

Chapter 4

De-modernization of the Architectural and Engineering Profession in Serbian Society at the End of the Twentieth Century



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Abstract The Serbian architectural profession was established over a period of two hundred years, during which it was internationally praised for architectural pieces of extraordinary quality. Serbia's architectural education became an internationally recognized brand in the twentieth century. Members of the Yugoslav architectural society participated in public life and were equally respected and admired in a way similar to journalists, writers, actors, movie directors, and painters. The end of the century brought conflicts and economic crisis in the Balkan region. It was a period of interrupted post-socialist transition in which architecture, among other professions, was struggling for existence and losing its authority, social influence, and the solid foundations it was built on. In this chapter, we analyze the architectural profession at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, taking into account its historic development patterns in order to understand its values, capacity, and accomplishments, and to envision its future. We will analyze various aspects, and context, of the profession and demonstrate both its positive and negative trends over time. The first aspect addresses the nature of the profession, its concepts, boundaries, organization, and relationships between its various specializations as well as relations with other complementary professions. We will try to recognize and evaluate its historical and contemporary identity. The second aspect addresses the relationships between the profession and society, government, civic groups, and public and educational institutions in which professionalism presents a governmental or societal goal. Finally, we will look at whether there is still trust in the profession, in and outside Serbian society.

Keywords Architectural profession · Professionalism · Post-professionalism in engineering · De-modernization · Transition · Globalization

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4.1 Introduction

The Republic of Serbia and the whole Balkan region had experienced profound changes by the end of the twentieth century. The early 1990s saw the collapse of what was Yugoslavia, the final form of the complex state founded in 1918, unifying different cultural and economic spaces, nations, religions, traditions, and different statehoods (sovereignties). Nevertheless, Serbia was especially interesting because of the overlapping interests that competed for decades in its cultural space. Besides the significant overall history of the region, it was also burdened with national conflict during the 1990s, imposed by and transferred from the military realm to the wider social space including its economic, cultural, philosophical, aesthetic, and religious aspects. We have to consider this specific context when analyzing the architectural profession, since it reflects all the complexity and longstanding conflict remaining in this region. In that sense, we have to broaden the research all the way back to the beginning of the nineteenth century and look not only into the architectural but also into the complementary professions of engineering and urban planning that share the same context.

Our understanding of the extraordinary results of Serbian architects that became a part of the national and international architectural heritage during the twentieth century requires significant and wide-ranging research. Analyses of the current architectural profession in Serbia require an understanding of the processes of the nineteenth and twentieth century, influenced by Anglo-Saxon, German, and Russian cultural circles. Architectural education played a special role in creating the reputation of the Serbian architectural profession. It influenced not only the developments in Serbia and Yugoslavia, but also in the Non-Aligned Movement countries of Africa and the Middle East, as their citizens were studying at Belgrade University and other universities in Serbia in the second half of the twentieth century.

We will analyze the generative process instead of focusing only on the state-of-the-art architectural profession in Serbia in order to better understand and offer an answer to the research question: is the current situation just one phase in the long-lasting destruction of the professional system that existed until the end of the twentieth century or an indicator of a new phase known in contemporary literature as *post-professionalism* (Burns 2007)? Understanding this process will help define the concept of the profession, which not only changed over time but also shaped this unique discipline in Serbia.

We will also broaden the research to complementary fields, i.e., the professions that are jointly acting in modern architectural practice, which should help in understanding and defining the range of the profession. In order to recognize its positive and negative aspects we will look into the following important elements: the concepts, the boundaries and organization of the profession, identity, relations between the profession and society, inter-professional communication, educational institutions, general confidence in the profession in and outside national borders, as well as the import and localization of ideas.

4.2 The Overview

4.2.1 Influences

The status of the architectural profession in Serbia cannot be understood by simply evaluating the results from the turn of the twentieth century, due to its geo-strategic position and related historical development. Therefore, we will look into major events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the flow of ideas and influences from European politics to Serbian social and spiritual development, the economy of the region, social structure, culture, and philosophy among other factors. We recognize three significant geographic and cultural areas of influence that considerably affected Serbian architecture. These are:

- Austria, Germany, and Switzerland.
- Great Britain, the United States, and Japan.
- Russia.

These cultural sources have formed a fruitful base for the development and advancement of the architectural profession in Serbia, differently influencing parts of society, creating patterns and interrelations between architects and different schools of architecture over time. Regardless of the level of influence, popularity, or recognition, all three groups constantly participated in the architectural market independent of the administrative organization, political attitudes, or the publicly demonstrated commitments of the state. In the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the French and Russian influence was dominant in education and the architectural profession in general. It was empowered by the presence of Russian architects working in Serbia and by Serbian architects educated in Paris. However, the Anglo-Saxon architectural schools, culture, and aesthetics strongly influenced Serbian architecture in the second half, and particularly at the end, of the twentieth century.

