122)

The suggested complexity of Radović's urban patterns becomes a criticism of modern design, which he described as one-dimensional and repetitive urban spaces, with rigid architectural typologies and isolated buildings, surrounded by more or less organized 'free space'. Through the suggestion of more complex patterns and meaningful geometric shapes, he, therefore, sought to bring out the spiritual and cultural pluralism of a contemporary city (Radović, 1998), an idea that he pushed further by creating *thematic designs*, which are elaborated in the following section. His admiration towards the design language of synthetic bold and volumetric geometries was evident earlier on, through his mention of Pikku-Huopalahti in Helsinki in his *Finnish Experience 1991-1995* (Radović, 1996) – a neighborhood primarily built in the 1990s using prominent geometric shapes: circles, squares and triangles, to form residential housing.

The urban design study carried out for the city of Sremska Mitrovica (Figure 2) was a contribution of collective visions on the geometric configuration of the city at its urban core, through a proposal suggesting strict pedestrian lines and “that returns to the harmony of Hadrian’s villas with one long bow” (Radović, 1997a, p. 1). In this arrangement, there was no central axis dictating the overall composition, causing the impression of an aerial view (Figure 2) that was lacking organization, concept, or order – an assumption that was hardly the case, taking into consideration the city’s Roman heritage (mentioned in the 4th century BC as Sirmium (Curta, 2001)), and Radović’s reference to the design of Hadrian’s villa and the way in which the columns were replicated to link Sremska Mitrovica with its past (Gubić and Leontiadis, 2018). On the other hand, to connect two squares in the urban core with the axial street leading to the park, Radović chose to first cut the street using a circular antique structure as a kind of urban cultural gesture, inspired by Italian principles of public open urban space design and the notion of a religious landmark as a reference point of orientation. Here, Radović took on a more contemporary and slightly abstract vision of structural connectivity for his arrangement, further highlighted through his handwritten intentions (Figure 2) in which he noted the Emperor Hadrian’s Latin axiom “varius, multiplex, et multiformis”, translated as “diverse, manifold, and multiform” (Karivieri, 2019, p. 284), adjectives that strongly describe the principles of his Sremska Mitrovica design.

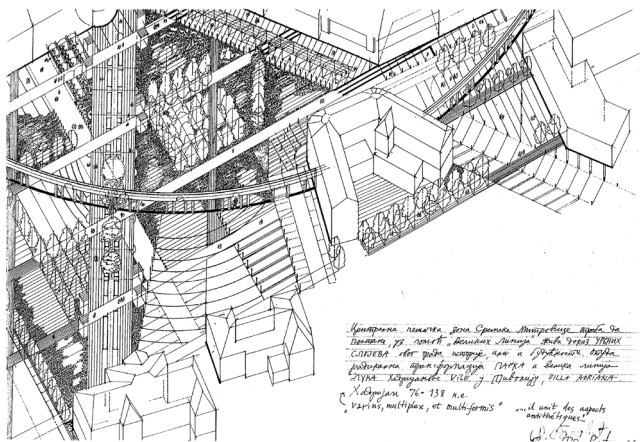


Figure 2. Design proposal by Ranko Radović for the central square of Sremska Mitrovica in Vojvodina, Serbia, 1997 (Source: Radović’s family archives, courtesy Mirjana Popović Radović)

It is interesting to explore the similarities between Figure 2 and Radović’s urban design research for the Herttoniemi area from 1992/1993 (Figure 3), carried out earlier in his career, in which he explored the possibility of the bow and dense use of urban land, in a non-symmetrical arrangement. In his relevant texts, he enigmatically wrote about the idea of “forces making towns”, creating a “great influence on the built urban spaces of use and life” (Radović, 1996, p. 43).

