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LIVING SPACES AT MULTI-FAMILY APARTMENTS IN REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

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Abstract. Based on the research that was performed at the multi-family apartments generally built in Republic of Kosovo, it was observed that these types of buildings underwent several transformations that can be classified in two groups. The manner of organization of living space at multi-family apartments differs in the buildings constructed before 1999 and those constructed since that year up to present time. Due to the various changes, be it political, the manner of construction of the buildings after 1999 and other issues of this nature, the living spaces started to shrink, in some cases to such a degree that they are not suitable to meet the needs of the users. All this doesn't end here, the issue is more sensitive when one deals with social housing buildings, the latter used by the inhabitants that cannot afford to solve by themselves the housing issue based on the monthly incomes that they have. The researcher endeavored to offer a description regarding social housing and to perform an analysis in functional and surface area aspect of the multi-family apartments in order to understand if the living space transformation phenomenon is prevalent also at the social housing.

Keywords; living spaces, multi-family apartments, social housing, Republic of Kosovo

Introduction

Generally speaking, Kosovo society faces great challenges regarding the issue of the housing. On the other hand the social housing problem in Kosovo remains an issue which is rather sensitive and which was not adequately treated for many years in this country. As a result of ever changing Law on Social Housing and other financial aspects, the issue is increasingly becoming more challenging. The users of Social Housing in Republic of Kosovo are in continuous struggle in attempt to obtain proper treatment and support by the responsible institutions. The latest research indicates that Social Housing which was built after 1999 does not fulfill the needs of the users in terms of living spaces. Often there were dilemmas regarding the Social Housing to have been distributed in unfair way to the families in need, as a result of the lack of proper coordination between the Municipalities or Ministries.

In order to evaluate the conditions of Social Housing and the legal framework that has to do with Social Housing in Kosovo, the Swedish agency for Peace, Security and Development – Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) has financed a pilot project in Kosovo. FBA cooperated with UNDP in Kosovo, the latter cooperated closely with the OSCE mission in Kosovo in order to implement the project “Measurement of rule of law in public administration in the Municipalities of Kosovo” through the implementing partner “Movement FOL” [1].

The issue of social housing differs depending on the state or region. The Concept Document on Social Housing stresses that the countries in the region such are: Albania, Slovenia, Montenegro,

Serbia and some cantons of Bosnia approached the issue of social housing through the laws on Social Housing, Slovenia and Macedonia through the law on housing, Croatia through the law on social care, whereas other countries through special Law on social housing [2]. In some countries of Europe, such as Austria, social housing is supported by a public – private – partnership as well as by non for profit agencies.

Kosovo is considered to be one of the least developed countries of Europe where the unemployment is one of the main factors of poverty, it is indicated that 6.9 % of the population are on social assistance (welfare programs). A higher degree of poverty is observed in families with more than seven members, which indicates a poverty rate 7 % higher than at the families with less than four members (around 4%), this is more prevalent in the families with single moms more than in families where the father is the head of the family [3]. A considerable number of citizens have not solved the problem of housing, therefore such an issue should be treated with more seriousness, and one should take urgent measures to improve the crisis in the country.

Objectives

The goal of this research is the analysis of the multi-family apartments which are constructed in the Republic of Kosovo. The buildings are analyzed by it in functional aspect, as well as in terms of surface area (m²) and lastly they are compared to other multi-family apartments, in order to understand if the social housing projects have underwent transformations with the passing of time, as it was the case with other general multi-family apartments.

Multi-family apartments in Republic of Kosovo;

The construction of multi-family apartments in Kosovo can be categorized into two groups, those constructed before 1999 and those after 1999. The projects of the buildings constructed before 1999 are implemented through complying with the standards of Yugoslavia on planning – JUS, whereas the period after 1999 is characterized by a transitional period wherein the projects are implemented without complying with a specific project design criterion. After this period of time in Republic of Kosovo there was not a technical regulation that architects and construction companies were obliged to respect during the implementation of the projects. The lack of law and technical regulations was accompanied by a chaos in the sphere of architecture that left a lasting consequence in the country.