4.2.2 *The Four Periods of Serbian Architecture*

The Serbian legal framework in architectural education and professional work was consolidated at the end of the twentieth century, but different ideas existed about how to start the reform and what the vision of the profession should be for the years to come. It was a time of political, economic, and social transition and required a new, appropriate legal environment and specific regulations for parts of the profession, and the profession as a whole. While the existing legal framework became weak and insufficient for the demands of the new era, the representatives and followers of the three influential professional groups insisted persistently on their specific legal concepts or the system of legal reforms. As an example, the national government adopted two planning and building laws at the turn of the millennium,

in 1995 and 2003, differing in visions for the architectural profession, resulted from the differences in education of the professionals involved in the legal reforms.¹ Professionals who were educated locally or in Russia anticipated a different future for architects and their professional positions and responsibilities within the state compared to those educated in Anglo-Saxon or German schools and universities. This illustrates the international cultural influence on history, the present, and most likely the future of the national architectural profession.

For the purpose of this research, the development of the architectural profession and education of architects in Serbia can be divided into four periods:

- 1813–1918, the period of the Serbian Kingdom.
- 1918–1945, the period of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.
- 1945–1991, the period of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia.
- 1991–2016, the period of the Republic of Serbia.²

The period of the *Serbian Kingdom (1813–1918)* was a time of renewal and development of educational institutions in Serbia, which started in 1846 with the establishment of the first engineering school (later technical high school) in Belgrade, by the decree of Prince Aleksandar Karađorđević. At the same time, Serbian engineers were educated in Vienna, Munich, and Zurich, thus establishing strong scientific relations between Belgrade and other European educational centers. Likewise, the engineers from Austria, the Czech Republic, and Switzerland were engaged in construction works in Serbia at the time. The imported developed knowledge from the above listed countries served as the foundation for professionalism in architecture and construction works (later civil engineering) in Serbia, which replaced the dominant but outdated construction model inherited from the period of the Ottoman Empire.

A transformation of the value system was also brought to Serbia from Austria and Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the social and economic status of the architects (engineers) changed. Namely, the Serbs educated abroad and foreign professionals who worked in Serbia restricted their professional engagement to the professional work at hand, putting the contemplative or reformative ideas aside or reducing them to a minimum. The boundaries of the profession were strict, with no overlapping between the fields of architecture, construction, and urban planning. An engineer was educated to work on urban plans, architecture design, and to perform or control construction works.³ Through the reforms of the architectural profession in Serbia, the government was imposing other social reforms accordingly, like the reform of tourism facilities implemented mostly through the architectural and urban design projects and technical consulting

¹*The Law on Planning and Organization of Space and Settlements*, RS Official Gazette, No. 44/95 and integral *Planning and Building Law*, RS Official Gazette 47/03.

²The first attempts for separation of the former Yugoslav republics occurred in 1991, producing incidents, political and social insecurity, and finally military intervention that escalated into a civil war in Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia.

³Franc Janke, Slovak architect working in Serbia between 1833 and 1842.

for the new generation of inns (Serbian: “mehana”) and hotels instead of the Ottoman “khans” and “caravanserais.”

The first engineering school in Serbia, with architecture being one among five courses, was established in 1846. The first technical high school and the Faculty of Technical Sciences with the Department for Architecture (1889) became Belgrade University in 1905 (Lazović and Mako 2016). The first professional associations were also established in Belgrade in this period.

During the period of the *Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1945)*, the professors educated in Serbia who advanced their knowledge in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland further developed the educational system established in the nineteenth century. The professional associations organized the first international architectural design competitions in Serbia to demonstrate professional self-esteem, promote cultural values, and the need and the will for professional and cultural exchange. Running away from Russia after the October Revolution, a number of architects found asylum in Serbia and brought with them their own values and knowledge, subsequently having a significant cultural influence on Serbian architecture, urbanism, and the arts in general (Fig. 4.1). They continued working in the style of Late Classicism, leaving behind the buildings and structures that still marked the cultural space of Serbia.⁴ The professional associations were also reorganized in this period.

Another significant international trend, the Modernist movement, emerged in Serbia at that time. Locally educated Serbian architects who had spent some time in France, and especially in the atelier of Le Corbusier, strongly promoted new ideas in architecture, urban design, and planning.⁵ The government supported the extensive construction of public, military, and administrative buildings in the biggest Serbian cities Belgrade and Novi Sad, which were predominantly built in classic styles, while the private housing or commercial buildings were built in the Modernist style.