The design proposal for Sremska Mitrovica (Figure 2) further suggested several sharp geometric transversal links with regard to the entire vegetation, transforming the park into a dynamic pedestrian ensemble, in which tree-lines

were a key urban and design motif of this proposal. For Radović, implementing greenery in cities was more than an additional design motif: it was a sign of a greater urban culture (Radović, 2004b). This claim was further supported when he wrote that one of the most successful ‘new cities’ in Europe was Finland’s Tapiola, which was planned, designed, and built from 1951 until the 1970s as a well-developed outcome of Ebenezer Howard’s ‘garden city’ model (Radović, 2005a). Consequently, Radović’s implementation of green elements in urban arrangements became a thoughtful part of his overall design compositions and geometries, as he sought to improve not only on-situ urban arrangements but the wider urban landscape configuration as well. As a result, even though his geometrical arrangements seemed to be inspired by the traditional Roman construction gestures of colonnades and arcades, the additional implementation of green objects became a vital part in the overall urban composition.

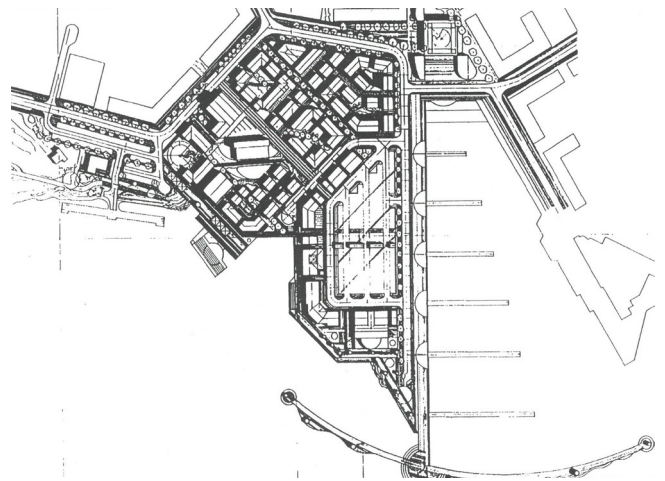


Figure 3. Design plan proposal by Ranko Radović for the Herttoniemi area in Helsinki, 1992/1993 (Source: Ranko Radović 1996, p. 42)

Along similar lines, the study carried out for the city of Apatin (Figure 4) began to decipher further parameters that influenced Radović’s design solutions, since in this project he demonstrated a straightforward design with geometric principles that seemed to follow up on the 1990s movement based on tectonics and geometry. Consequently, the design gestures reach further back in their values, abiding by the phenomenological approach of the 1960s and 1970s in which certain solutions found relevance to a deeper semiological purpose in pursuit of “creating a cognitive apparatus of progressive intentions” (Leontiadis, 2015a, p. 922) while defining a genuine identification of a certain place. To break down this analysis further, the tectonics and geometry of the composition are especially evident in Figure 4 below, with its three-dimensionality of pure shapes and forms, creating access routes in several directions: a four-line three-way alley beginning in the main street, initiating the motif of a gate, and a long street shaft supported by a one-line three-way alley, starting at the health center in the middle of the street profile. In the study, certain directions in the city center are additionally supported by single lines of trees and a linear geometric paving pattern, street lighting,

billboards, masts, and other relevant urban furniture. Similar to the two new proposed buildings, the museums of beer and boats have a circular base, a shape that is repeated on the center's paving through patterns that have linear lines cut through them. These geometric patterns, which become transformed from three-dimensional built shapes to the patterns of the ground, almost bring to mind Stan Allen's contemplations of 1997, causing "an intuition of a shift from object to field," and "non-linear dynamics [...] of evolutionary change" (Allen, 1997, p. 24). In his proposal, Radović visually concretized Allen's suggestion to examine the "implications of field conditions", while allowing buildings to "reflect the complex and dynamic behaviors of architecture's users and speculate on new methodologies to model programme and space" (Allen, 1997, p. 24). Nevertheless, Radović's geometric structuring is not so obvious, which is why it is radical and implied, basing its organization on what was already there historically, at the same time taking new compositions a step further to integrate everything into the wider urban fabric. For this reason, buildings that are secondary to the main components are discrete and become part of the existing syntax: they have only one or two floors, oriented to the street, while the ground floors are open to the public. However, the main buildings proposed in the city center are higher than the existing architecture, suggesting a geometric hierarchy. Similar to Cecil Balmond's tectonic and geometric contemplations of 1998, the "new structure animates geometry: It reawakens an original inspiration of form, enquiring of space itself as to its nature and interpretation" (Balmond, 1998, p. 83).