Before 1999 all the multi-family apartments including the social housing ones, were constructed by the public sector, whereas after 1999 they started to get constructed by the private sector.

Multi-family apartments that were constructed before 1999 are characterized by clear definition of calm area from the noisy one, and they used to have a larger usable surface compared to those built after year 1999 [4], see *Figure 1*.

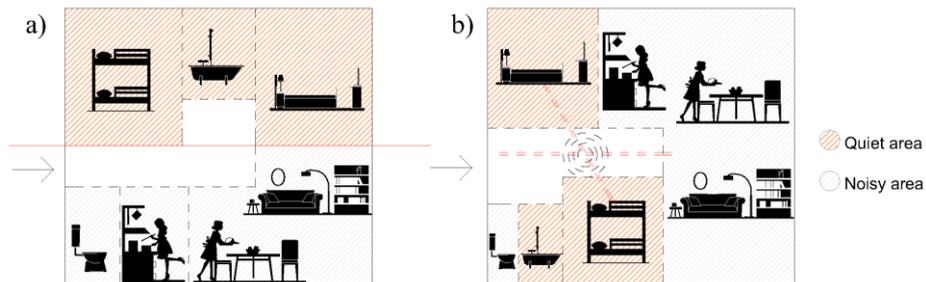


Figure 1 Development of the concept of multi-family apartments a) before and b) after 1999

Latest research that was conducted regarding multi-family apartments indicate reduction of living space at the one, two and three room apartments built before and after 1999, , *Figure 2*.

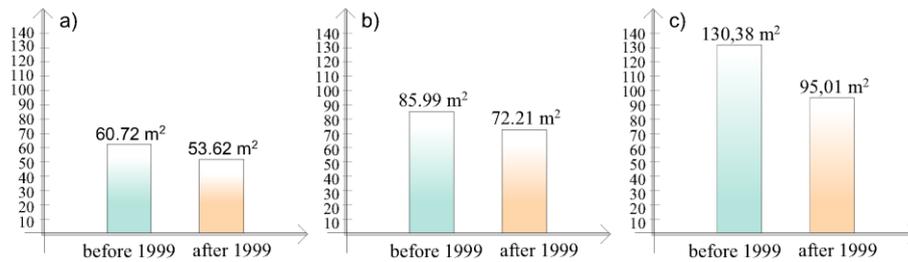


Figure 2 The diagrams of the floor area; a)one-room; b)two-rooms and c)three-rooms

The technical regulation entered into force in 2016 for the first time after 1999, the after-war period.

Research methodology

Research methodology for this paper is presented in *Figure 3*.

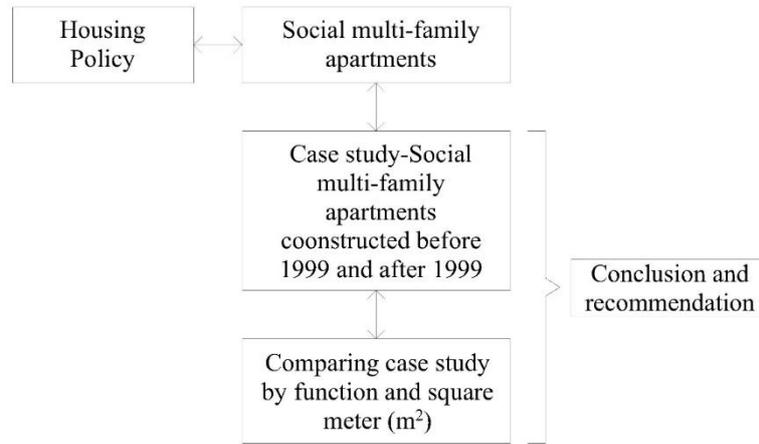


Figure 3 Research model

In *Figure 4* one presented the plans of two social housing buildings which were constructed in different time periods (before and after 1999). The aim was to analyze these buildings in functional, constructive and in terms of surface area aspect (m²), in order to see if the social buildings have undergone transformations during their construction in various time periods as it was the case with other multi-family apartments.

