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1. Introduction

The official residential architecture of any country shows the best examples that strive to improve the ambience and quality of living. It is the architecture that is being discussed, analysed and shown as a guideline for further architectural development. Still, in lieu of being a role model for a typical house, the “good” models usually stand as a lone example of what the residential architecture has a potential to be. Even though it is the part of official discourse, it is not the real representation of the way people live. Most country’s single family architecture is the mixed product of traditional architectural styles, modern day architecture, culture, economy and many other factors.

A single family house has a very special place in the architectural field. When looked at closely, it can give not only the insight into the building culture of the country in which it originated, but also into its demographic structure. What is common for most houses around the world, is that they are much more the product of the people who make them than the architects. It is quite rare that this type of mass built architecture belongs to the official architectural discourse, because it is usually where the architects have the least to say. The real architecture of single family houses is not the official one – it is the repetitive form that portrays the current face of the society; the expression of its owner’s thoughts, possibilities and desires. These structures exist alongside the official ones, creating its own arbitrary, semi legal universe and it has been estimated that over 90 percent of the world buildings belong to the unofficial, the so called vernacular architecture.¹

This unofficial, traditionally based architecture, has increasingly been adopted as a subject of research, becoming a very important standpoint for understanding the people’s needs. Made by empirical builders and based on the country’s tradition, the “architecture without architects” stands not only for the architectural practice, but also for the theory on that practice.² Architects often create idealistic projects that aren’t necessarily well accepted by the people; yet the people have their own architectural universe, that isn’t always well accepted by the architects. Although the importance of the vernacular architecture was recognized much earlier, the decisive moment was an exhibition in MOMA in 1964 by Bernard Rudofsky, where commented photographs of vernacular buildings all around the world showed the beauty that such architecture carries. The later researches took it step further, by analysing

¹ Ethnoarch 2006

² Ibid

not only what is to be seen, but also the reasons behind it and the social, environmental, economic or technological context in which they were created.³

The case of post war residential architecture of Bosnia and Herzegovina (and thus the focus of the thesis – the city of Banja Luka) is a very specific subject, because it evolved rather as the mixture of world cultural trends than as the advancement of its own tradition. Rapoport, who analysed the influences which determine the vernacular architecture, and tried to link house “forms to life patterns, beliefs, and desires”, mentions Balkans as well. The statement that “historical, i.e., cultural, differences” have much stronger influence than “site or climate”,⁴ shows that instead of being influenced by the physical world, the architecture of Bosnia is much more influenced by the created social conditions, from which most are a direct consequence of the civil war. The vernacular architecture per se is hard to define in precise terms⁵, and the most recent single-family structures on the Balkans don’t fall completely under this type. They didn’t arise entirely deprived of the architect’s influence, or the legal frameworks, but in the way it functions, and the effects it has, it still belongs more to the people than the official architecture of the country.

In the analysing process, it is clear that the social factors will determine the notion of the single family house in Balkan, and the city of Banja Luka for that matter. After all, a single family house is the architectural representation of its owner, and through that, of the whole society. It indicates its owner’s social and economic status, but also their thoughts, creativity, desires and ideas. “Even the simplest building involves series of ideas”,⁶ conscious or unconscious. Although it arises as an expression of the person making it, that person itself is the product of different historical, social, economic, cultural and political influences, which also makes the house a product of those influences. The importance of analysing this architecture that may be best defined as ordinary is to be able “to question how we look at things”.⁷

The society itself is shaped by many influences throughout history which create the mould for the architecture as well. That is why a certain era produces a certain type of houses that have repeating characteristics. In the architecture of Banja Luka today, those repeating characteristics have found their utmost expression in specific elements of the house, that are visible in the great number of the built structures. These patterns are to be found in the housing of both lower and upper social strata, manifested in more or less accentuated way. By

³ Ibid

⁴ Rapoport 1969, 30

⁵ Vernacular is the term used to describe the type of architecture that is primarily influenced by the traditional building styles and techniques without the involvement of an architect into the design process. It is mostly intuitive and it was created in response to the local conditions.

⁶ Allsopp 1977, 5

⁷ Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour 1977, 3

analysing these repeated individual elements and the way they evince in different houses, it is possible to connect the condition in which the society is currently in to its built representation.

In order to make a comprehensive, yet concise research, the focal points are limited to those that are important for the given area. The vernacular architecture of the Balkans has already been the subject of many researches. And although these were very important in understanding many socio-cultural aspects that will guide the thesis in drawing some of the conclusions, they have been oriented towards a certain type of architecture with the approach of explaining, rather than understanding. It is not just about defining this type of architecture as good or bad, but also about understanding the circumstances under which it emerged, using the methods of many publications that dealt with the subject. For example, Banja Luka is nothing like Las Vegas, but the methods in analysing of both cities are based on determining whether the architecture of the city serves its purpose.⁸

By choosing the interview as a main method, the analyses will give a very personal insight into the matter. Though the interviews can be quite subjective and can make the analyses somewhat difficult, the fact that they are conducted out of several different points of view can help in creating a full image of the current state of the detached residential architecture. Also, as a counterpart, the observation method is used to additionally round up the image. The process of the analyses will be conducted by deconstructing and dissecting the house, looking in its interior, construction, layout, details and other fragments that define it. In this case, a window, for example, is never just a window – its form, size, position etc., represents much more than what is to be seen on the first sight. It is also important to see a house through different perspectives: architect's, owner's, neighbour's, passer-by's etc., to get a complete image that a house forms in the eyes of different social actors.

Other than many outside factors, such as politics, economy and culture of the country, there are also many inside influences and participants that will give the house a final touch and make it differ (more or less) from the others. It is a complex set of circumstances that is catalysed into the building, creating a type of architecture that doesn't have much influence on the architectural improvement and innovation, but more so as a sociological phenomenon from which the architects can learn. When dealing with this type of "non-architecture", the typological approach is important in order to recognize what can't be seen on the first sight.

⁸ Even though other research works, such as "Learning from Las Vegas", cannot be directly applied to the research of a typical house in Banja Luka, they have been used as a rough guideline in understanding the importance of every architectural type.

2. Historic Overview

Banja Luka is the city that has been settled and ruled over by very different nations throughout the history. Even from the ancient times, it has always been a crossroad of diverse cultures. First it was the natural resources, and later geographical, traffic and strategic position that made it exposed to the turn of ruling forces.

The only historical continuity that not only the city, but the whole country of Bosnia and Herzegovina has, is de facto a constant change. Accordingly, the traces of ruling ideologies, cultures and systems are visible in the architectural heritage, predominantly in public and religious objects. The traces of change are also present, although less emphasized, in the residential architecture. Administrative, political and cultural influence of the city has often ranged, causing migrations to- and from it. There are different types of houses that offered solutions for the influx of people and that took turns as one ruling power gave way to the next one.

The past is inevitably embroidered in the mentality of the people, and it produces, knowingly or unknowingly, certain way of thinking, acting and accordingly – building. However, this vivid past and diverse influence is hardly visible at the first sight in today's house model. There are several reasons for this occurrence and they can be found in the influence of contradictory cultures that wipe each other out.

The historic overview won't be just the plain statement of facts, but moreover an attempt to connect the influences and elements from the past to that what is being built today. The analyses are based not only on the residential architecture of the past, but also on that what has been transferred from the past to present day architecture, whether it's the certain elements, construction method or the perception of space.

2.1. Ancient Times and Middle Ages

It is known that the area of Banja Luka was settled even in the prehistoric times. Some ornamental stone remains are the proof of dwellings that date back to Palaeolithic era. These first ancient inhabitants resided mostly in caves. In the pre Roman times, the people known as Illyrians have settled in this area. Several different tribes formed settlements all over Balkans, and one of them in the broad area of Banja Luka. The Romans and Illyrians fought over these

lands, until finally, Romans established their reign in 9th year A.D. During their reign, in the area of today's Banja Luka, the Romans built a military base – Castra.⁹ The type of the roman art developed in these areas, including architecture, was known as the roman provincial art.¹⁰

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Slavs have started to migrate and settle in the South-Eastern Europe in 6th and 7th century A.D. They mostly used Roman buildings as their shelters, but after a while they started building their own settlements. The impulses of roman culture were still deeply implemented into the building tradition of Bosnia during the middle Ages.¹¹

In this period, a typical house in most of the South-Eastern Europe was a *Dinara* house. These were simple structures made of natural local materials, mainly wood and straw. The interior was organized around the fireplace and there was usually only one room. The houses were, in general, quite simple, since the migrations were very often.¹² Even though this house type can be connected to Banja Luka based on some geographical presumptions, it can't be claimed with certainty that it was built in the city or its surrounding (see *Figure 1*).

Generally speaking, any influence before Ottoman reign didn't have a very strong influence to the forming of a house typology of today. Other than some remains of the ancient cultures, there isn't any evidence of the influence that ancient or middle Ages architecture has on the present day. It is quite often, however, that the today's houses have some ancient decorative elements or classical columns, mostly around the entrance area, but it would be farfetched to say that this trend developed due to the Roman reign. Same goes for the middle ages. There just aren't enough known facts to be able to establish the real connection with the architecture of that time to the houses built today. The architectural influence of the past hasn't disappeared without leaving its trace, but it is can be found mostly in other forms of architecture. The most noticeable link is in the sacral architecture, since the Serbian Orthodox churches show a very strong Byzantine influence.

When it comes to that what really shaped the residential architecture of the present time, one can speak of the four major influences: Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, socialist Yugoslavia and the most recent war followed by a post war transition.

⁹ Banjaluka Turisticka Organizacija 2016

¹⁰ Pasic 2010a, 5

¹¹ Ibid, 8

¹² Petrovic 2016



Figure 1: Map of different influences, migrations and building types in the ancient times and middle Ages

2.2. Ottoman Reign

With the fall of the medieval Bosnian state and the Ottomans establishing their reign, Banja Luka became the part of the Ottoman Empire in 1528. For the next 350 years' Islamic culture was predominant in Banja Luka.¹³

To compare the influence it could have today, it is necessary to understand the structure of the Ottoman residential architecture. Even though the Ottoman Empire comprised large geographical area, all of the houses had the same typology, including the ones built in Banja Luka. Urban planning in the city was based on creating several new nucleuses, around which the city life was developing. These nucleuses had a religious character, with the mosque in the centre, showing the importance of the religion in the Ottoman cities.¹⁴

Other than the mosque, the nucleus included some trading stores, public kitchen and 40-50 residential units. All of the buildings created a residential micro complex, called 'mahalla'.¹⁵ Unlike the organized and planned architecture that came later, Ottoman Banja Luka was much more irregular and 'wild'. There was no land registry, no orthogonal street matrix and no public areas. The residential units were introvert and had a life of their own. However, even though the architecture wasn't based on the rational planning of the Western countries, it was very functional, intuitive, in harmony with nature and tailored to human needs.

This Balkan-Oriental urban culture includes emphasized interest in natural phenomena, uses land configuration, focuses on the views, and pervades the entire construction with the elements of the sun, greenery and water. The presence of water overpasses pure utilitarianism; the greenery grows on the facades and over the fences and the angle of the sunrays is used for contouring and emphasizing construction elements. As much as the house is closed to the outside world, it is as much as open to the nature, sky, water and greenery. That is why the nature is the main component of the architecture.¹⁶

The family house or the residential complex is in the centre of Islamic culture. It was the main cell of the city and a closed unit that develops in its own circle, mysterious and introvert. It had a charm that doesn't come from a strict architectural planning or advanced construction technology (see *Figures 2-4*).

¹³ Banjaluka Turisticka Organizacija 2016

¹⁴ Pasic 2010b, 10

¹⁵ Ibid, 4

¹⁶ Ibid

To the more “civilized’ society”, it may appear somewhat wild and disarrayed, but it has an undeniable appeal. The main reason for the introversion is to hide women from the view of strangers and the passengers and partially due to hygiene. Decorative elements and bars on the windows protected the women from the view of the stranger, yet allowed them to observe everything what happened on the outside. This, in a way, gave women a certain type of power over men.¹⁷

The structure of one residential unit comprised more than just the house and the yard. Many additional facilities and the walls surrounding the unit were a part of it. The yard itself was divided into more parts, with two main ones: the public one and the *avlija* – the one for the family. In the *avlija* were additional facilities, such as summer kitchen (*mutvak*), woodshed, privy (toilets), stables, storage rooms, drinking fountain, flower garden etc. The house usually had ground floor and upper floor, was organized around *hayat* – the lobby, and the rooms usually had more than one function. Within the house, there was also a division between male and female areas. The yard also often included a vegetable garden, orchard, lawn and possibly streaming water.¹⁸

The house is being developed in outer space and includes closed and semi-open spaces - without stiffness and schematics in the planning. The focus is on the space and the walls are secondary and subordinate to it. A

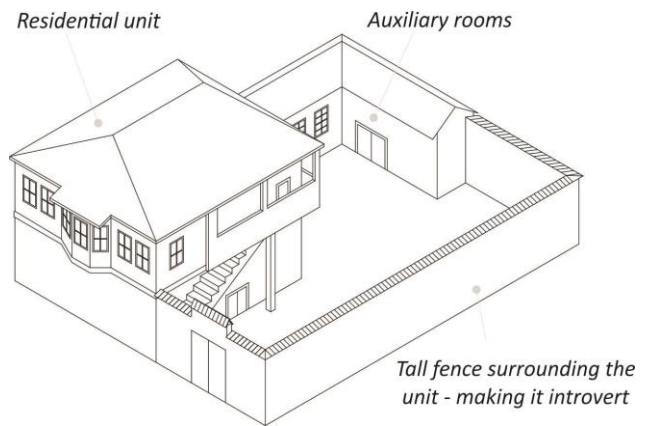


Figure 2: Schematic view of the Ottoman house



Figure 3: House Seranic, built at the end of 16th century; present condition



Figure 4: Bridge and settlement in Banja Luka; 16th century

¹⁷ Dengiz 2001, 40

¹⁸ Pasic 2010, 1

number of windows allow the elements of outer space to become decorating elements of the rooms. Nature is left intact, but with this system that doesn't have a clear border, a high degree of unity between inorganic and organic world is created.¹⁹

The time that both residential architecture and the city of Banja Luka were developing and growing the most, was the time when the city became the centre of Bosnian Pasaluk – from the end of 16th and in the first half of 17th century. It can be said with certainty that it had about 45 city quarters, or *mahallas*. The materials used for the houses were local, mostly wood and stone and they were covered with ceramides (hollow tiles) and shingles. After the city lost this function, the development had stopped. By the end of the Ottoman reign, the city had 1 126 houses.²⁰

Even though the eastern influence was dominant for quite some time, it isn't as strong as in some other bigger cities of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is mostly so because the city was always going back and forth between the East and the West, since it was an important military point. From the architectural point of view, not much has remained to this day. When observing a typical house, it is clear that the room distribution has changed, the decoration disappeared and there isn't nearly as much attention paid to the garden. The residential parts of the city that mostly grew during the Ottoman reign are almost empty and abandoned today, leaving some scattered ruins behind, that are a pale reminder of the Ottoman culture. All of the delicate connection that man had with the nature is nowhere to be seen in the city's houses. The gardens with lawns, pavements, water elements, flowers etc., are rarely to be seen, and even the ones that exist are quite kitschy and overcrowded with ceramic figurines. The yards are mostly covered with asphalt or concrete, leaving no place for the nature to grow. The division of inner and outer space is very clear and emphasized.