The University of Belgrade invested in and constructed the Belgrade Technical Faculty with the Department for Architecture in 1931.

In the period of the *Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1991)*, Belgrade was the leader in the region in implementing the post-war industrialization and electrification carried out by the highly educated engineers, as compared to other Eastern European capitals. In addition, the first Conference of Architects and Urban Planners of Yugoslavia gathered a significant number of professionals at the Athens Charter in Dubrovnik in 1950 (Krstić 2014), after the first 5 years of implementation of the Charter in the Federal Civic Republic of Yugoslavia (FNRJ). It was unofficially published in Paris in 1942 and officially in 1958. It is also worth mentioning that the last The Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne CIAM congress took place in Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia in 1956.

Although the mid-twentieth century urban plans for Eastern European capitals like Bucharest, Belgrade, and Sofia were rather similar, Belgrade's modern districts were better supplied with services, their design was of a superior architectural

⁴Nikolaj Petrović Krasnov (1864–1939).

⁵Zloković and Krnić, and from Yugoslavia Ravnikar, Pantović, and Antolić.



Fig. 4.1 General plan of Belgrade, 1923 (architect Jurij Kovaljevski) from the archives of the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade

quality and constructed with higher quality materials (Hirt 2008, pp 785–810). The neighborhoods provided a higher living standard (compared to their socialist counterparts) with plenty of open public space, which was different from the typical monotony of the communist housing projects. Moreover, Yugoslav architects continued to be an integral part of the world’s avant-garde (Hirt 2012, p 58). The quality of urban plans was also an indicator of professional and societal capacity for strategic thinking during the second half of the twentieth century (Gligorijević 2016, p 129).

A significant example of the long lasting and consistent conceptualization/design/construction process was the construction of New Belgrade, the new part of the capital city. The first ideas about the new city across the river Sava were conceived in Romantic style (Fig. 4.2), originating from the time before World War II (Blagojević 2007). Nevertheless, the new city was built years later through a new plan for the capital city made by the new state, the post-war Yugoslavia. It was just the right social setting for the concept of functional urbanism and the ideas of the CIAM established in the Athens Charter in 1933. The capital was built according to a political decision to host thousands of citizens in regular, standardized orthogonal housing blocks. Constructing the new city was a socialist accomplishment and a way for the government to show gratitude and support to the impoverished society. In such a city, citizens would live in their new, standardized apartments (Blagojević 2007). Although the old town of the city of Belgrade was

seen as a whole, New Belgrade represented a consistent implementation of the new, Modernist, governmental urban development project and the demonstration of the technical and professional capacity of the Yugoslav and mostly Serbian architects and construction companies (Figs. 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4).

The growth of the civil engineering field and its general development in the 1980s was still a fruitful environment for the education of architects in Serbia. In this period, the exchange with scholars from all over the world that began in the first half of twentieth century continued with visible results. Civil engineering remained one of the most successful state products regardless of changes in the political and economic systems, administrative organization of the state, or the separation of some of the constituencies. In this period, both the government and the private sector were founding a large number of construction companies and employing architects. The well-known reputation of the Serbian construction companies and their international contracts supported the state economy even in times of serious economic crisis and

Fig. 4.2 The design contest for New Belgrade's urban plan, 1947, architect Nikola Dobrović, Urban Planning Institute of Serbia (from Blagojević 2007, p. 67)



Fig. 4.3 The Conceptual urban design project for New Belgrade, 1948, architect Nikola Dobrović, Urban Planning Institute of Serbia (ibid.)