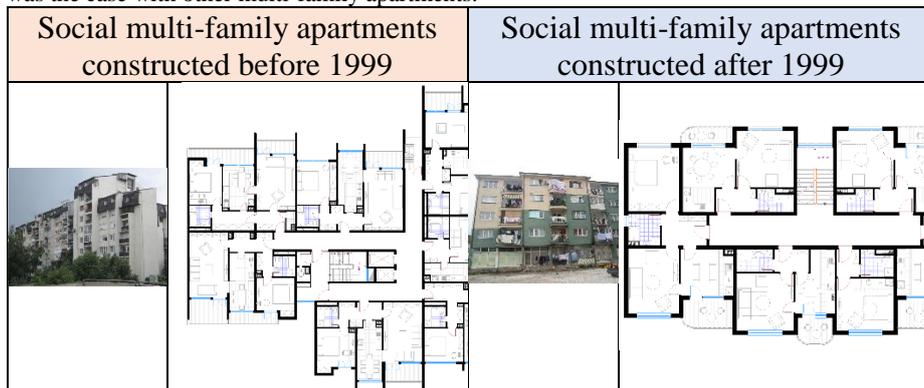


Figure 4 Multi-family apartments constructed before 1999 and after 1999

In multi-family social housing constructed before 1999 the quiet area was clearly defined from the noisy one and the kitchen was separated from the living room, which differs from those constructed after 1999 where we cannot find a clear definition of quiet and noisy areas, whereas the kitchen in some cases was divided from the living room, and in some cases it was integrated within it. Concerning the construction system, the majority of the social buildings constructed before 1999 were made of the pre-fabricated elements with a combination between massive and skeletal system, whereas those after 1999 were all characterized by skeletal building system. In *Figure 5*, one presented the plans of the one and two room apartments.



Figure 5 Typologies of housing units

Concerning the usable area, in the cases that were taken as key study samples, one cannot observe a considerable reduction of the surface, if you compare the social housing units constructed before and after 1999. However, the biggest problem lies on the fact that social housing units are occupied by families with a large number of family members, which is a feature of the families with low incomes in Republic of Kosovo, which renders these units as not fulfilling the needs of the users.

Result and discussion

Multi-family apartments in the Republic of Kosovo before 1999 were constructed by public sector, whereas after 1999 such buildings started to get constructed by the private sector. Living space got reduced considerably which came as a result of economic conditions which Kosovo finds itself in. For the inhabitants it is easier to obtain a smaller housing unit, therefore construction of such buildings represents a lucrative proposition for construction companies which were involved in sales. As a result of this, the mentioned buildings are characterized with changes in functional aspect and regarding surface area.

Public sector remains synonymous to the social housing. Social multi-family apartments were constructed and continue to get constructed by public sector in Republic of Kosovo. The reduction of the usable surfaces is not present in these types of buildings. Social housing buildings did not undergo transformations in terms of square meters, however the quiet area is not clearly defined from the noisy area as it once was.

Conclusions and recommendations

Generally speaking, Kosovo faces great challenges in the area of housing and in particular with the social housing. The latter does not fulfill the needs of the users in terms of living space, taking into account that the average number of family members in Republic of Kosovo is five up to six family members. There is no database regarding the present state of the housing and there is a need for housing in the municipalities. It is very important to establish new policies in the area of housing in Republic of Kosovo. The offering of sustainable and affordable housing for all the categories of society is ever indispensable. The establishment of a cooperation between Ministries, Municipalities, public-private sector and various donors is more than needed.

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