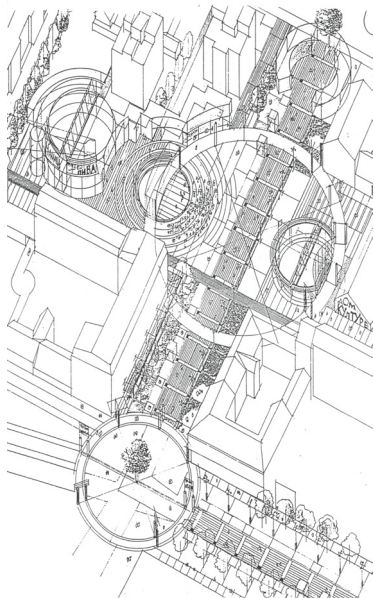


Figure 4. Design proposal by Ranko Radović for the central square of Apatin in Vojvodina, Serbia, 2000
(Source: Ranko Radović, 2000a, p. 20)

Much of this three-dimensionality of design found in the Apatin proposal is also evident in Radović's earlier proposal for the area of Vuosaari (a neighborhood in the city of Helsinki), demonstrating the strong influence of those earlier years in the development of his evolving conceptual

contemplations (Figure 5). Comparing the two figures (4 and 5), it is interesting to observe the added complexity and more synthetic characteristics of the Apatin proposal (Figure 4), deriving from a stricter and more straightforward configuration of the Finnish example (Figure 5).

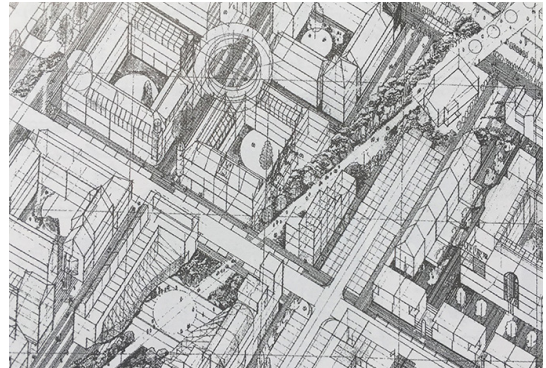


Figure 5. Design proposal by Ranko Radović for the Vuosaari area of Helsinki, 1995
(Source: Ranko Radović, 2005b, p. 282)

Further elaborating on his earlier Finnish approach to the Vuosaari neighborhood, it is interesting to study the gestures of colonnades and arcades in his research design for the Pauling 'Urban Factory' (Figures 6 and 7), in an effort to add significant elements to the existing factory's facades to integrate it into the surrounding urban environment. This is part of a wider plan to which Figure 5 also belongs, in an effort by Pauling Company to renew the area and its surrounding land. This design proposal implements the open vertical elements of the colonnades in strategic ways that both open up the composition to the surrounding area's main axis of urban circulation (Figure 6) and promote the pedestrian use of the adjacent street (Figure 7). As a result, the colonnades multiply the potential of urban activities and interactions, similar to the intentions of the colonnades and arcades seen in the design of the city of Apatin (Figure 4). However, the geometric order in which this is accomplished is different, whereby a specific ambience is contemplated by the use of an amphitheater form (semi-circular by nature), designed for outdoor activities such as recitals, lectures, poetry nights, etc. In any case, the geometry of the arc is apparent even in the more linear arrangement of Pauling 'Urban Factory' seen below, acting as a suggestion for opening up to the surrounding urban fabric.

The geometry of urban forms in Radović's designs is often translated into the shape and configuration of the circulation and traffic – a gesture that was widely used in European proposals nearly two decades later. For example, in his proposal for the city of Kula, implemented during Yugoslavia's politically turbulent times, Radović suggested an urban planning approach of street circulation in which he closed traffic in Kula's Lenin Street, creating vital urban pedestrian walks. It is interesting to observe that this type of configuration is very similar to what was recommended later in the Europe 2020 strategy on sustainable urban mobility plans and more "targeted action on urban road safety" (European Commission, 2013, p. 1-6), emphasizing his early