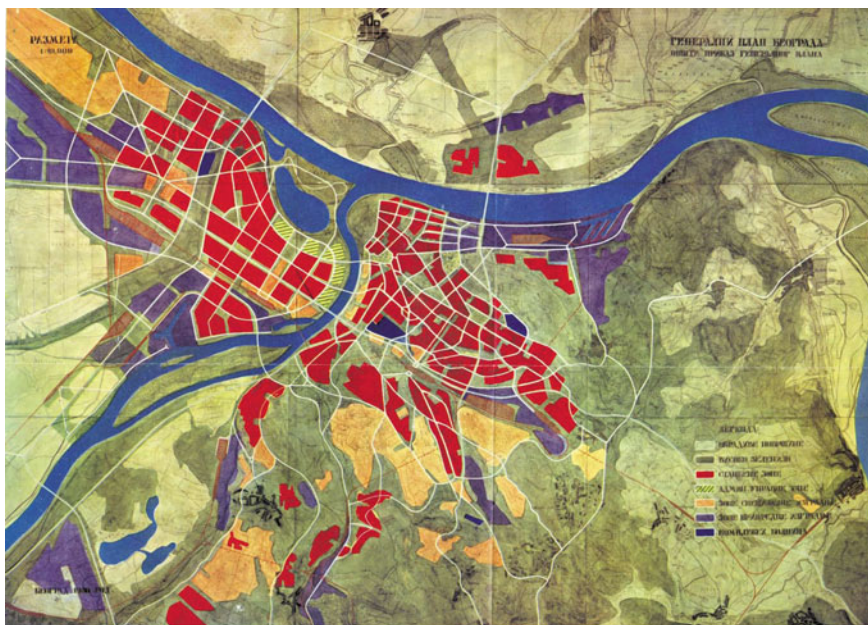


Fig. 4.4 General plan of Belgrade, 1950 (architect Miloš Somborski), from the archives of the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade

international political, economic, and cultural sanctions imposed against Serbia. Modernist architecture became absolutely dominant. Serbian professors of the Faculty of Architecture gained their professional experience in Serbia or through the international engagements of Serbian companies, as well as through specializations during the visiting periods in France, Denmark, Great Britain, and Italy.⁶

Architecture was a matter of public interest at the time. Mihajlo Mitrović, a well-known Belgrade architect, started a column on architecture in the most popular Yugoslav daily newspaper “Politika” over 50 years ago, and has been publishing with the same success and popularity ever since. Several professional monthly magazines or periodicals attracted curious, educated, and ambitious members of the architectural society.⁷

The existing Society of Architects and Engineers transformed into the Serbian Association of Architects, and later into the Serbian Union of Architects and the Association of Yugoslav Architects. Some Serbian film directors, actors, world-renowned painters (Vladimir Veličković), and politicians were educated at the Belgrade Faculty of Architecture. That also contributed to the change in status of the architectural profession in the period between the Kingdom of Serbia and the

⁶Stanko Mandić, architect and Professor at the Belgrade Faculty of Architecture, spent some time studying in Italy.

⁷*Arhitektura i urbanizam*, Belgrade; *Izgradnja*, Belgrade; *Čovjek i prostor*, Zagreb, etc.

Kingdom of Yugoslavia. An architect was no longer only a professional who offered services in construction works and design, but had also become an active participant in the public and social life of Serbia.

On the one hand, the boundaries of the profession expanded when the architects gained different roles in society, but on the other, a significant divide emerged within the profession that reflected on urbanism (urban planning and design), architectural design, interior design, and construction works. The reason for the divide might have been the overall economic development that induced the development of the construction industry, and accordingly, the expansion of construction companies offering a wide range of works and various specializations. The level of knowledge and growing technological development was also a factor in remaining highly ranked in the world market.

During this period, Serbian companies were building different structures and buildings designed by Serbian architects in Kuwait, Iraq, Libya, Zimbabwe, Peru, and Angola among others. For the first time in history, Belgrade University accepted students from Africa and the Middle East, at first using the multilateral cooperation between the Non-Aligned Movement countries, and later accepting all the other interested international students out of this group of countries. At that time Serbia was exporting architectural education to Third World countries.

The main architectural educational institution at the time was the Faculty of Architecture at Belgrade University. During the 1980s, the government allowed the establishment of the Faculty of Architecture in Novi Sad, Niš, and Priština.

The period of the *Republic of Serbia (1991–to present day)* administratively started within the shaken former Yugoslavia boundaries, still under socialism. The complicated transitional period that went from the centrally planned economy to the liberal market economy required complete political, economic, social, and legal reforms, which were initiated by the collapse of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia followed by the civil war on its territory (1991–2000). The period marked economic, social, and moral crisis. What remained of the successful economy and world-renowned construction and design companies was finally sold in several privatization cycles from the mid-1990s to the present day. The biggest and strongest companies were the first to be privatized, so the number of companies that could work on complex construction projects radically decreased. The number of offices where young engineers could get professional practice also decreased. Many young and educated architects and engineers left the country looking for jobs, better living conditions, and professional growth.⁸

With the economic downfall, the banks could no longer finance significant projects, so the construction industry had to adapt technology and capacity to the needs of small private investors. At the same time, small firms without enough specialization could

⁸An estimation from 2000 shows that 230,000 people moved to Serbia because of the war (and a significant number to Belgrade), gaining the status of “displaced persons.” During that period, 106,000 predominantly young and educated Belgrade citizens left the city permanently. Natural and migration-driven increase of population, 1961–2010, Statistical yearbook of Belgrade 2010, City of Belgrade Institute for informatics and statistics.

not build contemporary structures, and a gap arose between design capacities on the one hand and construction capacities on the other. The schools of architecture remained open for students, but the practical knowledge went with the closing down of companies and with talented architects and engineers leaving the country.