It seems like every ruling ideology, every change and every disaster, natural, or man-caused, has taken bits and pieces of the Ottoman tradition with it. The Ottoman reign is perceived different by the different nationalities in Bosnia. For some, it carries a heavy burden of tyranny and occupation, while, for others, it represents a time of rich culture and progress. Banja Luka belongs much more to the first group than to the other. That is why there is still a strong need in people's minds to distance themselves from everything that is Islamic, including the architecture. But regardless of the willingness to admit it or not, it is a fact that Ottoman tradition has shaped Banja Luka for the long period of time, leaving a trace that can't and shouldn't be erased.

There are still some houses, scattered across the city and its surroundings that have some elements that carry a spirit of the Islamic culture. Those houses still have the auxiliary objects,

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Udruzenje gradjana povratnika, 2016

such as summer kitchen, sheds and stables that imply the strong connection to the nature. However, they arose in the pre-war time and are mostly connected to the older generations. It is not that the need to feel connected to the nature has disappeared, it has rather been separated from the residential aspect. Most people have some weekend house, or simply some small shed on the countryside, inherited or bought, that they turn to and in which they seek recovery.

The tradition on building on the hills of Banja Luka has remained to this day and a fact that they are mostly unplanned settlements, without the regular road matrixes makes them reminiscent of that during the Ottoman history. However, the economic situation and the lack of planning have more to do with that than any nostalgia for the Islamic times.

2.3. Austro-Hungarian Reign

At the Berlin Congress in 1878, at the proposition of England, the big forces gave mandate to Austro-Hungary to conduct the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. With that, Bosnia became the country with two rulers: it formally belonged to Ottoman Empire, but the Austro-Hungary had all the power. The Austrian-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia was a historical turn point in the political, economic and the cultural life. The capitalistic order was set for the first time and everything changed according to it, including the architecture. There were many small industries and stores built all over Banja Luka and the periphery. Many roads were being built and improved at the time, which established a better communication not only between cities in Bosnia, but also with Europe. With all the economic and market development, increased turnover and the bigger investments of the private equity, the city developed very fast, which was followed by increased population and the erecting of new buildings for social and cultural influence. This changed the look of the city from the roots.²¹

There was a significant change in the urban planning and architecture. Some of the changes that Austro-Hungary brought were creation of new construction norms and laws, such as: the obligation to have a construction permit, the regulation of human and fire protection, the regulation of wall thickness and building heights. Some of the urban changes were the classification and the zoning of the streets, the regulation of the harmonic design with the environment and the obligation to follow the regulation plans. There was also a change in the philosophy of the design that developed into two distinctive architectonic styles: secession and

²¹ Jevrejska opstina, 2016



Figure 5: Herrengasse; 1910



Figure 6: Kaiserstrasse; 1905

force was fonder of plain, building wide orthogonal avenues lined with trees and houses with yards open to them.

“Although the new approach to building stood in contrast to the “non-western” urban structure of the Ottoman town, it did not allow destruction or significant alteration of the already existing districts. This ensured survival of what is today Banja Luka’s suburbs, as well as the bazaar, while new construction took place in the adjacent zones.”²³

In the residential architecture, there were two streets that defined the city configuration and influenced the architecture of today. The first one can be found in the very heart of Banja Luka – the Herrengasse, today’s Street of Veselin Masleša (see *Figure 5*). Most houses are built in a renaissance revival style, with some baroque revival style elements and secession style, lined up closely next to each other. Renaissance revival style was mostly used for public buildings as well as larger residential buildings, especially in the early years of the Austro-Hungarian occupation, while the secession style became more significant in the early 20th century. Ground floor was usually reserved for some type of store, while the upper floors were residential.

²² Ibid

²³ Savic 2012, 405

Renaissance revival style houses usually had symmetrical design; ground floor façade had fake stone division and above the windows on the first floor triangular tympanums. Compared to the houses of Ottoman reign, Austro-Hungarian houses were much more open to the street.²⁴ The tradition of building a commercial space in the ground floor of the house has carried on during the later times as well, and is even present to this day. This also meant the difference in decoration between ground and upper floors is also present in the later residential architecture.

The second style that left the mark in the residential architecture is represented through houses located in Kaiserstraße (see *Figure 6*). The forming of the Kaiserstraße started with planting a long alley of acacia trees. Although this part of the city was partially built and organized during the Ottoman reign, there was still some manoeuvre for adapting the street to the western way of building. There are eleven villas all lined up on one side of the road and although very different, there are some similarities between them.

“They are all more or less designed like traditional summer houses in Austria in late XIX century, with broad use of wood for the balconies, porches and decoration elements, plain clay tiles on complex roofs, central position on the lot and have back entry from the street of the lower rank.”²⁵

In the late 19th century, a large group of houses that belonged to so called “Alpine style”, “Swiss style” or “National style” were built all around the country, mostly in the city of Sarajevo. The architecture of detached houses of Kaiserstraße can be compared to this style (see *Figure 7*). What characterizes this style of building is primarily extensive use of wood, both for decoration and construction. The structural was mostly connected to the upper floors, where the wooden bearing construction was also visible on the façade. As a decoration, the wood is used for the “whole systems, like balconies, roof towers and profiles, entrance porches (see *Figures 8-10*).”²⁶

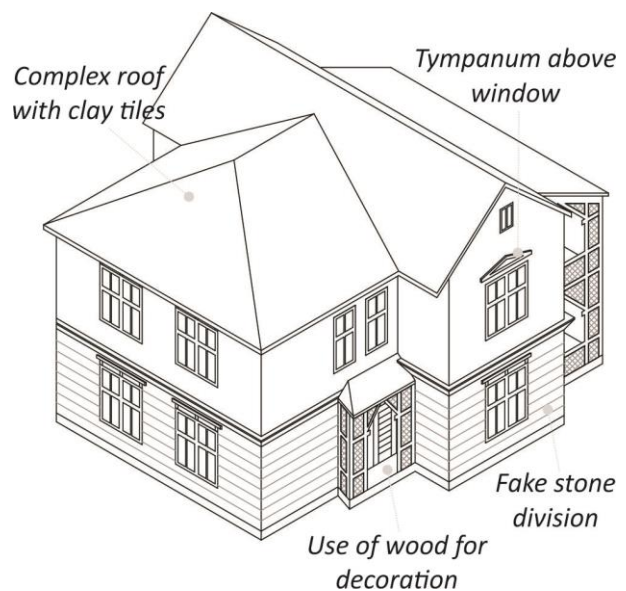


Figure 7: Schematic view of the Alpine style house built in Banja Luka

²⁴ Malinovic 2012, 164-172

²⁵ Ibid, 158

²⁶ Ibid, 158,159



Figure 8: House of Vlado Milosevic; view from the south-eastern corner; present condition



Figure 9: General Wilhelm Stockmann's villa, detail of the balcony; present condition



Figure 10: Family Rutz's villa; view from the south-eastern corner; present condition

Above all, the biggest change happened in the urban structure, since the house was no longer introverted. It was much more open to the street, enabling communication with the surrounding structures. To this day, the Austrian influence remains very strong in the whole Balkans. The biggest influence of the Austro-Hungarian architecture can be found in the city structure. All of the important axis, pedestrian zones, focal points and communications were pre-set during the Austro-Hungarian reign. The later generations followed this pattern, expanded it and build on top of it.

Even though Banja Luka hasn't been under Austrian influence for over a century, people will often find the inspiration in the Austrian architecture of the present time. These are not the part of the official architectural discourse; they belong to the country side architecture. The room distribution, the overall form of the house, the roof constitution, the types of windows etc., are all elements that find their role model mostly in the Austrian country side houses. Although this type of house is hardly the prime example of architecture, its adaptation to a different location is even more inept. While conducting some of the interviews, it has come to my attention that the people will often find an image of the house and go to the architect saying it is the type of house they want. In this way, the house is being put together out of an image without the context. Furthermore, the

whole street of decontextualized houses is being created, that stand awkwardly next to each other, without any interaction.

2.4. Between the two Wars

With the end of the World War I in 1918, the historicism, eclecticism and the secession styles did not disappear. However, since the socio-economic conditions in Bosnia and Herzegovina have gotten worse, the construction has significantly dropped, both in quantity and quality. The area was at the time part of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians.

As of 1929 it became a part of the Vrbas Banate of Kingdom Yugoslavia. Since then, Banja Luka has in very short time changed its architectural and city-planning physiognomy and started to take on the look of the dynamic, contemporary urban centre. In only several years, some very important public buildings were erected (Ban's Palace and administration building, Congregational Church of St. Trinity, Land Bank, Sokolski Centre, National Theatre), but a great attention is being paid to the construction of residential houses as well.²⁷ During the period between the two world wars, it was the residential architecture that blossomed the most. There were many breakthroughs in the field of residential architecture, especially in the cities. Apart from further implementation of historical styles, the modern architecture is also being well accepted, primarily in the residential architecture and only later in public as well.²⁸ Sunlight, wide vistas, establishment of contact with the greenery of city parks and streets, collecting rooms into functional units, shortening of the connections between the rooms in the house, were all starting points that marked a significant progress in this construction field.²⁹

First period of house construction between the two world wars represented the follow-up of the Austro-Hungarian period. In the second period one can already feel the change in the understanding of the culture of living. The young generation of architects who finished their education on the advanced architectural universities of middle Europe, insisted on the idea that the man is a measure of all relations that are important for the proper organization of residential space, and the living area should serve for the work, relaxation, leisure (recreation), and not just representation.³⁰ What differs the modern architecture of Banja Luka from the postulates of modern architecture, is that there are no "clean" modernist solutions in both aesthetic and conceptual sense. Some of these houses are traditionally organized, expressing the spirit of modernism through the façade that is free from the ornaments. Then again, there are others that are organized in a purely functionalist way, yet there are motives from the

²⁷ Udruzenje gradjana povratnika 2016

²⁸ Cvijic 2014, 28

²⁹ Bosna i Hercegovina - Komisija 2016

³⁰ Ibid

previous epochs applied to the façade.³¹ It also wasn't uncommon that the type of traditional construction system was applied, using the structural wall as a main bearing element (see *Figure 11*).

It was the houses that were responsible for acceptance of modernism, primarily those of the wealthier citizens. The relationship with the architects and the investor was very functional, allowing the architects to apply their ideas, yet making the house still a reflection of its owner.



Figure 11: Dr. Branko Petrovic's villa; 2013

Apart from single family houses, Banja Luka of that time has also sprouted some multifamily houses. These weren't the multifamily buildings in a real sense of the world, but rather an expanded version of a single family house, that was equipped to accommodate more than one family. Multifamily house offered the housing solution under one roof for more families that were often related. The owners of these houses used one residential unit, while they could rent the others, which would bring them additional income. At the same time, the units that they rented offered a solution for the future expansion of the family.³² This is something that is often applied in today's architecture of detached houses that are rarely made just for one family. However, even if many families have additional unused space at their disposal, it is

³¹ Cvijic 2014, 29

³² Ibid, 58

almost never rented, usually because it is unfinished, but even much more so because people cherish their privacy above all. This phenomenon of underutilized space will be analysed in the following chapters.

Most of these houses are marked as objects of architectural value and under care of Institute for Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage of the Serbian Republic. Yet, their current condition is anything but the representation of their value. They aren't far from collapsing and if a random passenger is asked what fate this type of house should meet, they'll all say the same: it needs to be demolished. This is the reflection of the attitude that the people of Banja Luka, and most of the Balkans, have towards anything that is old and partially their attitude towards the modern architecture. It was never particularly well accepted. If they see such a house, they won't say it's ugly, but they will say that it doesn't look functional, that it seems expensive and high maintenance. The time of prosperity for a modern single-family residential architecture was sadly brief and it has only started to reach its potential before it was interrupted by the World War II. It didn't stick long enough to leave a permanent mark that influences the architecture design of today.

2.5. Socialist Yugoslavia

In the post war period, the accent in the residential architecture was shifted to multiple family buildings and residential blocks. Detached houses became simpler, with far less decoration than before and there were new settlements and city quarters formed in Banja Luka.

Then another great catastrophe happened. This time, the nature was to blame. Two devastating earthquakes in 1969 damaged many of the city's significant buildings. There was once again the need for quick recovery. Many residential complexes arose at the time and still define the city skyline today.

When the residential architecture of the former Yugoslavia is mentioned, along with the waiting list of apartments from the company, planning another child in the house, tenancy rights, etc. – large apartment blocks, skyscrapers and new settlements for new citizens come to mind. Many agree that these new buildings gave people new opportunities for decent civic life, the expansion of the family, and the general improvement of life; but today many will also notice superficiality of construction of these same buildings, asphaltting of the green areas and assess them as average and inventive.³³

³³ Bjelopetrović 2007, 49

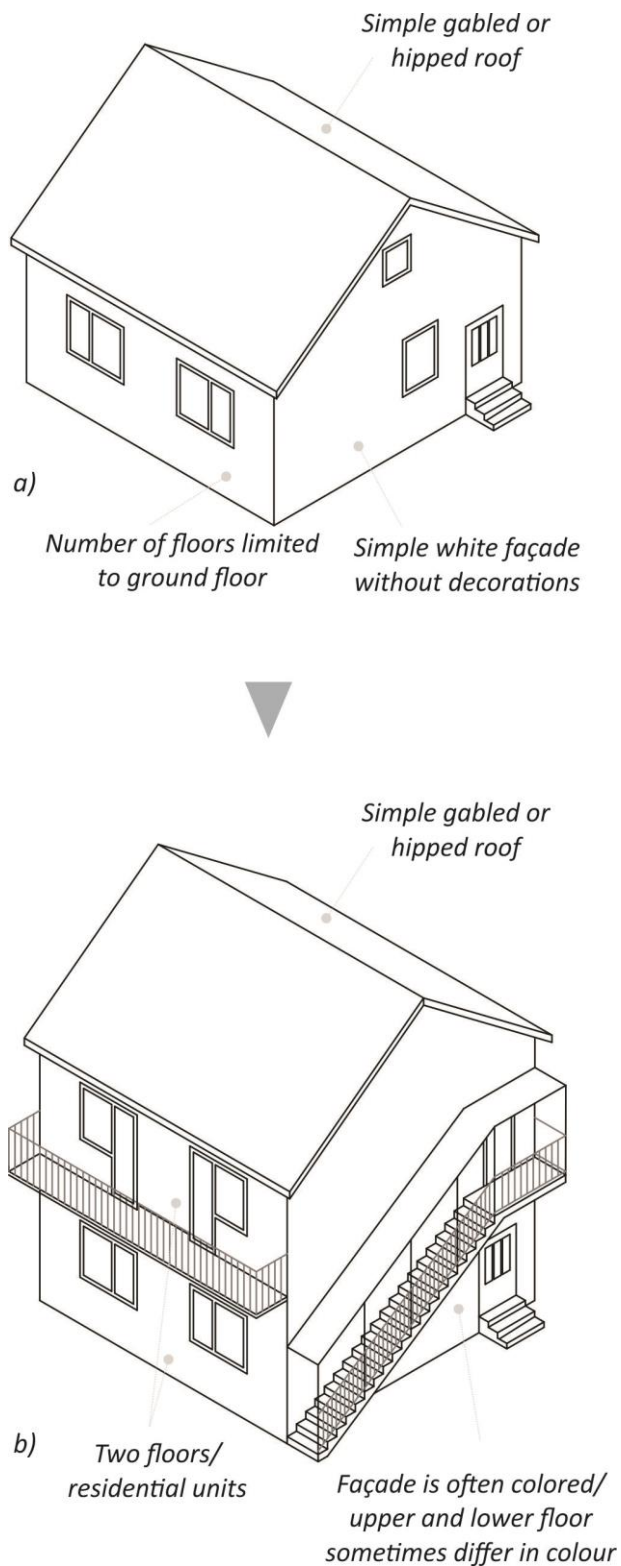


Figure 12: Schematic view of the house in period of Yugoslavia in the early a) and post war b) years

The architecture of the detached houses seemed to become more and more insignificant in the socialist Banja Luka. Plain rectangle or square forms, simple roofs, plain white façade, and houses that mostly had only ground floor or eventually attic/upper floor looked like they were being produced on the production line of some factory. There aren't any single-family houses from this time that can be marked as a significant architectural work.