European influence in paradigmatic urban configurations. Meanwhile, Radović discussed the “sustainable, smart, and inclusive growth” of cities, later suggested by Caprodossi and Santarelli as “slow paths and urban networks” (Caprodossi and Santarelli, 2012, p. 103) that add to the overall quality of the urban space, “emphasizing the prevalence of circular processes instead of linear ones” (Sargolini, 2012, p. 173). Furthermore, Radović's concern with circulation and traffic also translated to bicycle paths, which he considered an important factor of urban culture missing from Serbian cities and towns that were newly planned from the '50s and onwards, compared to Finland's 840 kilometers of bicycle and pedestrian paths serving Helsinki's 500,000 inhabitants (Radović, 2003). This concern of his is evident, for example, in the design of Apatin's radial expansion of pedestrian routes (Figure 4), causing the area of the square to be visually divided into several parts/areas, with each acquiring a unique character. Therefore, in addition to the physical structure, the space further gains interest due to its newly defined and specific contents, and function.

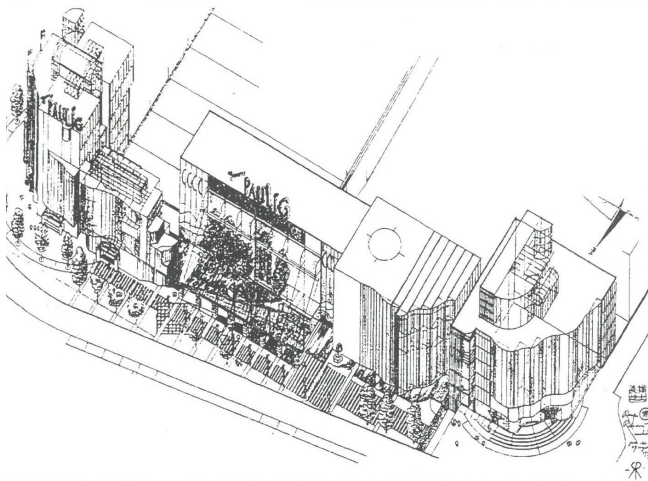


Figure 6. Research design proposal by Ranko Radović for Pauling 'Urban Factory' in Vuosaari in Helsinki, Finland, 1995. The image expresses the west side that is open to the area's main axis
(Source: Ranko Radović 1996, p. 52)

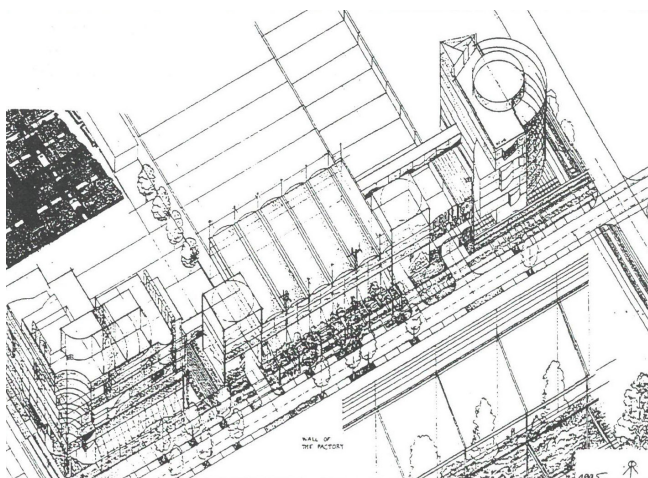


Figure 7. This image expresses the east axis, promoting the pedestrian use of the street.
(Source: Ranko Radović 1996, p. 52)

THE IDEOLOGY OF URBAN SPACE; PRAGMATISM AND IDEALISM

Radović's ideology of urban space is readily expressed through his writings and lectures, demonstrating a holistic understanding of the environment for which he spoke, through what he calls '*sensitive urban planning*'. Highlighted in his volume on the Finnish experience, which set his foundation for later planning in Serbian cities, he expressed his concern for “taking care of all dimensions and interests in urban matters, trying to combine pragmatic realities and high ideals, and developing the pluralistic, complex and integrated thinking of the urban functions, as of the urban spaces” (Radović, 1996, p. 33). This '*sensitive planning*' approach is mentioned in more of his writings, elaborating on a process of exploring “the simplicities and weaknesses of post-war architecture and urban planning as a lesson” (Radović, 1998, p. 39).