It is interesting to look back into the legislative framework for the architectural profession during the last two periods in the former Yugoslavia. The laws regulating urban design were the responsibility of the Sector of Construction Works in 1938, 1995, and 2003; the Sector of Urbanism, Housing and Constructing in 1989; the Sector Constructing, Environment, Mining, and Spatial Planning in 2009; and the Sector of Constructing, Transportation, and Infrastructure since 2014 (Gligorijević 2016, p 111).

4.2.3 *The Synergy of Influences*

The consequences of the factors discussed earlier were:

- Depleted architectural language due to a size of projects and investment.
- Basic constructions dependent on the capacity of construction firms lacking educated staff.
- Simple forms, uncostly, affordable for common households' financial capacity, mainly from savings.
- Irrational, surprising architectural forms in an attempt to construct the maximum capacity of the parcel, commonly ignoring planning regulations and design guidelines.
- Neighborhoods lacking basic technical and social infrastructure and low standards in planning regulations.

Consequently, the architectural profession was engaged in legalizing informal buildings in order to provide technical documentation for the cadastre. These documents are of little importance for planning and architectural design.

Schools of architecture are lacking a faculty with practical experience and specific theoretical knowledge. The ideal architectural expertise should be a combination of both practical skills and theoretical knowledge, a mixture of theory and praxis. With the national educational reforms (2006) shifting to the *Bologna Declaration*, the faculty were less practically experienced albeit theoretically knowledgeable. The transfer of knowledge remained mainly theoretical, even when it came to beneficial international exchanges. Graduation gave architects a chance to enter the professional world of materialization, regulations, and administration. However, since graduated architects could not use and develop their theoretical knowledge in the local market, they usually tried to develop their skills in the wider international professional community. Therefore, it seems that the architectural profession had no capacity to respond to local, lower market-based demands, nor to the demands of general society to solve the practical problems of everyday life.

After a 200-year-long tradition, the profession seemed not only to suffer from a lack of capacity but also experienced a serious decline in its authority and self-esteem.

According to national legislation, certification of architects is divided into two administrative fields: the field of education, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, and the field of planning and construction, which is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation, Constructing Works and Infrastructure. According to the regulations, a condition for a graduate architect to work as a practitioner is to first gain 2 years of practical experience and then to apply for the Engineer of Architecture Certificate before applying for their license with the Chamber of Engineers of Serbia (CES; founded in 2003).

The professional associations of architects have been sharing the destiny of the profession as a whole. The establishment of the CES was rooted in the 2003 Planning and Building Law. Although the claimed intention of the reform was professional cohesion, the chamber caused an even greater divide among architects. The CES consists of four main sections: regional planners, urban planners, design engineers, and construction engineers, who once licensed and have their licenses renewed annually.⁹ To lead and govern the projects within their legal offices or institutions, all engineers in Serbia have to be certified under one or several sections of the CES. A continuous education program was regulated by law and established within the CES, but after its 13-year-long history, the national system of continuous professional education is still under construction and facing adjustments to new EU regulations. The CES has put efforts into equalizing the evaluation and licensing systems to the EU professional chambers' regulations, so as to provide equal conditions for free access to professional jobs all over the EU, however, this was only undertaken for some professions, with the architectural profession not being included. Since the system is under reform, we will restrain from commenting on the programs and the quality of offered lectures, seminars, and workshops within the CES continuous professional educational programs. We can only say that they are similar to the professional exchanges previously conducted by the professional associations of architects and planners.

4.3 Discussion

4.3.1 *The Concept of the Profession*

4.3.1.1 The Social Framework

The trajectories of the profession at the turn of the Millennium, i.e., at the time of transition from professionalism to post-professionalism, can be understood by

⁹Amendment of the Decision on the types of licenses issued by the Engineering Chamber of Serbia, No. 4078/1-3, effective from 20th December 2012.

following the three main previously explained twentieth century concepts: Anglo-Saxon, German, and Russian.