It is probable that the strong feeling of the "brotherhood and unity" put individuality in the background. There was a cult around the strong and charismatic leader of the Yugoslavia – Josip Broz Tito. None of the aspects of his life and politics were ever questioned and although the country was growing and developing at the time, many problems were completely overseen. Many people still remember his reign as the golden age of the Balkans, which shows that the faith in the country and its ruler were so strong, that they haven't faded to this day. This faith, in a way, made the people believe in the social order and the politics, it made them believe that they have a bright future and it made them feel safe. All of this demised the need to accumulate the personal belongings or think too far into the future, which is the case with the post-war architecture. It is quite clear that the community and neighbourhood had much more significance than the individual houses. There was much more attention paid to the garden itself and the connection to the surroundings, than to the house itself.

However, although the freedom was one of the main principle of the country, the architecture and the urban planning gave away a clear vision of control. To implement the principles of equality, all the previous differences had to be annihilated, which has reflected negatively to the architecture, especially that of detached houses.



Figure 13: Socialist residential neighbourhood in Banja Luka; present condition

Since the beginning of the eighties, the crisis was felt in all segments of society. People continued to flee to the cities, but the cities are being impoverished and the unemployment increased, while the medium and small cities and villages are being urbanized. The housing construction activities have significantly dropped, even though investment in housing and public utility services grow. The average floor area continues to grow, as well as the living standards in general (see *Figure 12*).³⁴

This is the time when the single family houses are growing too. What was once a simple ground floor house – has now become a two or three storey house with more details that separate them from each other, while the base remains the same. The insecurity and the crisis in the state are somehow being represented through the increase in living standards. The shakier the state was, the bigger the houses grew. It all escalated with Bosnian Civil war, that has not only stopped the whole construction process, but defined it for the next two (or more) decades and changed the future of every former Yugoslavian state.

2.6. Civil War and the Aftermath

The war has brought with it what every war brings: destruction. The architecture that suffered the most was the one that was a representation of national and religious identity: churches,

³⁴ Ibid, 53

mosques, city councils, landmarks. The war recognizes that what is the best of architecture – and destroys it. Although the city itself wasn't on the direct impact, the change of the demographic structure has influenced its built structure to a great extent. In the process of ethnic cleansing, the architecture has suffered as well. It wasn't just the physical world that was annihilated; the consequences that remained are far reaching. Two decades after the war were hardly enough to heal after such a destruction: the social life, politics, economy, culture and the overall state of mind of the people on the Balkans and predominantly in Bosnia (since it was hit the hardest) are still standing on very shaky legs. Today, while trying to overcome the consequences of the war, the governments are rebuilding that what they once crashed. However, the distrust and instability are still very much present.

“This diversity of cultural influences has always relativized the notion of collective identity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which political manipulation has ensured remains a problematic concept. [...] The political reality today is that questions of identity are directly associated, in the mind of most of Bosnia and Herzegovina's people, with affiliation to a religious or “national” group. This phenomenon, though running contrary to current European trends, has arisen partly from the taboo nature of the subject, and partly from the enforced suppression of nationalism and religion in Yugoslavia.”³⁵

And once again, instead of creating a colourful architecture of all the different influences, this diversity creates a strong division between people, which, interlaced with the architecture of single family houses, creates a clear vision of that what people value the most – the private sphere. The growth in the private sphere is the first attempt to go back to normal life, by putting the private aspect into foreground. The focus has been completely shifted from the community, which was the pillar of the pre-war socialism, to individual/family. The distrust toward everyone else has caused people to find the security within their own four walls.

Taking advantage of sketchy legal frameworks and governments initially too weak to enforce rules and regulations, inhabitants have taken the issue of housing shortage in their own hands: they started building new dwellings from scratch and adapting existing edifice for their own purposes.³⁶

³⁵ Ibelings 2015, 23

³⁶ Regine 2008

3. Main Features of a post War House

When it comes to analysing the typology of detached houses, is important to determine what a home represents for people. It is also important to discover what element Banja Luka's citizens subconsciously choose, what do these elements really stand for, what living standards and expectations people have and how do they turn a house into a home.

“Living is both intimate and ordinary at the same time. Like eating, drinking and sleeping, living is something that most people simply do, without continually thinking about what it means to be at home, to feel at home, protected, safe and in familiar surroundings. Just where ‘being’ turns into ‘living’, and vice versa, is difficult to determine with any precision; a large part of the time they coincide.”³⁷

Living is in a strong relation to the private sphere and that is where people can be themselves the most. The same way the being turns to living, the unconscious part of a person turns into a conscious one when they make decisions. The importance of the analyses in this case is to see how much the unconscious affects the conscious decisions and how much does it influence the actions such as making the house. The conducted interviews have shown that there are certain features of the house that seem to inevitably come up in every interview. These features, such as the room layout, construction elements, house form or decoration elements emerged in specific social, political and economic frames. There are many factors that will influence the way a house looks: the market, the economy, the current trends in building, the law, the culture etc. Because the house is a cultural phenomenon, all of these factors will contribute to its making. This means, that when making a house, an individual will unconsciously make some decisions that were affected by some exterior influences. That is why the single-family architecture is such a subjective representation of not only the identity of its creator, but of the whole society. “The house is an institution, not just a structure, created for a complex set of purposes.”³⁸

It is not hard to describe a typical house in Banja Luka, since a great number of single-family residential architecture falls under one type. This type of house has in average three floors, out of which each floor creates a separate functional residential unit. Each residence is connected by outer stairs to create privacy for each entrance. The house is usually unfinished, with only ½ or ⅔ equipped for living. If it isn't in the city centre, there are high chances that it doesn't have a façade or even all the windows. The ones that do have a façade form a colourful neighbourhood that has an entire spectrum of rainbow. The living room is too large for its

³⁷ Ibelings 2010, 153

³⁸ Rapoport 1969, 46

user's needs, but this is required so that the owner can celebrate the slava³⁹. The upper social layers usually have an extra room which solely purpose is to accommodate all the guests during this day. The house has a simple rectangular base and a simple gabled roof, but if it belongs to a wealthier citizen, it will usually have some geometric additions, decorations and/or more complex roof. The construction is massive, with thick masonry brick walls. Any other type of construction is discarded at the very beginning. This massiveness makes the house solid, stable and permanent. It is meant to last and it is the only certain thing which will withstand the test of time (see *Figure 14, 15*).

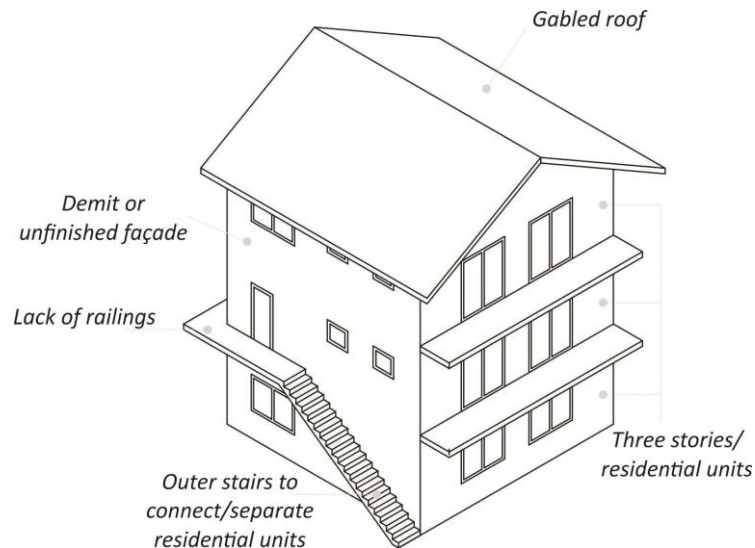


Figure 14: Schematic view of a typical Banja Luka house

The yard is mostly unfinished and sometimes the whole street or even the city quarter is in an unfinished condition, since a lot of them emerged without the proper urban planning. The main reason that the neighbourhood planning is something that is very little present in the urban planning of Banja Luka is that most settlements are built without the proper legal paperwork. Another reason can be found in the fact that people care much more about the private domain than the neighbourhood.

“Living is done not only in a house, but equally well in a neighbourhood. A considerable part of recent collective and private housing architecture in Bosnia and Herzegovina appears to be less concerned with the wider living environment than with the dwelling itself, more with the private domain than with the collective social world. That is hardly

³⁹ Each Orthodox family has a patron saint that they celebrate once a year. This celebration traditionally entails inviting friends, neighbours, colleagues and family members to one's home, where sumptuous table awaits the guests. It usually lasts from 2-3 days.

surprising in a situation where the normality of daily life needs to be rediscovered in the wake a traumatic period of war.”⁴⁰



Figure 15: A typical house in Banja Luka, view of the south-western façade

This need for privacy in this case manifests itself through many elements of the house. That is why a very important task is to “select those features of the house which seem most universal, and to examine them in different contexts so that we can best understand what it is that affects the forms”⁴¹. The main hypothesis that the Rapoport had, that can be directly applied to the case of Banja Luka residential architecture “is that house form is not simply the result of physical forces or any single causal factor, but is the consequence of a whole range of socio-cultural factors seen in their broadest terms”.⁴² He also recognized the importance of the physical factors, but he marked them as secondary compared to the socio-cultural, which were considered primary. By following this logic, for every element of the house, there is a whole set of circumstances that made it the way it is, not just its overall form. By analysing every house element individually, one can understand the way a whole society, politics and culture in the country influence the people, and through them, the architecture of detached houses.

⁴⁰ Ibelings 2010, 153

⁴¹ Rapoport 1969, 17

⁴² Ibid, 47

3.1. A Three Storey Giant – a House for the Future Generations

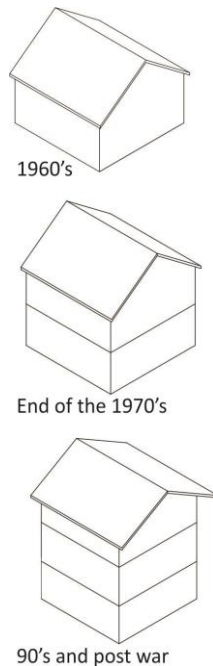


Figure 16: Schematic representation of the house expansion through years

In the last half a century, the house size has varied a lot. In a way, with the formation of Yugoslavia, all the previous influences were erased and a new house model was created: a simple, squared ground floor house, with nothing remarkable about it. It didn't have any of the elements of the previous epochs and cultures, since it represented the unity where everyone was the same. As the instability of the state grew, somehow, along with it, grew the house, upgrading for one floor. After the war, the two story house has become a three story house that is the main characteristic of the Banja Luka house of today (see *Figure 16*). Not only that the new house model has asserted itself as dominant in the city structure, but it is also not uncommon that the old models are adapted to the new standards (see *Figure 17*). Although this is the most common characteristic of the houses built after the war, it is clear that not every house in the city structure is three floors high. Many detached houses that originate from the earlier epochs, as well as some that are built today are limited to one or two floors. However, for the purpose of showing the

way the house size is inversely proportional to the economy, the three floor model will be the one taken into consideration.

Today's Banja Luka's economy (and of the whole country) is affected by the corrupted politicians and criminals that pile up the wealth on the expense of the common people. This causes a big discrepancy between the social statuses. There are hardly any people to be found that can be classified as the middle social layer. However, when observing the housing solutions in the city, one can't help but notice that great number of citizens are the owners of a luxury-sized house. This would mean that either most of the people are wealthy, which is not the case, or that the house size is not an indicator of a person's social status. Three story houses with ca. 100 m² on each floor can hardly be called uncommon in the area. A ground floor house is a rare sight, usually overwhelmed by the sea of these 10+ m high residences. Despite the high number of the low income citizens, building a three story house is a common practice.

So why do people of lower and middle social statuses have an enormous house and how is that financially possible? The answer is quite simple: the wealthier citizens will mostly build the house for themselves, to show off their wealth and enjoy it, making gyms, vine basements, spas etc., while the lower social layers build the house for themselves, their children and possibly their grandchildren. This means that even though the house size doesn't vary that much, the layout of the rooms certainly does. The fact is, it is much cheaper to buy one piece of land, to make one roof and foundation for a house that has three separate residential units, than to make three of each. In this way, the house owners have made sure that they children have a future home.



Figure 17: The expansion of the pre-war house in the post war years, view of the eastern façade

There is still a question of how is making such a house financially possible. Regardless of the fact that, according to some logic, a bigger house is more rentable, it still takes a lot of resources to make one. Because the financial resources are limited, the whole process of building is a story for itself. It usually takes up to ten years to even put the roof on the house. The house owner S. J. says: „I started building the house in 2000. We put the façade in 2012. But it still isn't finished. It's an endless process. “

A lot of money is being saved by not following up all the legal framework or hiring architect to make the proper blueprints, which is why the city has over 20 000 illegally built houses. Also, the investors, with the help of their family and friends, do a lot of building themselves. Everything that isn't necessary in making the house inhabitable is discarded. It is usually important to make one part functional. That is why there's a vast number of houses that lack a façade, windows, railings etc.

Another way of saving up on a three storey house is to finish a house with an attic instead of a full floor. The reason for building an attic is primarily financial – it is more rentable. First of all, less material has to be built into the house, and secondly, the government rent for an attic is 25 % lower than the one for the regular floor. This is a frequent solution that saves up some

money. But other than the financial factor, many investors enjoy living in such a space. Making a functional attic is often a challenge for architects because of the natural lighting, since a roof window is still some of a taboo in Banja Luka, primarily because of a firm belief that they always leak. It seems like a great majority of problems that appear in the architecture of detached houses is due to the fact that people are accustomed to a certain pattern and there are many aspects of construction and architecture that haven't been explored. That is why they'll go for the proven solutions.