Later, in 2004, he further elaborated on '*thematic planning*', breaking down its main characteristics in “the interdisciplinarity, complexity and integrated social / political / cultural / economic[...] / spatial and construction issues” (Radović 2004a, p. 1). It is further interesting to speculate on the way in which he proposes a pragmatic analysis of such an idealization, which he described as “an integrative approach” involving “layered analysis” and “sensitive relations with many different urban dimensions and aspects” (Radović, 2004a, p. 1).

During Radović's involvement with a series of workshops and seminars that took place in the city of Zrenjanin before the relevant urban design competition, he was able to elaborate on his ideologies that were highlighted by the main topics of the events, concerning how the city of Zrenjanin had been a cultural and economic center of the region for 600 years, but at that time faced certain urban problems and loss of its recognizable spatial identities, along with its '*genius loci*' (i.e. *the spirit of a place*) (Gubić and Leontiadis, 2018). Therefore, even though the competition took place a few decades after the surge of the phenomenological uprising in architectural and urban planning in the 1960s and 1970s, this presented an opportunity to use whatever knowledge happened from then and until the early 21st century, and tie it back to the influential essence of finding and elaborating on the place's true identity.

On the idea of good design for urban space, Radović emphasized the presence of well-identifiable urban forms that are readable, safe-moving, public and semi-public, while also following the Italian guidelines of Camillo Sitte found in *City Planning according to Artistic Principles* (Sitte, 1945). Strongly influenced by these writings, Radović sought to consider the spaces in between, together with the total harmony of the environment – this approach indeed followed many of the semiological theories that support the hidden relationships between a building and the surrounding site, as well as the public spaces around those buildings (Radović, 1996). In fact, when initiating studies such as those for Apatin and other cities in Vojvodina, Radović hoped that his conceptual experimentations and definitions could be used by the local government as a basis for further planning in various urban centers, establishing a framework for further

urban development, while also setting the ideological framework of the city's organization.

In his design for the city of Apatin (Figure 4), we see his intention to create a central urban area with "more radical supplements to become a real magnet" (Radović, 2000, p. ii), in pursuit of referencing an original inspiration and ensuring an evolutionary interpretation. His intentions, as he pointed out, were not to remain bound to the already occupied/bordered space but become synchronized, both with the existing context and with the advantages of the potential new part of the center. This envisioning was organized in three directions: 1) the program and quality of content; 2) the spatial coordination and connections, and; 3) the details and arrangement of the ambience according to the highest standards of contemporary urbanism. These clarified intentions began to mature earlier on, from his Finnish explorations, as seen through the urban design research for the Herttoniemi area (Figure 3), in which he discussed a means of "hierarchical urban structure" of urban greens, acquiring the additional touch of a higher standard, as mentioned earlier in this paper. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of understanding the concept of a "city within a city", in which new areas are independent, homogenous and self-sufficient (Radović, 1996, p. 45) – referring and relating to his later mention of spatial coordination and connections.

Looking again at Balmond's *New Structure and the Informal*, which is highly relevant here, we read concurrent thoughts on the theoretical architectural and urban outlook, combining the tectonic with deciphering 'the spirit of a place', in which the architect extracts "hidden energies to a building", improvising gestures through non-apparent connections, and putting together equilibriums in ad hoc instances; Balmond describes these as informal acts of release that set architecture free from fixed notions of an urban grid that otherwise acts as a cage, leading to more diverse urban topographies (Balmond, 1998, p. 83). Radović found examples of such ideals early on in the Finnish city of Tapiola; "one of the most important achievements in post-war urban planning and development – and not only in Finland," with its "typical combination of urban-rural-natural forms to produce a particular townscape," or "mental space" (Radović, 1996, p. 23). Therefore, it is not strange to see the highlighted importance of green elements, not only in his later town designs in the province of Vojvodina, but also in his more mature written works.