Due to the circumstances inherited from the two-decade-long transitional period, the legislative institutions and their regulations faced a loss of authority; the government, supported by the profession, intended to establish a consensus for all the participants in the planning–design–construction process of a particular territory. Without going into too much detail, the political structures involved usually tried to reach administrative efficiency through changing the regulations: in Milan, Italy (Mazza 2007), in New South Wales, Australia, Ontario, Canada (Schatz and Piracha 2013), and The Netherlands (Schultz van Haegen 2015). Despite good intentions, the changes were often made without the democratic consensus of the professionals who had been interested in, and affected by, the legislation. In other words, the changes were rather implemented as rigid political tools and a demonstration of political will and power. Being detached from professional patterns, heritage, framework, and needs, the laws and rules have become another administrative obstacle for the conscientious professional work that brings extraordinary results. Serbia is also trying hard to adjust the legislation to the needs of local governments, investors, and developers, and to enable a business-friendly environment.

For over 20 years efforts have been made by the government to impose a legislation model that would fit all. During this time there have always been supporting and opposing professional or interest groups whose opinions and arguments have needed to be taken into account. Also, the rationalization of the local authorities, having no capacity to provide appropriate building controls within their territories or being inconsistent in implementing regulations, unintentionally weakened the system and contributed to illegal or semi-legal construction as well as preventing a sustainable legalization solution to be found.¹⁰

Professional organizations were not properly involved in the decision making about the status and the future of the profession. The Republic of Serbia Planning and Building Law, Article 130, 2003, prescribed the establishment of the CES, the organization to which the government transferred the right to certify architects and other engineers and planners in the Republic of Serbia. The promotion of personal licenses represented the will of the government to support the private sector and reduce the importance (or monopoly) of governmental planning and design institutions.

Professional organizations also lost their significance. Some of them, like the Association of Architects and Engineers, which was respected and influential all over the former Yugoslavia, or The Union of Architects of Serbia (UAS), which used to be the most significant professional association for more than 130 years, lost their power and reputation when their duties and responsibilities were transferred to the CES under the authority of law. The UAS, for example, transformed

¹⁰Common practice in local administrations was to reduce the number of employed building inspectors saving local budget expenditure. Only one or two people controlled developing areas in municipalities with populations of up to 85,000 like Čajetina or Užice in western Serbia. Familiar with this situation, developers have been using the chance to increase the permitted floor area ratio (FAR) of their properties in order to gain greater profits.

into a group of volunteers mainly devoted to architectural design contests and the promotion of national architecture, its identity, tradition, and its significance for society. The Association of Urban Planners of Serbia also lost some of its authority being focused only on achieving better practices by organizing the annual planning exhibition.¹¹ The legal status of these professional associations has become equal to that of groups of birdwatchers, chess players, or cheese producers, showing a lack of recognition by the state and the public. The state has already shifted its formal power and the power of the professional associations to the CES, so the former contribution of the professional associations has disappeared, as well as their legitimate professional dialog about important professional, administrative, and regulatory issues. Their role is evidently missing in education and the promotion of the architectural profession, as well as national architecture, its role, heritage, importance for the state economy, cultural position, and national identity.

An open market for jobs and ideas was a privilege available in the former Yugoslavia, enabling architectural design contests for local and international teams and architects, as well as numerous scientific and professional conferences where architects could share and gain knowledge and experience. The scope and role of the profession has changed. It became blurred and unclear due to the new building and construction organizational reforms from 2003. Societal needs to engage knowledgeable and skillful architects for its benefit have also diminished. Finally, without professional authority, there cannot be a clear vision for the profession itself nor its role within society.

4.3.1.2 Economic Framework

The impact of the economic framework on the concept of the profession should also be analyzed in a broader time-frame. The *“Engineering News Record”* magazine listed several important Serbian construction companies among the top 50 in the world. Most of them were Belgrade based, including “Energoprojekt,” engaged in all sectors from urban design to construction; “Mostogradnja,” engaged in the bridge-construction sector; “Ratko Mitrovic,” in hydro-construction and military facilities; “Proleterski put,” known for road construction; and “Rad” and “Napred,” in housing construction. These companies employed several thousand people and developed construction sites on all continents during the last decade of the twentieth century. Their international competitiveness resulted from a high quality organization and highly educated architects and engineers expanding their knowledge in their respective companies, while, at the same time contributing to companies’ capacities and reputation. The quality of internal organizations enabled the exchange of knowledge between young and experienced engineers. This was proven to be one of the best standardized professional education methods through

¹¹Annual Urban Planning Exhibition, Niš, organized by the Association of Urban Planners of Serbia, since 1990.

which theoretical knowledge could be tested directly in practice. The socio-economic transition, privatization, grey economy, and political restrictions and interventions first weakened the Serbian construction sector and eventually destroyed it at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

As noted earlier, with the restructuring of the sector into a small and medium enterprise (SME) system, companies tried to achieve as much work as possible with the least human resources possible, so an overlap of professional responsibilities became unavoidable. Specialization was lost and both architects and civil engineers shared the same duties and responsibilities. The latter gained an advantage, since their education had always been closer to praxis than that of architecture, so the scope of their work was broadened to include the architectural design of structures up to 400 m² and housing up to two floors high.¹² The aesthetics of buildings became irrelevant during this time of economic crisis, resulting in illegal and informal constructions, and a lowered standard of living. The main concern was building stability while the aesthetics and context, belonging traditionally to architectural design, became irrelevant to owners and investors.