One still can't help but wonder why these people build for the future generations anyways. If one can barely afford to build a house for themselves, why do they even think so far ahead and take the burden of providing a home for their children (or even grandchildren)? The answer to almost everything that happened in the last two decades is the most recent civil war. It is not just the destruction of the war that left the mark in people's minds, but the whole transition process from the socialist to capitalist country. The generation that started the trend of building three storey houses were the ones that grew up during socialism where they were promised equality and stability, and then fought the war that was imposed on them, only to be left with nothing. This resulted with the feeling of uncertainty and the fear of the future, which create a need for safety that is manifested in building houses – the only thing that is permanent. Scared and disappointed by the situation in the country, wondering if the situation is about to get any better and worrying that their children will be in even worse situation that they are now, they build. They take on the burden of building for the next generations, in order to make any kind of future possible. This means, that on one side, the constructing as the medium of overcoming the past and advancing towards future, is actually the indicator of the fear of that future in the private domain.

It is not just the number of floors that indicates the disbelief in the future. The fact that a lot of houses have some area reserved for business tells a great deal about the insecurity and instability of the country. Most people don't even have any concrete business plans, but they still make such a room just in case (see *Figure 18*). House owner B. K. sais:

“I planned some sort of business space there. It has a height of 3.20 m and there could be some grocery store or a workshop or mechanical shop. It can be altered to a living space as well. I'm not really sure what there's going to be there. [...] You can lose a job anytime, so I wanted to have something I can fall back onto. I have a decent job now, but who knows.”



Figure 18: A house with a business area in the ground floor

Apart from the practical reasons for making three storey houses, there is also other side of the story. The new social order that depicts piling up material things as the only goal in life, has unconsciously obtruded onto people the heavy burden of showing success through personal assets. In this case, the size of the house determines the successfulness of a person, even if the actual situation is far from it. A house is supposed to give a false insight into social and economic status of the family. The need to show off the wealth isn't a product of the last twenty years, but it has certainly increased lately. The fact is that the poverty in the land of poor is a shameful thing. People will rather borrow money, take loans and stop paying bills in order to be able to make a house that exceeds their financial possibilities by far. This describes almost every aspect of life in Banja Luka, but it would require a complete separate study to try and find out how most people still afford a certain lifestyle.

After the available financial resources (that are almost always overestimated) have been depleted, even with all the saving methods, the houses mostly remain unfinished (see *Figure 19*). Usually only one third of the house is inhabited, while two thirds still remain empty, waiting for the future generations to finish them and move in. And this is something that rarely happens. Younger generations no longer want to live with their parents. They will rather get a bank loan and buy a small apartment, since they cherish privacy more than large living space. "If someone decided to make an analysis of the utilization of residential space of the individual housing, the results would be devastating," claims the architect S. B.



Figure 19: Line of houses in Banja Luka where only one out of five is finished

This peculiar phenomenon of house growth in the last half a century can possibly be best shown through one of the case studies: a small construction company owner and his wife have built their house in 1980. It was a small, ground floor house, with some basic rooms, like most houses of the time were. As the children came along, they were planning on building a new house next to the old one, but it was more cost effective to just expand the old one. So the house grew. This was at the end of 80s, with the war approaching and by this time, ground floor house model was already long replaced by two story houses. In case of this particular house, the living room was expanded and an upper floor was added, so that there was a master bedroom, a room for every child, along with the spare bedroom in the ground floor. This was the house they all lived in comfortably, never needing any additional space. Since 2015, they're expanding again. Though their children have grown up and left the country, they are building and expanding the house. Making it bigger, taller, so that their children have enough place to live there too. Maybe there is another factor that can be added to this equation of making three story giants – the fear of living alone and the children leaving. Yet the younger generations are leaving the country at an increasing rate. It is almost like they are consciously building something they know will never be used, in order to give themselves some hope and comfort.

Some rare sights of the Banja Luka houses that don't fit into these standards can be found scattered across the city (see *Figure 19*). These are ground floor houses built in the past few years, mostly by younger generations that don't carry the burden of war as much as the older generations do. Those individuals will build for themselves, to enjoy the present and use the money for something else, rather than investing into a house their whole life. They think more in the present, trying to reasonably enjoy every aspect of life. There are still,



Figure 20: A ground floor house; view from the south-eastern corner

however, very little visible marks in architecture field that show any kind of change, primarily while young couples usually decide to buy an apartment, rather than to build a house. That is why a ground floor house is such a very rare sight in Banja Luka. It is also almost inevitable that the owners of such house with only one residential unit will have to answer many questions, especially if they have male children that, according to society's standards, they need to provide a future home for. This question came up in one of the interviews, where the young couple with two sons have built a ground floor house with one residential unit. The attention this house arose, just for being a one story house, is almost beyond the point of belief.

The legal aspect defines the size of the houses as well. A lot of the interviewees were pushed into making a bigger house that they wanted, only because of the legal frameworks. Interviewed B. M. didn't have such a big house in mind: "That whole story wasn't planned at all, but according to the urbanistic plans, there were three stories planned, so we had to do it [...] people are complaining about that." After all, a house had to fit into neighbourhood, and making a ground floor house between two tall houses is not acceptable, especially in the city centre zones. This means that the variation of the house size in the near future most likely won't happen. The guidelines have already been given by that what is built illegally, and to reverse the process is very difficult at this point.

It is clear that people have more than one reason for building the oversized houses. However, when the reasons are those that settle them back, rather than to help them prosper, some things need to change. The underutilization of space represents a real problem, without people even realizing that. But before the way of building can change, the overall state of mind has to be changed too.

3.2. The Stairs

The stairs “are symbolic, as well as practical”.⁴³ The repeating pattern of the staircase use is in the connection with the size of the house. As previously mentioned, a house is usually built not just for one, but for two or more families. Considering the fact that there are more families living under one roof, there is a need to separate these residential units in order to provide some privacy for each of them. In the majority of the houses, people will build the outer stairs that will both connect and separate each floor (see *Figure 21*). According to house owner S. J., that way, “everyone has their own place” and they “don’t get into quarrels”.



Figure 21: Roofed outer stairs detail

However, this physical barrier only seemingly enables the privacy. Family members will often overstep privacy boundaries by coming unannounced. Important factor in this case is the living situation in general. The economics and partially the culture are the cause that many young people live with their parents until they get married. This occurrence creates a strong need for parents to protect their children and to do so they need to know everything that they are doing. So if they continue to live under the same roof with them even after they started their own family, it is hard to establish the boundaries and sever all the prior ties. This means that the separate entrances are an empty symbol. They are the representation of privacy, but they do not provide it. That is why so many young people rather take a loan and buy a smaller apartment, even if they have the living situation arranged. This contributes to underutilization of space, resulting in many half-empty houses.

The reason that people prefer outer, rather than inner stairs is, besides the privacy aspect, a matter of economy. For most people, this is far more practical and above all cheaper solution. Having the inner staircase can almost be called a luxury since, according to many, they are a

⁴³ Allsopp 1977, 58

waste of living space and money. “You lose quite a lot of space with those. Besides, I have two kids...if they one day need the house, of their own, this one is already divided in two units (house owner B. K).” The material used for the stairs is concrete, for both inner and outer stairs. Any kind of modern, light steel or wooden stairs is something that is untested and unsafe. The final coat is also often considered luxury, sometimes even for the interior. They often stand in their raw form, without the railings or with something that can be barely called that way.

3.3. Construction – Only a Brick House is a Real House

Every proper house in the Balkans is built out of bricks. Massive construction is the only one that is well accepted by the majority of Banja Luka’s citizens. The core of the house is that what will remain, everything else can be replaced. That is why the “skeleton” is the most important house element, because it is there to last. So when it comes to the materials and the quality of work for the house core, it is something that has to be done by certain standards. Even someone with limited financial resources will invest as much as possible into this phase and will be there along with the construction workers to make sure everything is done as arranged. The interviewee B.K. sais:

“The walls and slabs are very important and if that isn’t done properly, everything else falls apart. [...] my house is far from finished, but I’ll rather wait a little and buy some more quality materials, than do it just for sake of finishing it.”

The concrete and the cement have to be of good quality and the most favoured brick is the hollow clay block with the dimensions 25x25x19 cm, that has a very good quality/price ratio. These materials provide a solid wall with thermal insulation that can withstand the weather conditions even without the façade (see *Figure 22*). This is something that every owner will invest his time and money into and won’t hesitate to do anything to make the construction according to their standards. “We paid a lot of attention to the quality of the construction, especially the concrete. I vibrated the slabs myself, to make everything more compact and durable”, says B. K.



Figure 22: The core of the typical Banja Luka house

Anything that doesn't fit into the pattern of a solid, enduring house is usually looked down upon. One out of nine interviewed people doesn't have a brick house. But the ratio of a brick house vs. any other type of construction is much higher. There are many companies that make prefabricated houses and have years of experience and many built houses behind them. Without going into a discussion about the quality of a prefabricated house, what is clear on the first impression is that it's a cheaper, faster and simpler solution. However, everyone who decides to make a prefabricated house will be the centre of interest of the whole neighbourhood. Since people don't have that much experience with other types of construction, they tend to mark it as bad even without knowing much or even anything about it. And in a long run, the wooden construction is certainly not as durable as the brick construction, which is the worst possible aspect in their opinion. There are still a lot of doubts for everything that is slightly different. People will always go for the solution that is proven to be working.

Another thing that is characteristic for many people on the Balkans is that the house construction depends a great deal on the help of their friends and family. That is often why the whole process takes so much time and it is, in a way, "do it yourself project". Everyone has something that they consider vital when making a house and for B. K., the durability was primary:

"My father in law helped me a lot with building. He built the entire brick walls in the ground floor. We made the concrete reinforcement together. I know how everything was done and it was done exactly how I wanted it. When the slab was poured, I wanted to vibrate the concrete, and I did that myself. [...] I painted all of the inner walls, put the laminate, med this bar that separates the kitchen and the living room. [...] You can do a lot of things by yourself, especially on the interior."

Once again, the main influential factor is the economy, but also a lack of trust in the construction workers, which makes the investor highly involved in the process of construction.

3.4. The Façade or the Lack of it

When observing many of residential settlements in Banja Luka, one thing that is more than obvious is the lack of façades. The further is the settlement from the city centre, the bigger is the percentage of the houses without a façade (see *Figure 23*). An uninformed observer driving by would probably be under the impression that all of these houses are recently built and are waiting for the façade that will complete the process. However, anyone with any information about the current housing solutions in the whole Balkans, will be aware of the fact that all of these houses have been long inhabited.

The most important reason behind this occurrence is the lack of financial resources. Building a house is an investment that many will go into unprepared, knowingly or unknowingly. Even when aware of the financial limitations, one will try to provide a residence with multiple separate units. For most, the main goal is make one of those units inhabitable for the time being. By the time that most people reach this phase in which putting the façade is next order of business, the financial resources have been depleted, which clearly means one thing – no façade.



Figure 23: Settlement of Banja Luka with high number of illegally built houses

Most people willingly make a decision to leave an unfinished house, since it wasn't built legally in the first place. Those who do put the façade mostly do so in order to get the proper paperwork for the house. First of all, the laws and regulations are not adapted to the economic and social situation of the country, which makes it impossible for most people to follow them through. This has a mass illegal construction as a consequence, since people can't afford all of that what the law mandates. Due to the fact that there are too many illegal houses, the law enforcement can't conduct the law properly. And once again, since the law is not conducted properly, there are more illegal houses being built, which once again excludes the facades from the process of building. This way, a closed circle is created that can only be broken if the socio-economic situation is in accordance with the law.

The analyses of those facades that are made doesn't require comprehensive examination. If an individual has enough resources to put the final layer onto his house, a typical demit façade with the minimal 8 cm Styrofoam layer is the most logical choice. The final layer is usually acryl or silicate plaster that comes in all imaginable colours. The colour of the façade can vary from light yellow to deep purple, from light to dark nuances. What most people will choose, considering the fact that the façade is there to last, is some pastel shade, such as light yellow or peach that they won't get bored of so easily, but a complete opposite is not a rarity either (see *Figure 25*). Some house owners, in order to emphasize a salience, a window, an overhang, floor division, or balcony, will often choose a different shade, colour or material to decorate and embellish their house (see *Figures 24, 26, 27*). Since many houses have two or more different shades of the façade, the whole mixture of colours as well as houses without the façade create disharmonic city quarters. The fact is, façade appearance isn't in any way regulated by any law, so people mostly do whatever they like best.



Figure 24: Emphasized corners, windows and floor division on the façade, view from the North



Figure 25: A house with an intense façade colour, view from the south-eastern corner



Figure 26: Emphasized balconies on the façade, view from the south-western corner



Figure 27: Different colours on the façade for accentuating the house geometry, view from the north-western corner



Figure 28: Façade of the 1960's house adapted to today's aesthetic standards; view from the south-western corner

From the socialist residential neighbourhoods, where all houses were made on the principals of simplicity and equality, the colourful image of today's capitalistic neighbourhood shows that it's all about individuality. This is not the individuality in the sense that each house is unique and nothing like any of the others; it is rather that some superficial factors differ, while the core remains the same. Since the idea of equality collapsed, the colour of the façade was a way to express diversity. Some of the old houses have taken on the new attire, in order to adapt to present aesthetic preferences (see *Figure 28*).

White has become the least common colour for a long time, up until recently. Since all the houses are colourful white is the only colour that stands out now. Many contemporary houses of upper social strata are now following a trend of putting a white façade, since it is the best way to make a house stand out.

3.4.1. Ecological Aspect and Energy Efficiency

The ecological construction is still something that is in the early phases even in more developed countries, which means that there will be decades before this type of building takes hold in Bosnia. There have been some experiments with the "smart houses" and it is a part of the official architectural discourse, but it will be a long time before the ecology becomes a parameter in the house construction of the masses. It is something that is rarely on the mind of an average house owner. While renewable sources of energy are slowly becoming commercialized with many people putting solar panels on their roofs, their price is still out of range for most people in Bosnia. But for the time being, the people of Banja Luka have to take baby steps towards this type of house. Although the law is trying to catch up, the reality is still falling behind. The paragraph 5 (2) of the Space regulation and construction law states:

"During the planning, design and construction of new buildings, as well as the major reconstruction of existing buildings, the long-term measures must be applied, as the minimum requirements relating to the reduction of energy consumption and switch to the use of energy from renewable resources, thus creating conditions for the energy efficient use of buildings, improving the energy performance of buildings and reducing

the environmental impact, according to the rules and conditions established by this law and regulations on energy efficiency and environmental protection in the Serbian Republic.”