THE TRADITIONALITY OF URBAN SPACE; HISTORICISM AND CULTURE

Radović's concern for traditionality and its preservation within the urban context are evident in a number of his writings and his participation in relevant congresses, such as the 10th *International Federation for Housing and Planning* [IFHP] Urban Planning / Design Summer School with the theme "To Regenerate Urban Heritage". Concerned with the ongoing topic of globalization and the endangerment of past architectural and urban achievements, Radović could strongly empathize with this event's incentive, recognizing the "need [for] a change of paradigm in evaluating the characteristics of urban and semi-urban communities as testimonies of their own time and society – regarding urban and cultural

heritage as a resource and projecting these values into the future" (Helsinki University of Technology, 2004, p. 1). This same event, showed an even earlier devotion to the importance of historicism and culture in the design of cities, for example in the 7th IFHP Summer School, the objective of which was intervention on existing townscapes while "keeping in mind their traditional value and relevance in the modern urban life" (Helsinki University of Technology, 2001, p. 1). These events seemed to have been of strong interest to both Radović and those who participated, resulting in his establishment and leadership of IFHP Urban Planning / Design Summer Schools in Finland for 10 consecutive years, the last one being in 2004.

The circular antique structure that cuts the urban blocks of the city of Sremska Mitrovica (Figure 2) seems like an attempt to narrate the layers of the city, together with an effort to reinterpret and transform certain urban motifs through their symbolic signs of gathering, continuity, pluralism, and social integration. These expressive layers are a pragmatic expression of the previously mentioned ideological approach of a "layered analysis" (Radović, 2004a, p. 1), which finds application in the narration of history. Here, Radović was trying to link the present condition with tradition in a unique way, through sharp walking pathways, large curves, and the implementation of paving, urban furniture, lighting, and other purposeful elements that suggest a narration within the street.

Traditionality comes not only in the sense of honoring a city's past but also in the way in which it expresses its influences and inspirations. For example, this type of traditionality is evident in the tree-configurations in the design for Sremska Mitrovica, which resemble Roman colonnades and arcades – an idea that is also elaborated upon in the geometrical explorations of Radović's urban shapes.

Traditionality is important when it comes to redesigning cities, such as in the case of the city of Kula in 1999. Here, Radović supported a traditional approach of simplification, similar to the developing possibilities for green urban centers following a deep economic crisis, involving the "simplification of town planning processes [...] [and] the revision of regional spatial plans" (Zifou, 2015, p. 159). This approach gave importance to the original intentions for the city, combined with a more straightforward language that sought to immediately target the city's fundamental needs with a parallel strategic calculation of urban planning gestures that might also be needed in both the near and distant future. This is where traditionality must be considered closely with contemporaneity and a nation's current state, which in any case, is a result of a chain of events that still relate to gestures and decisions of the past – whether planning politically, urbanically or both. This idea further relates to Eckardt and Sanchez's work *City of Crisis* (2015), in which wider urban issues are justified as a result of a nation's overall state, including poorly managed or lack of appropriate cultural diversity, and miscalculated urban planning gestures.

During the period in which Radović produced his design proposals for public space interventions and urban development within historically significant public spaces, making contemporary interventions was both common and

challenging, partially highlighted by Ananiadou-Tzimopoulou and Yerolympos' 2000 European study on certain historical European squares and the pursuit of their contemporary interventions. Such works highlight challenges similar to those faced in connection with Radović's research designs for Finland and Serbia, dealing with matters of character, scale, physical space, and ecological factors (Leontiadis, 2015b), in a parallel effort to avoid "imitation, false naturalism, the insertion of falsely decorative elements, statues, or false works of art, urban equipment, or illumination that trivializes the space, elements that are inappropriate for the site and the particularities of the project" (Ananiadou-Tzimopoulou and Yerolympos, 2000, p. 113-114).

All of the elements described above highlight Radović's theoretical conviction that relationships between buildings should be modest and simple, retaining both a socially visual and urban energy (Radović, 1996). Another important aspect of his concern was the quality of texture of the urban fabric, which he suggested to be "open, consistent, diverse and tolerant to changes and spontaneous, unplanned events and activities" (Radović, 1996, p. 103). These descriptions not only touch upon the phenomenological influence noted earlier, which puts weight on the important factor of human behavior and perception within designed spaces, but they also support Lewis Mumford's (1938) earlier ideas on the flexibility of space, aiming to meet human needs through variety.