On the other hand, architects thoughtfully developed an integrated model of designing and constructing buildings during the most successful period of the Belgrade School of Architecture, while the modern advocates of such a system contributed to the integration of basic architecture with the civil engineering profession. In aim to achieve high profits and an efficient construction process, investors engaged a construction office to produce a “design and build” package instead of consulting architects, who first regard the future design or context. Interdisciplinary communication and the tradition of teamwork, which were common until 1991, were lost under the transition process for the sake of higher efficiency, profits, or market competitiveness. Under such circumstances, there was no need for inventive and innovative architects or for functional, aesthetic, contextual, and sustainable architecture. This aspect of authorship became non-essential.

By losing the conceptual position in urban, architectural, and building processes, the role of the architect as its creator and/or director was diminished. It was a big shift for the profession that used to be admired, respected, and socially engaged in harmonizing human, economic, and political interests up until 1991.

4.3.1.3 The Industry of Building Materials

Serbia developed the industry of building materials in the mid-twentieth century and was as equally innovative and competitive as other developed European countries. The end of the century was highly productive because of market demands and active communication among the various fields of the profession, that is, the educational, the design, and the construction components of the construction

¹²The CES designing license allows the civil engineering sector to design buildings.

industry (Share 2009; Share et al. 2012). They supported research and development (R&D) of new products giving constant feedback from construction sites to the R&D sector.

The extensive privatization of Serbian construction companies, usually taken over by foreign companies from the same engineering sector, caused the closure of production sectors and the layoff of many experienced architects and engineers who spent their entire careers in this field. This produced many personal, professional, and social problems leaving a proportion of the working class without jobs and basic incomes. The new owners usually adjusted or imported construction materials and applied technology according to their new needs.

Different cultural, political, and economic interests in Serbia also influenced the professional sphere. Without any consensus achieved, none of the three (previously discussed) interests were dominant or willing to accept a compromise. The former Yugoslav Standards (JUS) were a synthesis of German (DIN), American (ASA), and Russian (ГОСТ) standards, a synthesis which enabled local companies to produce and export products and professional services internationally.

4.3.1.4 Politics

The role of the construction industry in Serbia was very important to the general economy of the state after World War II. The construction sector participated in many economic activities; it employed thousands of people from all social and educational groups; it generated income in and outside the country, and contributed to the cultural landscape of the nation and state. As a sector, it has always been promoted in political marketing either by presenting its achieved results or in a metaphoric way when promoting the future visions of national development and progress, and was therefore, both directly and indirectly, linked to political structures and politics. The interference of local politics in the profession is common in urban planning. The history of Serbian planning goes far back. It became standard in Serbian municipalities from the early nineteenth century. Namely, the first regulatory plans were made in 1829 for the standardized building of urban settlements. In 1833, the first building was destroyed because it was not built in accordance with urban planning regulations.

There is another aspect of the spatial policy of local governments in which politics is a crucial factor. The informal construction phenomenon appeared in Serbia in the second half of the twentieth century, predominantly in housing. There was a sudden growth of urban centers not prepared for the new building demand or the weakening of local authorities. The vast number of illegally constructed houses and buildings was the result of transitional processes at the end of the century. There were two main sources of informal building in Serbia at the time. The first was social, numerous families were coming from the former Yugoslav republics to Serbia running away from the war and the nationalist violence to find a new home. Neither the state nor the cities were able to accommodate the newcomers in an official, regulated way. The second was the result of a failed, incomplete transition,

and grey economy, as a significant number of informal structures were built in middle-income and high-income neighborhoods and even in luxury housing zones and city centers, not strictly obeying regular building permits. According to The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe UNECE study (2006), Belgrade significantly contributed to the estimated number of over one million illegally constructed buildings in Serbia (Mojović et al. 2011). Approximately 43% of all housing land and 22% of the central City of Belgrade contained informal settlements.¹³ There are also estimates that the number of legally constructed buildings was equal to the number of informal structures in 1997, not only in terms of houses, but also administrative, commercial, and industrial buildings and structures. By the end of the century, the urban planning process became equally important for surveying or mapping informal sectors and planning urban development. The role of the architectural profession became important in mediating the political and social interests of local communities and municipalities through the planning process.