However, as previously mentioned, one of the biggest problems in the city is the number of illegally constructed houses and the incapability of conducting the law, due to the very bad economic situation in the country. So even if the law defines that the energy efficiency is something that needs to be upheld, due to the current state, this is something that can't be conducted. So it is not only that all of the rules aren't followed through, but even the basic things, like putting the façade are still an issue. People often lack the money for this final step and thinking ahead by putting façade in order to save up on the heating expenses is something that is rarely taken into consideration. That is why some, like B. K., have to find another way to adapt to the weather conditions:

“I have to heat a lot now, and we have this stove in the hallway. I won't install the central heating until I put the façade. And I would do that right now if I could, because it would pay off in several years, but as much as I want to, there are no financial resources for that. [...] When it's colder, we turn on the AC and all the radiators.”

This is not the lone example; most illegal houses don't have the façade, which means that this number could be as high as 20 000. The energy waste is enormous and air pollution accordingly. But for the people making the ends meet, this is the last thing on their mind. Those who do have enough funds to put the façade usually all follow the same pattern, by putting 8-10 cm Styrofoam on the 19 cm thick wall.

But even despite all of the financial setbacks, people have slowly started to pay attention to energy savings. According to the owner of a construction company in the city, people buy materials of the better quality, in order to save on the energy costs. This is even more visible with those that have more financial resources. Interviewed house owner M. D. has thoroughly thought it through and saw a proper insulation as a long term investment. He said:

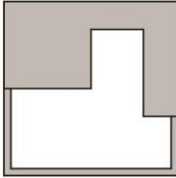
“The outer walls are 53 cm thick. The wall is made out of Austrian *Porothersm* masonry blocks that were set across, so the built wall is 30 cm thick. Then we added cement grout on both inner and outer side, the air cushioning of 2 cm and 12 cm of Styrofoam. This means that we didn't put the Styrofoam directly on the brick, since most people do it that way. And we actually found a lot of data that confirm that this is a better way. We saw in Austria, Switzerland, Germany that the government partially subsidizes this thermal insulation of the houses, since they automatically use less power and there's less pollution. And that was a crucial moment for us, where we decided to have this type of insulation.”

The only solution for the time being could be precisely found in quote above, which is the government funding. Funding of housing projects, or even enabling some incentives could go a long way. However, the current political system and even the general state of mind prevents something like that happening anytime soon.

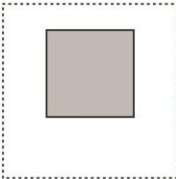
3.5. Fencing the Property

“One thing we require of a home is privacy. Enclosure is not only required to create a suitable internal climate: it is required to give privacy.”⁴⁴ This need for privacy is almost a basic instinct, something that can’t be rationalized. Even more so, the privacy is required when the trust has been disrupted. The need for privacy has changed and gained different meaning throughout the years (see *Figure 29*). After the war, when there was a need to rebuild and restore, the homes were rebuilt, but the neighbourhood was neglected. The big boom in the construction

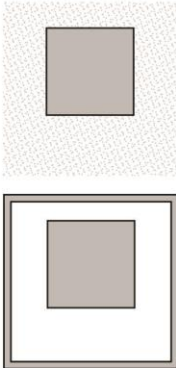
*Ottoman Empire:
Tall masonry fence was separating the residential unit from the city*



Since the western influence became dominant in the area, the house is mostly positioned freely on the lot, with a decorative fence surrounding it



After the war, the regulation of the lot became irrelevant for some, while others built tall fences around their dwellings to keep it separated from the city



of detached houses, especially at the beginning of the millennium, has obviously left out the planning of the communities. On the other hand, the need to create a personal space and to enable privacy was much increased. There was a clear shift from the collectivism of the pre-war socialist Yugoslavia to the individualism of the capitalistic post war states. It is inevitable that the war has implanted a seed of distrust between people, because it led to neighbour turning against neighbour. That is why a detached house model of socialism was replaced by a new introvert model that doesn’t communicate to its surrounding. Private domain is something that is safe and tested, while the public domain, or the community in this case, is an unmarked territory. Trust towards the neighbours has yet to be established.⁴⁵

Figure 29: Importance of fence through time

⁴⁴ Allsopp 1977, 54
⁴⁵ Ibelings 2010, 11

The general rule is that the people don't like anyone looking in their yard and they like to mark what is theirs. The quarrels between relatives and neighbours over the property boundaries are one of the most common cases that can be encountered in the Minor Offence court rooms. All of this makes a fence very important element of a house. It is there to protect anyone entering the property, protect the house from too much visual exposure and mark a clear boundary of the lot. The fact is that nobody likes for others to meddle into their privacy, but they do want to know what is happening in the neighbour's yard. Again, the recent war can be seen as part of the reason why people so often look into private business of others. That war caused the closest friends and neighbours to turn against each other, which caused a general distrust and feeling of uncertainty. The post war situation didn't bring much improvement either. Many people took advantage of others in order to get rich. That is why the poor don't trust the rich and always want to know more about their affairs and vice versa.



Figure 30: Massive fence detail



Figure 31: Wrought iron fence detail

Having a fence is not something that is connected to a specific house type. Almost every house has one, tall or short, more or less transparent (see *Figures 30* and *31*). It is something that can be called a necessity, since people will often overstep the privacy boundaries. Even if an individual doesn't care about that, their neighbours will most likely make sure that they start caring. There have been some extreme cases, such as the one with the ground floor house of M. T. and I. T. The house owners didn't care all too much of putting the fence around the property. It felt like it was an unnecessary waste of money they could invest somewhere else. After all, in their opinion, a fence is just there to mark the property, no one is going to step over privacy boundaries anyways. Until one day happened something that changed their mind: "There was also this neighbour once that came here with the tape measure and started measuring something in the yard." Their child was home alone at the time and got scared of the strange man going around house. This was the day they decided to put the fence.

As previously mentioned, there isn't really certain fence type be connected to a certain house type. There is a fence typology that manifested itself throughout the years (see *Figure 32*). In the period of Yugoslavia, there was basically only one fence type with varying patterns. In the later years, the types became more individual, depending more on the financial resources. It is often that the turbo folk⁴⁶ architecture implies quite striking massive fence that protects both from the intruders and sometimes the views, but it is still not a general rule that can be applied in every case. Usually the politicians or some "important" people prefer putting up a high fence. There are several cases in Banja Luka, where the fence is so high and massive, that the whole house gives away the impression of a fortress (see *figure 33*). Many other turbo folk architecture lovers don't want high fences, since they want every neighbour and passenger to see their luxurious house that they are proud of. Other people will mostly have some simple iron fence that serves the purpose of separating their private space form the public. Since it is another investment that requires additional financial resources, for most citizens the choice of fence depends on the price.

⁴⁶ A separate section will explain "turbo-folk" architecture more precisely, but for the time being, in order to understand the way it correlates to the fence size, it is necessary to define it in short lines. It is basically the architecture of bad taste, pompous and overwhelmed with different geometric elements, decorations and forms that clash and give away the impression of kitsch.

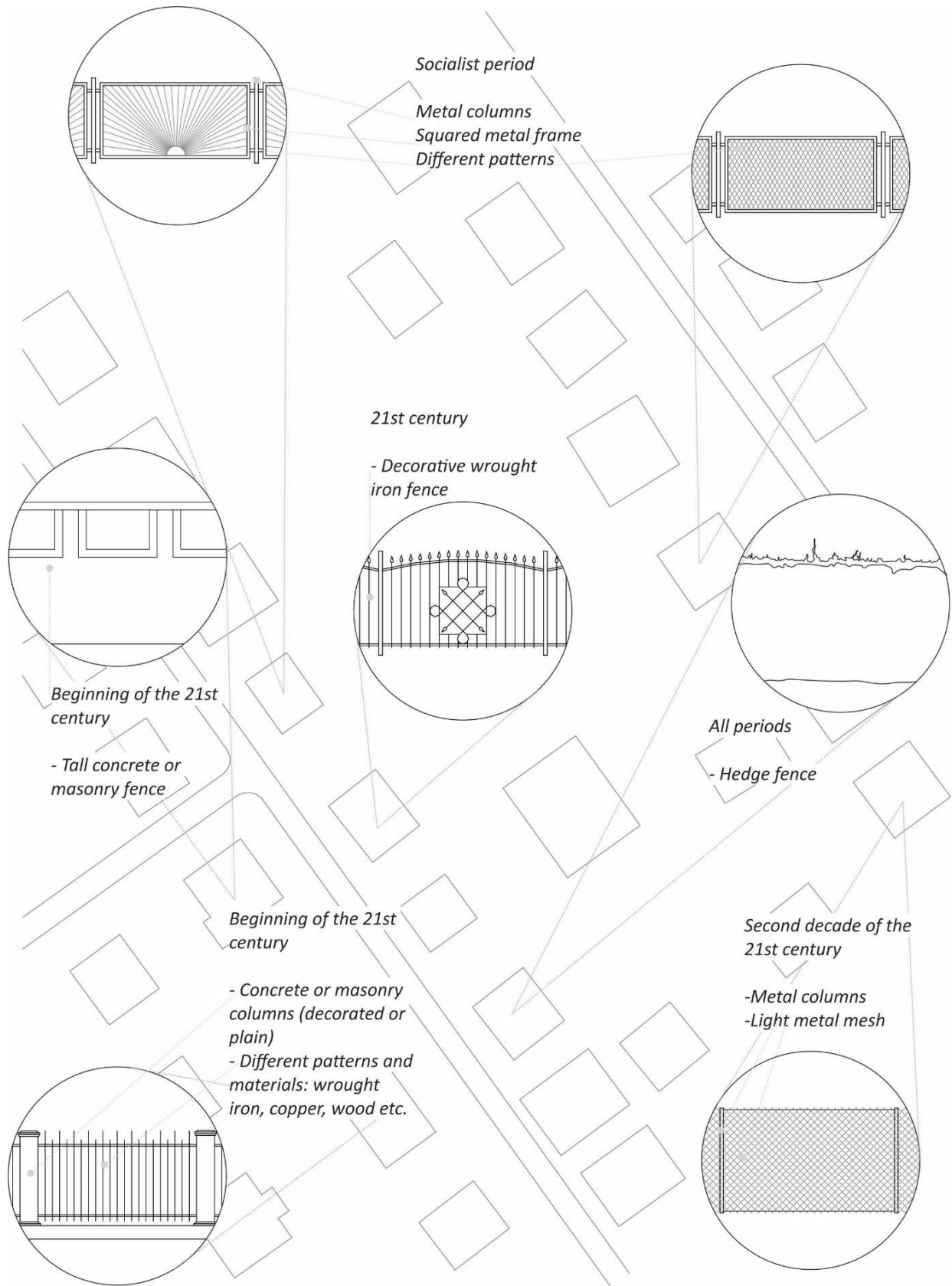


Figure 32: Typology of fences that can be found across Banja Luka



Figure 33: A “turbo” fence, spotlights and surveillance cameras

In the suburban and especially rural areas, fencing of the property has much more of significance. Even if they aren't using every piece of land, every villager values the land above all and wants to clearly mark that what belongs to him. Many of these markings are done by the land owners themselves, which causes many irregularities and improperly marked lot borders. This, as an aftereffect, often creates problems with paperwork during a house construction.

3.6. The Room for Slava

During socialism, religion was a domain of the society that was put far in the background. With the socialist times long gone, the religion gains on its importance every day. The number of built religious objects after the war is the witness of this occurrence. “For the first time after almost seventy years of stagnation, there is a boom in the construction of churches, mosques and theological colleges.” Since the ending of the war, in which every nation fought in order to establish their national identity, “religion has re-emerged from the private domain into the political and cultural limelight, and is an active catalyst of social change”. It has not only gained the importance on the country level, which equalizes it to politics, but it has also become a

synonym for every nation's identity. "In next to no time, religious edifices took over or regained their role as the central feature of many towns and urban districts."⁴⁷

Respecting traditions and religious customs has become one of the most important things for an Orthodox Serb (as it has for any other former Yugoslavian nation), which includes following up on the tradition of slava. Slava is a celebration of a patron Saint that every family has and this is something that is passed on to every male in the family. This festivity takes place once a year, in the home of the host and lasts for 1-3 days. It is a big event for every family and the preparation for this day will take a lot of time and money. Without even bringing up this subject to the interviewees, this is something that came up in every interview, without the exception, showing the importance that this day has on the Serbian orthodox community. It may seem excessive, but this one day has an immense influence on the layout of the house. S. B., the architect who has done many house projects, claims:

"It is a fact that in these areas, especially in smaller towns and rural communities, the whole house and the whole arrangement is subordinated to one single day – slava. It is important that there is the room for slava and all the rest is secondary and irrelevant. People will often make a living room with 30-40 m² where they can put the table for some 20-30 people or even more and they will struggle with this space for the rest of the year."

The drawing of the house plan will start with one important thing – making the living room large enough, which can effortlessly be transformed into a space for celebration. For everyone making a house it is something that implies and what influences layout of the house the most. Having a large living room is only one out of many possibilities that a person can do to provide a space for accommodating all the people that will go through their house during slava.

Probably the most extreme one is having an extra room for the sole purpose of celebrating this day. Most often, in some unfinished houses, the slava is celebrated in one of the unfinished rooms, or floors, thus finding some use for the space that doesn't have any other purpose throughout the year, such as in a house of M. O.:

"A big part of it [upper floor] is still unfurnished. This area remains empty for now, since we're going to keep this room for slava. Here's where a small kitchen is going to be, so we can keep the food here, without having to carry it from downstairs. It's actually a bit bigger than the space downstairs. There's over 5m length, enough for to fit in any table."

⁴⁷ Ibelings 2010, 25

There is also a possibility that an extra room for this festivity is incorporated into the plan from the beginning. This is something that is present with the upper social layers that can afford a luxury of having a room that they only use once a year. Some choose to repurpose it during the rest of the year, so that its construction can be justified. Architect N. D. talks about a luxurious house project:

“Across from the spa room is a big room for slava, which is basically both a hobby room and a slava room, with billiard and some other games. There’s also a small kitchen connected to it, with the fully functional cooling chamber. This room is also connected to the wine basement.”

For those less fortunate, who live in an apartment or have a smaller living room, it means taking out and moving all the furniture (see *Figure 34*). There are some other possibilities, such as celebrating in the garage or the attic, but this is mostly the case with the people who have older houses, when this festivity wasn’t celebrated as much, and thus, the room layout wasn’t subordinated to it.