THE FUTURISM OF URBAN SPACE; INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

To further examine the thought processes behind Radović's design and theoretical contemplations, it is fair to argue that all of his intentions were expressive dimensions of urban culture, which were supposed to simultaneously form creative environments for future innovation and technology. Even though Radović was an advocate of traditionality with a deeper sense of thematic and ideological planning, his rulings did not seem to oppose possibilities for the futurism of urban space. In fact, he spoke of the creation of an analogy of the urban environment with machinery and industrial products, only possible at the level of technology. This, he claimed, only expanded to the very spirit of our cities and districts towards the creation of their form, their function, and their landscape (Radović, 1998).

At a roundtable organized in Zrenjanin in 2001, Ranko Radović stressed how the development of Zrenjanin's city center was an opportunity for rethinking urbanism while creating productive planning opportunities that within the next 5 or 15 years could radically change the state of the city. He mentioned that such changes should not be by means of 'revolutionary gestures' or be affected by prejudice towards 'inherited' urban elements or by certain titles of governmental influence (Gubić and Leontiadis, 2018). This goes along with the post-modern thinking that was present at that time, seeking to suggest more active design alternatives that would go steps beyond the idealized images of the urban collective past (Mallgrave and Contandriopoulos, 2008), similarly to the 1999 conceptual framework made known three years earlier by Ben Van Berkel and Caroline Bos through their UN Studio, renouncing architects and planners as "the fashion designer[s] of the future [...] speculating,

anticipating coming events and holding up a mirror to the word" (Van Berkel and Bos, 1999, p. 27-28). Radović seems also to have been drawn into this contextualization of a polemic state of 'deep planning' that relates to an attempt to create social reinterpretations in the city.

Later, Radović published the text 'Zrenjanin's Center – Cross-checking Urbanism Today', advising on ways to push the city towards reaching its desired state. He wrote:

"The perfect city design, from big avenues to urban details and urban furniture, can exist only at the place and in a time when the spirit of the city and the spirit of the place are known, when urban space means something and has a power to reflect its citizens' needs, goals, and ideals" (Radović, 2001, p. 53).

What takes place in these writings is what was mentioned earlier: a contemporary approach of offering semiotic significance to elements while knowing and understanding their historical importance. On these thoughts, remembering also Alan Colquhoun's *Historicism and the Limits of Semiology* of 1972, we discern Radović's parallel stress on understanding both the historical context, and any changes that are related to their accompanying ideologies. Furthermore, Radović's characterization of urbanism as an "art", as stated earlier, is very similar to Colquhoun's descriptions of urban systems as aesthetic systems "grouped under the fine arts and the applied arts" (Colquhoun, 1985, p. 130-131) – all of which retain certain properties of a 'critical tool'. Ultimately, the deciphering of the city through its details should reflect a multivalent understanding of its citizens, therefore, bringing together the tectonic and the structural, with the 'spirit' of the place.

CONCLUSIONS

Radović's approach to planning and designing public spaces seems to demonstrate a sequence of evolution and development from his Finnish years to his sequential research designs within the Serbian context. During both of these periods, Radović demonstrated a special interest in specific categories of investigation concerning the geometry of the urban space, its ideological characteristics, the integration of traditionality with regards to the relevant cultural context, and the future possibilities for the spatial transformation of the places he studied and designed. The selection of these categories as part of this research was influenced by Radović's theoretical preference, as demonstrated in his written texts, his lectures, and his conference discussions. However, these preferences of thematic investigation are also evident through his drawings, in which he seemed to illustrate and bring out elements that called the observer to decipher their semiotic meaning. These often wire-frame drawings sought to expose the fundamental urban geometry of the place, ensure an interpretation of an evolving urban hierarchy, bring out the historical and cultural attributes of the greater composition, and present a futuristic vision of expressive innovation and potential technological integrations.

Therefore, Radović's analysis not only sought to express and reflect the culture of the Finnish and Serbian cities which formed his context, but also to create possibilities for future interventions that would find values on which to stand, creating a semiological basis for construction. It seems that

Radović took such interventions of any new architecture into the existing urban and natural environment very thoughtfully, using a combination of synthetic innovations in a flexible and sensitive manner. This sensitivity was his primary concern, aiming to suggest subtle interventions that add to the semiology of a place rather than to the grandeur and radicality of its design – a revitalized approach, as stated by Radović, which builds onto a city's lost strength during times of what he called 'tired urbanism' (Radović, 1998).

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