4.4 Conclusion

The question of professionalism and post-professionalism in Serbia at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty first century should be analyzed in a wider context of the 200-year-long tradition and in the context of an incomplete political and economic transition. The conflicts that occurred in this period have brought new and unique processes within the scope of the profession. These processes questioned the values established during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

The concept of the profession lost its essence due to the changes in the education system, economic system, and the general downfall of the Serbian construction industry. All of this dramatically affected the overall level of knowledge and skills that professional architects acquired before 1991. The changed perception of national production, the dominant role of SMEs in the construction sector, and the economic crisis made different segments of the profession compete in a weakened professional local market. Architects and civil engineers who had previously specialized in large professional teams, became “designers” with their specializations often overlapping. This situation marginalized important elements of architectural expression and historical significance related to conceptualization, aesthetics, and organization from urban planning and design to construction, which led to the loss of the architectural profession’s authority within society.

National structural, social, economic, and legal reforms made traditional professional associations disappear rather than transform into professional organizations. The integrative state policy, imposed in 2003, officially unified the planning,

¹³Documentation of the General Plan of Belgrade, 2021, Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade, 2003.

architectural, and engineering professions into a single national organization to which the government transferred the certifying rights that had been under the jurisdiction of the state administration or professional associations, some of which had existed for over 130 years. Although the number of new organizations is higher than before, their significance has been considerably reduced, unveiling the obvious lack of a clear vision, professional cohesion, and activism.

The boundaries of the profession have changed to the detriment of the architectural profession. The notion of architecture lost its professional influence on other fields due to the overlapping of responsibilities with other professions for things like regional planning, civil engineering, surveying, and engineering. Process evaluation is important for strategic decision making about the national architectural education system, achievement of competencies in architectural production, quality and attractiveness of national and international studies, as well as for the EU professional and educational exchange and ranking system.

The links between education and the construction industry radically weakened due to the privatization and collapse of large construction companies and the sector for the production of construction materials. Interdisciplinary collaboration and teamwork, considered traditional before 1991, were lost due to transition, political sanctions, lack of capacity, and xenophobia for the sake of higher efficiency, profits, and market competitiveness. The discourse of professionalism was blurred given the lack of specific standards that were supposed to be set through the consensus between the architects and the architectural guild.

Educated architects, who were the leading professionals in planning, design, and construction, significantly participated in social and cultural life and were successful in venturing into other professions such as the film industry, theatre, painting, and politics. Architectural “language,” both in written and visual communication, became incoherent and reduced, partly due to social crisis and poverty, the lack of high-quality education, and adaption to the needs of the laic construction market.

Professionalism as a social project was a successful concept initiated by individuals and associations, but it was not visible in Serbian contemporary professional society. The competition between professions for higher contribution to the quality of life practically disappeared. Social perception of the profession shifted because of architects’ inability to timely respond to the needs of society, social change, innovation in technology, and the economic crisis. The profession’s identity based on innovation and creativity became unnecessary and consequently, architecture shifted into reproduction (Duffy 2001). The role of architecture in society has evidently changed from an active, respectable, to a rather marginalized profession. The public trust in the architectural profession has fading due to unsatisfactory planning, a lack of architectural participation in the design processes, a lack of participation of architects in political debates, and especially a lack of cooperation with political parties. The potential causes of this unsatisfactory position were the constant changes in society, its constantly changing value systems, and the changes in professional focus from dominantly humane to other aspects and attractions.

In conclusion, the architectural profession needs an urgent change in terms of its organization in order to achieve the ability to self-evaluate, improve quality, increase competitiveness, and collaborate within a wider and international environment. The current performance model of the architectural profession can be perceived as *deregulated*, not *post-professional*. To reach the phase of post-professionalism, the architectural profession needs to achieve clear, creative, and productive solutions oriented toward a better quality of life. For this to happen it is necessary to evaluate many possible solutions and define the architectural profession's position within partnerships with complementary professions, to re-establish the scope of the profession, and to evaluate and reform the educational system so it can better contribute to the profession, the economy, and society since that represents the first step in the ethical and professional development of an architect (Banks 2004). The new vision of the Serbian architectural profession should rely on a successful historical framework adjusted to a new context in order to set up its vital elements which include competitiveness, creativity, and innovation.

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