Figure 34: An apartment living room transformed into a slava area by relocating the furniture

The complexity of this whole phenomenon of celebrating this festivity is mostly shown in the one fact: that this very important day for every religious Orthodox is celebrated for the complete wrong reasons. Most of the people celebrating go to church only several times a year or they don't go at all. The religion in these areas has completely lost its sense. It is important to show that one's a great believer by posting symbols of the religion, such as an icon or a cross, which is materialized in the architecture as well. It is not about being religious but rather about materializing religiousness through empty symbols. The same goes for slava. It has become more about making sumptuous table, where all the guests will consume too much food or drinks than it is about celebrating a protector saint of the family or following through on any tradition. The table is, according to the older church customs, supposed to be modest and only the nearest friends and family need to be invited. But the tendency to over exaggerate in a really extravagant manner is something that repeats itself in many aspects of Banja Luka's citizens. The slava that is celebrated nowadays is also a turbo representation of what it should be. An average citizen has to set aside a whole salary or more for these two days and probably another one by going to slava that the family and friends celebrate. It is almost expected that every guest brings some gifts, which are also often an indicator of someone's social status. If one individual invites forty people to his slava, then he has to go to forty such festivities. That means that this person has to buy forty gift bags. Considering the fact that an average person doesn't have the money to buy something each time, or even that they don't need everything they get, it is no wonder that so many gifts get "recycled". It is quite possible that a gift will make a full circle and come back to its original owner. So one can't help but wonder what the point of such an unnecessary custom is. However, anyone who would ask such a question would highly offend almost every citizen of Banja Luka.

The significance that this custom has in the social life of Serbs is not to be dismissed easily. For many, it is a distraction from everyday problems, enabling them to see their friends and family. In order to get invited, one must celebrate, which makes it almost mandatory to be a host once a year. To the outside observer, the excessiveness of the situation may seem unnecessary, but once again, the goal is not to justify certain house features, but rather to realize their importance. It is clear that the importance of slava is an undeniable fact and it has already implemented itself as one of the main parameters in the design process. Having this in mind, it isn't unusual that this much attention is being paid to organizing the house according to the requirements for slava. Whether this custom is going to be transferred to the younger generations is yet to be seen, but for the time being, the architects have to accept it in order to make a functional cooperation with their clients.

3.7. Geometric Addition

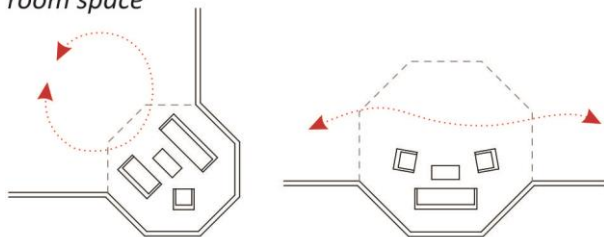
A circle, hexagon, octagon, square, triangle, trapeze etc., are all geometric forms that are often added on to the basic cubic form of the house, in the middle of the wall or at the house corners, for many reasons. The most important one is the one that has already been addressed in the former chapter, which is to gain some extra space for slava (see *Figure 33*). This is the indicator of how one festivity that is celebrated once a year not only influences the room layout, but the exterior of the house as well. It still reflects the need to subordinate the whole house to one or two days during a year, one level below making an extra room just for that day. It is not a separate room, but it does create some extra space for moving the furniture just slightly to the side and creating some extra space.

To think about it, it isn't completely unpractical. Every good citizen feels obliged to celebrate slava, since it's the highest expression of national pride and religion, so it is a thing anyone needs to take into consideration when making a plan for the house, whether they like it or not. A house owner M. D., when asked about the trapeze in the middle of the façade, replies:

“This is a trapeze that means a lot, because we can put all the living room furniture here and the rest of the space remains fluent and uninterrupted. [...] And we have to just

shove them a little together and this remaining space is big enough to put two large tables in here, so we can celebrate slava.”

Geometric additions on the corners (a) or in the middle (b) of the façade wall create a fluid living room space



By slightly moving the furniture, the required space for inserting a table for slava is created

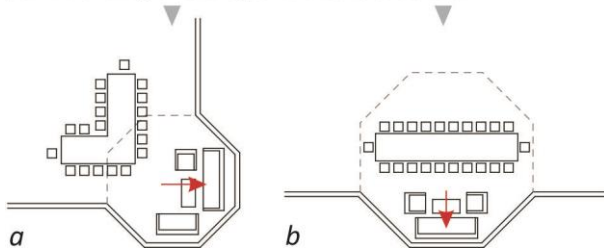


Figure 35: Geometric addition in correlation to slava celebration

The most common geometric forms are hexagon and octagon – on the edge of the house, or in the middle – which makes it a trapeze. This trapezoid form isn't really something new – it is an element that was often to be seen on the houses of some previous epochs on the Balkans, especially in the period of the Ottoman Empire, where it was located in the middle of the upper floor street façade. However, its use is taken to a whole new level. Seeing such an addition on the ground floor house or stretching over one upper floor is not something that catches the eye that much (see *Figure 35*). But considering the fact

that most Banja Luka's houses have three or even more stories, it is an addition that defines the whole house (see *Figures 36, 37*). There are many houses that will can be listed under the category of a modern day castle, and not in a good way, precisely because they have one or more geometric additions. The most common case is a three or four story house that has one hexagonal 'tower' on every corner. With the addition of the spiked roof covering the towers and some half-circle windows, it is reminiscent to the middle age castle, which gives it a turbo folk character. Usually located on the city outskirts, with the forest behind them, these houses inevitably have an ominous character (see *Figure 38*).



Figure 36: Geometric addition on a ground floor house corner; view from the west



Figure 37: Geometric addition in the middle of a four storey house; view from the south-eastern corner



Figure 38: Two towers added on corners of a house; view from the north

3.8. The Pantry

Another important room in the house that unlike the space required for slava, has some completely opposite characteristics: it is small, very functional and used throughout the year. It is about 2-3 m², with one small window, shades that are always closed and is full of winter stores and different kinds of food that don't need to be kept in the fridge, but still need a relatively dark and cool space.

This room has kept its importance for a long period of time. Since a lot of Banja Luka's citizens make winter stores, mostly pickled vegetables that they use throughout the winter, this room is usually located near the kitchen, to enable the easy access. This is extremely valued by the older generations, like D. D. It is something they've been used to:

“There's also pantry for the winter foods, of which I make a lot. You know, older people already have a certain habit. So when making a house, these influence their decisions a lot. When younger people make a house, there mostly aren't pantries included. They don't need that, since they often eat at their mother's place. And I couldn't imagine my house without it.”

Still, its incorporation into the plan hasn't vanished with the younger generations either. Some will decide that they don't need it, others, such as M. T., will find it important: “There's also a small pantry. We really got the minimal space for it, but still of the great value.”

Unlike the usual storage rooms that can be found in the apartments and houses of the western countries, the pantry differs in a fact that it's not a dark unventilated space positioned something in the centre of the house, where there was some leftover room. It is always a ventilated room on the façade wall, to ensure the proper preservation of the groceries.

3.9. Interior Design

When it comes to interior design, most investors have very simple demands: they want their furniture cheap and they want comfort. To the nation who has a hard time accepting the fact that they need an architect to draw the construction of the house, having an architect to do the interior design is a completely abstract subject and unjustified expense.



Figure 39: Some of the most common furniture elements in Banja Luka living room

Today, with the amount of information and ideas that the internet supplies, even the older generations will seek to find something suitable for them. The most preferable styles are those in furniture catalogues from Austria and Germany, and quite often Italy, but these are always from the standardized catalogues of the large store chains where the individuality and originality are often not the subject. One thing that people of Bosnia don't seem to use into their own advantage is the fact that there are so many carpenters that can make any type of furniture. Though the craftsmen and especially the carpenters are very difficult kind of people to deal with, the possibilities are numerous. Despite of this fact, an average citizen prefers not to experiment and goes for the proven model (see *Figure 39*). That is why most living rooms, bedrooms and bathrooms look the same, just with slightly different materials and colours.

The floors and the walls are always rather simple. A plain white wall, or some colour of owner's preference suffices in this case. There has been a trend of putting some wallpapers, usually on some bends or emphasized parts of the wall around the year 2010, but it was still mostly characteristic for younger generations. The wallpaper is something that belongs in the past and hasn't made a comeback in Banja Luka. For the floor, the best options are always parquet or laminate, as the cheaper solution, and, of course, the tiles for the rooms that require waterproof floors. Once again,

there isn't much room for experimentation, but it's not just something that is specifically bound for the South-Eastern Europe. Detailed and planned interior design require organization and time which many can't afford, nor they can afford to pay a professional to do it, as they don't see it as a necessity. Apart from that, everyone knows what makes them feel most comfortable and what piece of furniture can make a room feel like home.

Though interior design is not something that is often applied, but it can be very helpful in increasing functionality of small spaces, such as apartments. Turning towards contemporary design in order to improve their living space is something mostly young married couples will find acceptable. A house is a large and expensive investment that young people don't want to burden themselves with, thus using the money to buy an apartment that usually doesn't have the luxury of space. This is why some choose to turn to an architect, such as L. S., that can make their living space more functional and creative. According to him, the preferred style is Scandinavian minimalism and the collaboration with the client is open and brings good results, creating a unique space.

3.10. Windows, Arches, Columns and other Additions

When it comes to house details, the simplicity is most often the solutions, but there are additions that can improve (according to their owners) to aesthetic of the house. The entrance doors and windows are usually PVC, large enough to let the light in, small enough to protect from the view of strangers. Large glass panels are something that can't be found almost at all, since they disrupt the containment of a residence and thus its privacy. However, in order to express their style preferences, many will reach for arched or circular windows to make their house stand out. Also, anything other than the standardized house shell is something that expresses the individual characteristics of the house owner. These are mostly some unnecessary additions that cost extra money, so it's not something to be seen in an average house. This kind of "embellishments" is something that can be found in the architecture of the wealthier citizens, especially in the houses that were built at the beginning of the century. A Greek column was something that many citizens found appealing, adding them especially around the entrance area. The house can also get its unique look by adding many balconies with rail balustrades, small towers, roof additions etc. "[...] Greco-Roman, Turkish, Slavic, and other forms are often found in the same place."⁴⁸ There will be more mention of this sort of houses, alongside with sociological interpretation of this phenomenon, but for the time being, it is important to understand that most houses don't fall under this category and don't have any additions that make them stand out.

The preference for a house are not based on the outer socio-economic and cultural influences, but on the inner as well. Factors such as age, education level, economic status, position in the society etc. can influence the look of a house to a great extent (see *Figure 40*).

⁴⁸ Rapoport 1969, 30

Owner info/ House characteristics		Number of floors	Geometric additions	Ecological aspect	Turbo folk additions
Age	40 and under	 1-2	 less common	 of little importance	
	40 and over	 3-4	 more common	 of very little importance	
Education	Lower level	 1-2	 more common	 of very little importance	
	Higher level	 3-4	 less common	 important	
Economic status	Low	 1-2	 less common	 of very little importance	
	High	 3-4	 more common	 important	
Living status	Local	 3-4	 less common	 of very little importance	
	Living abroad	 3-4	 more common	 of very little importance	

Figure 40: The overview on the correlation of inner influences to the house form

The table shows that even though culture and society can influence the house form, some other factors can work in a contrary direction. For example, if a person is living abroad, has low education level, high income and is over the age of forty, the chances of them making a turbo folk house is very high. The education and age (in case of younger generations) work against the turbo folk preferences. Aspects such as ecology are more important to more educated and wealthier citizens. The first see the importance of reducing air pollution from heating, and the second see it as a long term investment that reduces heating costs. Younger generations aren't as burdened by the future, thus making houses for themselves only, but if they're living abroad, the house can serve as a display of success, by adding some extra floors. Younger generations with high education levels are unlikely to make anything resembling turbo folk.

4. Turbo Folk Subculture

The first time word turbo described something widely spread on the Balkans, was the moment that the new type of music emerged. It was a musical genre that started developing in the late 70s. The authors experimented with new song structure and lyrical themes that were more oriented towards elements of contemporary life. The approach to folk music was post-modern, with implementation of pop elements into it. At the beginning, this music was known as newly composed folk music and although not accepted by the official government at the time, it has become popular with the working class. Since Yugoslavia was ought to give an image of a liberal state that was open to Western influences, the new musical direction was looked down upon and it was seen as a domain of the uneducated and uncultured people.⁴⁹

Turbo-folk is a successor of the newly composed music. It was the next phase of music evolution and it fused Euro-pop with the national tendencies, which was also a reflection of the current political and social instability in the state. The folkloric lyrics and motives, which were almost naïve, were substituted for much more blatant themes of urban hedonism and synthesized sounds.⁵⁰

Turbo-folk has reached its peak in the nineties, when the civil war was raging in the Balkan countries. During this time, international sanctions were imposed onto Serbia, which caused hyperinflation and a steep decrease in living conditions. The impoverished country was a very fertile ground for a quick spread of the new musical genre that celebrated hedonism and consumerism. Its patriotic connotations and promotion of new found national identity have offered people an escape from a gloomy reality of destruction, which aligned with the interest of nationalist parties in Serbia,⁵¹ but it also spread quickly in Bosnia, predominantly in areas settled by Serbian population, including the city of Banja Luka.

During the worst international sanction in Serbia, turbo-folk was stronger than ever, celebrating materialism, hedonism, excess and sexual innuendo, presenting the escape from the grim reality and destruction.⁵²

⁴⁹ Cvoro 2014, 9-10

⁵⁰ Ibid, 10

⁵¹ Ibid, 2

⁵² Ibid, 11

“...Turbo got its first and strongest producers in TV Pink. The studio built itself on the piracy, porn and Turbo Folk production, which at times were nearly indistinguishable.”⁵³

After the war, turbo-folk has lost its nationalistic connotation and has crossed the national borders. It is no longer the Serbian music that promotes the hate. Ironically, it has become one common cultural link that consolidated all of the former Yugoslavian countries. It is the bridge that connects and reconciles divided nations and overcomes nationalist animosity. It has filled a gap that has appeared with the disappearance of the Yugoslavian national identity.⁵⁴

What is turbo actually? According to a dictionary, it originates from the Latin word “turbo” that translates to “spinning top” and has several different definitions: a turbine; a turbocharger, which is a car device that improves the efficiency of an engine; a car that is powered by such an engine. The turbo in turbo folk is linked to the second definition: the maximized achievement of the shell. However, the meaning of the word turbo isn’t strictly applied only to describe this device; it has gained a much wider use in many languages. It can be used to describe the highest performance of any electronic device or to emphasize any word. In a way, “turbo anything” is something very big, powerful and brings out the highest performance out of any shell. Anything can be turbo: turbojet, turbofan, turbo design, turbo music or even turbo architecture.

The term itself was coined by a Serbian musician Rambo Amadeus in the late 1980s which he used humorously to describe his own music that was a mixture of many different styles and influences. This turbo music took the old shell of the traditional folk music and gave it some extra energy by adding pop, techno, oriental or any other beats to it. It was a mixture of East and West, which existed for centuries, but in the term of turbo music and culture, it was something that started developing in the seventies. The combination of the traditional and modern elements spread its influence on different aspects of life and culture, creating a sub-culture that got the name from the music genre.⁵⁵ As Amadeus said it in his song titled “Turbo Folk” from 2005:

“Folk are the people, turbo is the system of injecting fuel
Under the pressure into the cylinder of the engine with
Internal combustion.
Turbo folk is combustion of people.
Every fostering this combustion is turbo-folk.
Flare of lowest passions at Homo sapiens.

⁵³ Weiss 2006, 23

⁵⁴ Cvoro 2014, 3

⁵⁵ Kronja, 2013

Music is a darling of all the muses, the harmony of all the arts.
Turbo-folk is not music, turbo-folk is the darling of the masses,
cacophony of taste and smell.
I gave it a name.”

Anything that awakens basic instincts and accelerates the combustion and degradation of people is turbo folk. After the war, the aftermath was more or less the same in every state. The new line of order was capitalism in which the weight has been shifted from collectivism to individualism. In this new order, the possession and accumulation of material wealth were primacy. In the lands that had to cope with both post-socialist and post-war transition, the new capitalistic order also became turbo. Many people who knew how to take advantage of the given situation have accumulated the wealth very quickly and created a new lifestyle which all aspired to. This new style was a personification of clichés and bad taste and it was promoted through the most popular musical genre at the time – turbo folk. The ideal of owning material things, which was imposed by the capitalism, was the goal of the masses.

4.1. Turbo Architecture

It wasn't long before this phenomenon spread to the architecture as well. With the mass acceptance of turbo-folk as a legitimate musical genre comes the inevitable acceptance of values immanent to such music. With everyone imposing their own taste and building for themselves, it was inevitable that a new type of architecture emerges – the one that was installed without any rules or regard to surrounding built structures. In the field of single-family architecture, the whole phenomenon started with the upper social strata who sought to show off their wealth through the contemporary castle they called home.

“In many countries in southern Europe (and the Balkans have a reputation to maintain in this respect), there exists alongside the formal, official architecture a parallel universe of mostly semi-legal, informal architecture. Every now and then, this informal architecture produces an exuberant cheerfulness, but often it results in buildings that are quite simply depressing. This parallel universe, which has come to be known as ‘turbo-folk’ and ‘Balkanology’, has recently attracted more than its fair share of international attention, and more even than the official architecture.”⁵⁶

The term itself was coined by Srdjan Jovanovic Weiss to describe the amalgamation of different typologies and different architectural types incurred as the consequence of high speed urbanization:

⁵⁶ Ibelings 2010, 11

“Turbo architecture is a post-socialist mainstream in nationalizing collective identity through architecture. Today while things turbo from our global techno culture accumulate and swell the material world with machines that squeeze higher performance out of some retro shell, tiny or large, material or virtual, anything that ends up being called “turbo something” will have to create fundamental conditions for such surplus on its own. It will have to materialize basic conditions in order to house greedy dreams of extended individual comfort, which will then result in bunkers of extralegal wealth, bunkers that we will eventually be tempted to call architecture, places that we will be tempted to call the city. [...] We may simply be talking about bad and pompous architecture [...]”⁵⁷

This informal architecture that has “followed the collapse of governmental institutions and decentralization”⁵⁸ is mostly improvised and its main feature is a combination of different architectural influences. The biggest influence was through the media and the new type of music that spread rapidly, which imposed the luxurious lifestyle onto the masses making it the main criterion that shaped the new “traditional” house. In a way, great majority of the single-family residential architecture could be categorized as turbo, when carefully observing the elements that make it. The maximized use of the shell by squeezing in as many families in it as possible, can, by default, be considered turbo. The oversized living room that justifies its surface area by accommodating slava once a year can also be considered turbo. Some additions such as Greek columns in the entrance area, different geometric forms, semi-circular windows – can all be considered turbo. But this type of architecture average person architecture is not something that can be considered turbo by default. It is true that, from the outside, every house looks like it is made to achieve “greedy dreams of extended individual comfort”⁵⁹, but the previous analyses showed that such building



Figure 41: Excessive geometric additions, different window forms, rectangular balconies and the colour create a turbo façade; view from south

⁵⁷ Weiss 2006, 17

⁵⁸ Vöckler 2008, 2

⁵⁹ Ibid

usually houses more than one family, which actually diminishes the comfort. Weather turbo or not, this house model has infiltrated into every settlement and has become a canon for a house construction. The fact is, however, that turbo represents much more than just the surface area, number of floors, or even couple of Greek columns in the entrance area, but rather a mixture of many contradictory styles, elements, excessive geometric additions and clashing materials (see *Figures 41-44*).

Though turbo isn't exclusively linked to the architecture of the upper social strata, the "real" turbo architecture was and is the representation of the excessive comfort, luxury and of bad taste which is usually linked with those who want to show off their status. Since the house expresses, above all, the owner's taste, it is no wonder that the new family house, primarily those of singers and politicians, soon became personification of turbo folk, which was the most influential "cultural" aspect on the Balkan. The new trend in building didn't bring any innovations or improvements to the architecture field – it was rather a degradation of space. It didn't even try to hide under the mask of aesthetically pleasing architecture. This type of house is blatantly honest in the fact that it doesn't even aspire to achieve good taste. New houses sprouted all over the Balkans, including Banja Luka. There are many "contemporary castles" in this city that are the witness of a distorted comprehension of architecture and the way it shapes the space. It is not the geometric additions, towers, semi-circular windows, columns of classical Greek style or combination of bright colours that make them turbo, it is rather the use of all those mismatched elements that that create a rather grotesque form.



Figure 42: Floor numbers, decorative balcony railings and the relation between the two houses creates a turbo image; view from the south



Figure 43: $\frac{1}{4}$ circular windows, the roof and a $\frac{1}{2}$ of an octagon added to the entrance; view from the south



Figure 44: The mismatched use of the materials and semi-circular openings; view from the south-west

“By and large this architecture, whether rich or poor, came with bulky forms, rounded edges, was bold, shiny and clad with an array of metal and glass panels. It appeared in distorted and sometimes soft shapes, as clashing postures of primary geometries, as additions of pieces, computer rendered, with mushroom like mansards, unfinished, incomplete, symmetrical, as bunker-like mini castles, with triumphant arches and stripped surfaces. Or this architecture came as quasi-Byzantine, Neo-Classical, inflated and big-looking, reflective, round, red, yellow, gold, pitched, lush inside, cheap and glitzy, amorphous, awkward, clumsy, hulking. It was placed on roofs, on terraces; was impenetrable and bulbous, silver, clad in marble, domed, wavy, semi-curved with concrete arches, cantilevering parts, balustrades, round towers, spikes, cornices, tiled roofs, looking corpulent and hovering.”⁶⁰

All of turbo architecture cannot be summarized under one category and all of the owners don't always have the same reasons for making something turbo. A turbo folk house stands mostly as a representation of one's wealth and power, but it can also stand as a story of someone's success and interest in different aspects of life. During some interviews, it was clear that matching all of the house elements or even its aesthetics wasn't the primary criterion. It's stability, experimentation with form, functionality or even energy savings were the reasons for most of the decisions. It is not always about having the “prettiest house”, but rather about

⁶⁰ Weiss 2006, 17

standing out, about trying out new things or implementing some global trends onto the typical Banja Luka house, as in example of N. D.:

“I make everything different; from my own head. I never looked at the photo and said: ,that is what I want ‘. I usually see some details somewhere, that get stuck in my head, but I still reshape them and adapt them to my needs and taste. I don’t like to simply copy the stuff that other people thought of. And I always looked that it is as cheap as possibly, but still high quality.”

However, even with different additions and elements, none of the interviewees had a house that can be considered a textbook example of turbo architecture. Those houses usually belong to the very wealthy and influential politicians that don’t have any desire to let anyone get all too close or look around. Usually surrounded by a very large fence, they give out a clear message to stay away. Still, a simple observation from the distance can clearly tell whether the house can be classified as turbo or not.

Generally speaking, turbo architecture would be any architecture where the architect doesn’t systematically contemplate on his design. He’s aware of the desires of his clients and he undergoes them without the thought about the aftereffect that it has on the constructed environment. And the client, knowing exactly what he wants, creates a mixture of everything that has ever crossed his mind. Turbo houses in Banja Luka are (sometimes literally) castles, often on an elevated surface that allows them to be seen, but with tall fences so that they can’t be approached, with towers, geometrical add-ons, balustrades, very conspicuous materials and colours or even crosses on the top of the roof that shows the religious preferences of the owner (see *Figures 45, 46*). The garden is also not spared from the monstrous attack of bad taste – ceramic figurines, such as gnomes, fawns, mushrooms are all entwined between the trimmed hedges and colourful flower lines.

The houses alone are not the only problem, but the whole city as well. The number of the look-alike houses is turbo. The settlements are also turbo. And thus, the city is approaching of becoming a turbo, even if the official architectural discourse is far from anything that even remotes turbo architecture. Some parts of the city have permanently been devastated by the wild urbanism and construction. But before putting the blame on the people, or even the architects, it is important to realize that the architecture was the product of the given situation. The wild settlements appeared as a quick answer to the increased housing need after the war. The new house model is a direct response to the difficult social situation and dysfunctional laws.



Figure 45: A turbo house with a grocery store in the ground floor; view from the south-eastern side



Figure 46: A house with auxiliary objects – garages and a cross (marked red) on the façade and above each garage window

4.2. “Gastarbeiter” Architecture

The local traditional architecture is anything but local or traditional. “Dismissing local customs is a passport to internationality and worldly sophistication”⁶¹ It arose as the product of media influence, but partially due to the aftereffects that the increased migration had.



Figure 47: Gastarbeiter house; view from south-west

During the war, many people from South-Eastern Europe have migrated to more developed countries. Most of them stayed after the war ended and the war aftermath caused much more people to leave Bosnia in the search for better life. There’s a paradox that is connected to quite a large number of these immigrants, which is the most visible in the architecture, since it’s the most visual medium. This paradox is to be seen in the quality of life they have in the “foreign” country, or the country they live in (Mostly Germany, Austria or Italy) and the “homeland”, where they originated from, but spend small fraction of the year there. It is usually that the house they build “back home” in Banja Luka has far higher standards and much more room than the one they spend most of the year in. These houses mostly gap year after year, waiting for their owners to retire. Turbo folk music, as well as the whole sub-culture, is quite popular with the immigrants and the most eminent forms of turbo architecture can be found precisely in the houses built by them (see *Figure 47*).

The problem with most “Gastarbeiters” is the division between two worlds – the one they live in and usually can’t completely accommodate to, and the one they left behind and deep down long for. Instead of making the most out of the living situation in the country they currently are, their focus is in finding enough time to regularly visit their homeland and live to the fullest (turbo) once they get there. Since they are divided between the two countries, but also two

⁶¹ Vöckler 2008, 9

cultures, they don't really belong to either, yet they belong to both. This is why their house is often an awkward mixture of the European and Balkan architecture, sized to by far overcome the needs of a family – making it undoubtedly turbo architecture. One of the interviewed architects S. B. has addressed this phenomenon as well:

“I made a project one of those houses with two towers on each side for the man working abroad. It is a house with a large surface area and only one residential unit – very luxurious. He found it in a catalogue and wanted a replica. But this house is occupied maybe 15 days a year, if at all. Even when he comes, he often stays in his mother's small barrack. [...] The living room itself has almost 50 m².”

In this case, it is obvious that the house is mostly built to show off the fact that one is successful and making a lot of money, while in reality, they're leading quite average life in the country they emigrated to.

4.3. Turbo Urbanism

The problem with the architecture in Banja Luka starts at the very beginning of the planning process – the urbanism. After the war, when the institutions were weak and people were in need of new homes, the emerging architecture took its toll on the city planning. New settlements arose without the proper planning and infrastructure. Today, when the institutions are stronger and things are getting back to normal, the urban planners are much more preoccupied with fixing previous mistakes, than making new settlements. The old settlements that arose in epochs of Austro-Hungarian reign and later in Yugoslavian times are rectangular, planned and organized. The ones that arose in early post-war years are much more reminiscent of the Ottoman times, with all the downsides and none of the benefits. Located on the city hills, with irregular unpaved streets and lack of the neighbourhood-feel, they represent a big problem for planners that try to make a functional city again. However, instead of learning from mistakes, the city builders keep making them. The latest problems in the city planning have shifted from single to multi-family housing. The private investors only seek to maximize the revenue from their investment, thus creating dysfunctional spaces. The lack of proper traffic planning and parking space, as well as the common spaces and the green surfaces lower the living standards. The planners are helpless while the private investors build their apartment buildings at the expense of parks and children playgrounds, because, once again, the money is the only things that puts things in motion in the city. This doesn't mean that there aren't any good examples in the recent urban planning, but it's rather connected to the public city zones.

The creator of the word turbo architecture, Jovanovic-Weiss, briefly mentions the problem of the turbo urbanism while addressing the architecture: "...bunkers that we will eventually be tempted to call architecture, places that we will be tempted to call the city." This new urbanism has fragmented the city and there virtually isn't a unified plan that can comprehend the city planning. The greatest damage was done in the sphere of public planning, where capitalism created new type of office buildings that have the sole purpose of efficiency and profit maximization, but the residential city quarters are not falling behind. These illegal, wild settlements arose as an answer to the increased need for housing of the war refugees, but continued to develop long after, because the underdeveloped institutional structures that couldn't catch up.

"The socialist period left its mark on many housing developments, which clearly illustrate the collective nature of society at that time, in which planning, decision making and financing were a centralized state monopoly. Things have now swung to the opposite extreme: since the war, in the process of transition, private initiative, in the form of a plethora of small businesses, has completely taken over the housing development market. The state has invested very little in housing, and the result is a fragmented market and the absence of any strategy. [...] The family house as a marketing ploy has become synonymous with comfort and quality of life. Side-lined in the urban planning of the 1980s, it is enjoying a come-back as towns and cities grow and new suburbs are built, where it can be found in all its variations: detached houses, villas, town-houses."⁶²

Market liberalization has encouraged overcrowding in older developments rather than the creation of new ones. The usual victims of this process (which saves having to invest in infrastructure) are open and green spaces and children's playgrounds.

The urbanists of today are given a difficult assignment of putting the city back together and fixing the wild settlements that sprouted after the war. This retroactive post-planning can be successful only with the conjoined work of planners and government institutions can the city be re-established.

The "wild" city zones' biggest problem are the infrastructure systems that are unplanned and overstretched, unable to allow further expansion and growth of these settlements. The lack of schools and medical centres, as well as any other public content is evident. There's a clear incoherence in planning of the residential zones. The city has virtually no zones that are reserved for some middle class residential settlements. Above all, there are no residential settlements in the urban nucleus, except for some that fall under the old city zones. These are, however, slowly disappearing, while the multifamily housing is taking over. There's a trend

⁶² Ibelings 2010, 26

now, that in the sense of planning, on the individual lots, multifamily buildings are being planned. This causes the prices of this lot to go sky-high, so, in a way, it's not really rentable to have a house in the urban nucleus. This means that multifamily housing is replacing individual housing, which is slowly disappearing from the city core. This is why the only option for someone building a house is a wild settlement on one of the hills, which are not that far from the center, but the lack of planning is what makes them problematic (see *Figures 47-49*).



Figure 47: Problematic part of settlement Petricevac



Figure 48: Problematic part of settlement Pobrdje

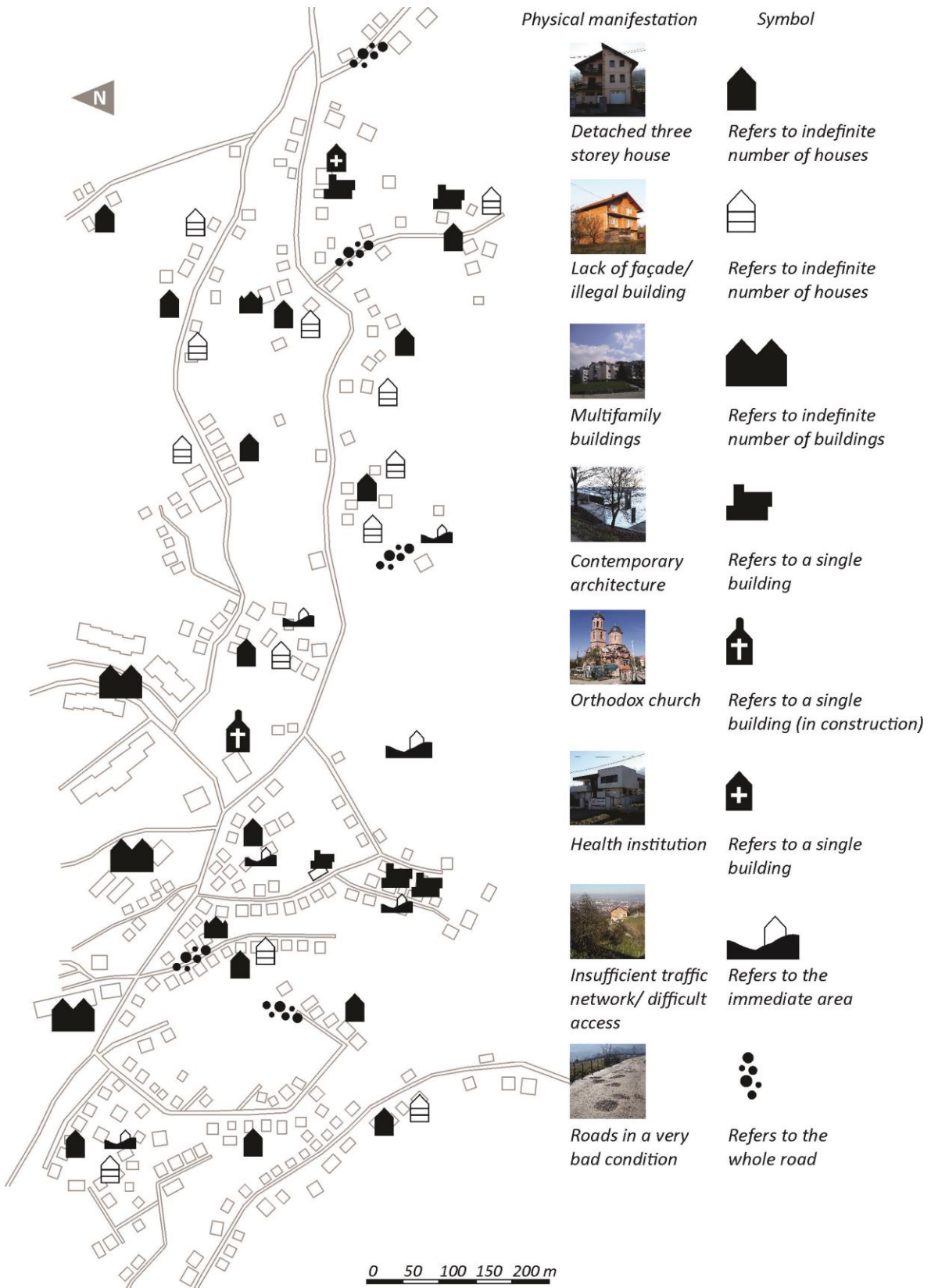


Figure 49: Map of presence of certain elements on the example of Starcevica settlement

4.4. The Rise of Turbo Culture as a Metaphor for the Decline of Yugoslavia

Shortly after the war, once the economic and social conditions have started to get better, the construction has started with it. The primacy was on the construction on public facilities and on the residential blocks that were supposed to solve the living situation quickly. Somewhere in the background, the architecture of detached houses existed, but didn't show much progress. The condition in the country was stable and the goal was to receive a state apartment and to start a family. Since the living situation was resolved in favour of working middle class, there wasn't much need to build houses. Even in those houses that were built in the fifties and the sixties, had a very simple, clear design that, although unremarkable, was still showing order and forethought in urban planning and design. Simple ground floor house, placed on the most appropriate position on the lot, with the white façade and maintained garden didn't bring much to the architecture, but it didn't devastate the space either. The residential single-family neighbourhoods were the reflection of control in the society.

The seventies brought a new musical genre known as newly composed folk music that was far from the kitschy turbo-folk of today. This music didn't have any national connotation and it had quite similar lyrical thematic. However, it did vary from region to region, showing signs of individuality. The architecture began to change as well, but the planned and organized settlements were still a priority, even though the houses started to differ in colour or form. There was also a visible political change, especially after the death of Josip Broz Tito, when the tensions between political elites have started to grow.

It was the war and the post war chaos that have spawned turbo-folk that is the chaotic need to survive. Ironically, although turbo-folk emerged as a symbol of nationalistic tendencies, it was precisely that what, once again, brought a sense of unity to all the nations. It is also clearly visible in the architecture, especially that of single-family houses. Even though every house arose for itself, the whole cultural and social situation made them all look alike. There is no more planned neighbourhood as there was before, at least in Banja Luka, but all of the city's houses still resemble each other. The most unusual thing is that the same house model can be found in any of the former Yugoslavian countries, showing that the politics may divide people, but the culture, even such as turbo-folk, is still a link that connects.

During the process of transition, the appreciation of professional competence was significantly diminished and architecture is one of the examples of how a certain vocation can fall onto very low branches. It was the first that collapsed since the investors, encouraged by the prosper of private property and disruption of the culture, thought that they know best what is beautiful, useful or appropriate. Since the field of the construction, especially of that in private domain,

depends greatly on the will of the client, the educated experts were no longer needed, which made the investor the absolute master within the perimeter of their plots.⁶³

4.5. Why Turbo?

Interesting fact about turbo-folk is that it was always perceived as the music of 'peasants' and 'Gastarbeiters (foreign workers)'. It was, and still is, a somewhat shameful thing to openly admit to liking or enjoying it when one considers themselves as educated and culturally uplifted persona. Most people will claim never to listen to it at home, or only to listen to it when they're drunk, yet the clubs are always full of people that are singing along to every song. This is the case not only with the music, but with other life aspects, architecture included. Everyone will talk about simplicity and how they don't want anything exaggerated, but the reality proves otherwise. Even simpler things, such as fashion, are an everyday witness of turbo-affinity of the masses. The mere situation in Bosnia and most Balkan countries is such that turbo is the only exhaust vent.

The trends are always formed by the wealthier people making something new and the masses trying to follow up. It has started as an expression of wealth and power and later some of the elements were transferred to the average architecture as well. The new trend of the upper social strata is leaning much more to the contemporary design, but it still remains to be seen whether or not the modern will become the affinity of the masses.

⁶³ Mrduljas 2008

5. The Relations between Different Actors

The relation between all of the participants in the process of making a house is a very complicated one. Everyone has a different standpoint that inevitably creates disagreements. On one side is the architect – an educated connoisseur of the way a house is functioning, trying to show the investor that the architecture and detailed planning can make the living between four walls much more pleasant. On the other side is the investor who gathered the knowledge of the internet and magazines as well as their surroundings, which created a clear image of the house he wants. One of the major issues in this relation is that the investors are forced to spend part of their already limited resources by hiring the architect to do something what, in their opinion, they could do themselves. When the whole process of negotiation and planning is over, another actor comes onto the scene, creating additional disagreements. It is the construction worker who gathered practical experience throughout the years. To understand how this relation works, it is important to see things from each perspective.

5.1. Architect's Standpoint

The architecture history shows that there's always a certain architectural type linked to a certain region. There is a typology of buildings, a pattern and a local style that can be recognized and linked to a specific place and time. Different time periods have found their utmost expression in different types of buildings: a church, a corporate building, a shopping mall, but a detached house has always had a special place throughout the whole architectural timeline. For many architects, it was a favourite type of building to design.

A detached house tells many stories: the one about the architectural style it which it emerged, the one about the taste and social status of the owner, the one about the current political situation and, most importantly, the story about the architect that made it. However, the houses in the city of Banja Luka are becoming more and more a product of a repeating pattern. That is why they tell the stories rather about the society than the individuals. That is why an analysis of any house won't give an insight in the work of the architect, but it can tell something about the way the architects and the architecture in general are being perceived. It can say a lot about their position and influence they have.

Ironically, the versatile history and house typology have found their final expression in the repeating pattern of today's house. The house has become something ordinary, familiar, that repeats itself several times down a street, in every city quarter. The façade colour, the railings

or the shape of window may vary, but the core remains the same: it is a same house wrapped slightly different. The first thing to do in this case is to blame the architects, their lack of revolutionary ideas and the lack of influence on their clients and the whole society. However, before putting the blame on them, one must be aware of the wall they are facing – the wall that is the society’s unwillingness to change.

The most important factor that rules out the influence of the architects in the construction of the family houses is that a great deal of them are built illegally. The number of illegal houses is estimated to over 20 000. This, of course, means the complete absence of architectural planning. Though the exclusion of an architect from the planning process doesn’t necessarily mean bad architecture, an architect could make the house development move in a more functional direction. And even with the high number of illegal facilities, there is still a great deal of them built with the help of an architect. However, despite their involvement, architects are rarely the creators of that what is being built. There are numerous reasons why something like that happens, and the most important one can be found in a fact that the architects are often forced into drawing according to the desires of the investor, without any deviations. Even after the plans have been drawn, it doesn’t mean they represent the final form of a house. A lot can change during the construction process. It could also be that the lack of financial resources has obstructed the house form reaching its final form. A great deal of houses is built completely different than originally imagined.

All of the above shows that the biggest problem with the single-family architecture of Bosnia is the lack of functional collaboration between the parties involved in the process. The architects have lost their compass in this field quite long ago:

“The transitional field within the ex-Yugoslav architectural profession of the 1990s was affected with almost surrealistic tremors including a change of the political and economic system paralleled with the war while a simultaneous narrowing of actual realizations occurred. In order to survive, architects had to fundamentally change their status and role within society. The architect was no longer a ‘gentleman’ with bow tie and cigar waiting for the patron in order to design a building for the national institution of historical importance.”⁶⁴

Even before the 90s, the single family residential architecture was put in the background. The socialist Yugoslavia didn’t care much for individual housing; the public buildings, but also multi-family residential buildings were in the centre of interest, since it was a quick housing solution for the middle social layers which was referred to as the working class, especially in fast pace growing cities, such as Banja Luka. The single family houses were the personification of simplicity: ground floor house, with white façade and a gabled or hipped roof. There wasn’t

⁶⁴ Vöckler 2008, 48-49

much place left for any experiments. Even in later phase, where the houses started to take on more individual characteristics, there were catalogues of typical projects from which citizens could buy a plan from, for much lower price that it would cost to hire an architect. This went on even after the war, for approximately ten years. There is no more possibility to buy a project from this catalogue, but all of the houses still look like they've come straight out of a production line of some imaginary house factory that keeps making the same model over and over again.

During the designing phase of house making, it is mandatory to hire an architect to do the project. But the architects have become mere drawers. They are there to follow up the legal aspect of the house building. In reality, they draw the ideas of the owners who have found their ideal house in a magazine, from the surrounding or on the internet – and they just draw the lines to match the picture created in someone else's head. There are occasionally some deviations from the original model, such as an additional geometry element, an unusual balcony railing or extravagant colour, but the mould for the house remains the same.

The owner usually has a vision of a house imprinted in his brain and is not willing to change it. If it were possible, many people would probably draw the projects themselves, but they are legally obliged to have an architect to do the drawings. Vast majority of architects who specialized in detached houses are just a printing machine for a typical house. Most of them have tried at the beginning: tried to move the boundaries, to bring something new in this architecture field, but they haven't been able to do much. Architect S. G. sais:

“I make detailed designs for an average house. To an average person, price is what matters the most. It's a bargaining like on the market. [...] People mostly come in with a clear idea of what they want so during the first meeting I rarely say much and just let the clients talk.”

Banja Luka's citizens, especially in the city suburbs and rural areas, have a certain way of living that is represented through the house they choose. The term 'culture of living' doesn't exist in their minds and in their opinion the architects don't really understand what an average person needs for its house to fulfil. This is the standpoint of architect S. B.:

“You can talk about the lot, the orientation, organization as much as you want, but they won't even try to understand or listen. There are a very small number of people that will follow your suggestions. I'm not saying they should listen to us without questioning anything we said. They are, after all, making a house for themselves and they're going to be the ones that will live in it. However, they will refuse to listen to you because of some small things that they inculcated in their head, which they later realize it was a mistake.”

In a way, the vernacular architecture arises as a fulfilment of people's needs. From the second half of 20th century, the exploration of this anonymous folk architecture has helped the architects to learn more about the needs and customs and thus to create the architecture that can support them. The importance of understanding without criticizing can help the architects improve traditional architecture into its more functional and aesthetically pleasing version. This is not something that might happen in the future Banja Luka, but in this moment, there is a huge gap between the architects and the masses.

There are essentially three types of architects in Banja Luka. The first type is the drawer that makes the same house model over and over again, just for different locations. They have already made peace with the idea that their job is to make what the investor wants and to only use their knowledge and creativity in order to transform an image into a functional model. People will mostly come to them already knowing what they want, or even with an image of a house they found on the internet or in a magazine. They usually don't make 3D models or interiors, but rather just a detailed design for an ordinary typical house. The main influential element in these kinds of projects is the financial situation of the investors that mostly have limited financial resources. It is also not uncommon that this type of architects, such as S. B., will work on house legalization, where they draw a project of that what has already been built:

“This is one of the projects I recently made; it was legalization of a house. [...] People will mostly tell you what they want. Some bring a picture, mostly from a German magazine, saying that is what they want, so you adapt. For some, the price is all that matters. So they start making suggestions in order to make it as cheap as possible. [...] It's like a market, but I still try to do as much as I can for this price.”

Sadly, this is also the most common type of architects and as much as the situation is hard, one can't help but putting the part of the blame on them. They willingly make plans that don't contribute to the architecture in any way, degrading it even further; they patronize the wishes of their clients in order to get the job done so they can get paid. These architects do not care about the nature of social, political and cultural context in which they create; they don't take into account the balance and harmony of visual elements they use or about the aesthetics of the design; they do not have their own attitude towards what they do and they certainly aren't aware of the far-reaching consequences of their activities for the society in which they live.⁶⁵ And they can't afford to take all of this into consideration. They keep thinking that if they don't do it, someone else will, and that is something that will inevitably happen. The famous architect of Sarajevo, Ivan Straus, who has also spent a part of his life in Banja Luka, has addressed this problem during an interview several years back. He claims that most architects of today are „educated as architects for local use and for filling up empty urban spaces with

⁶⁵ <http://sveske.ba/en/content/danas-u-arhitekturi-vise-nema-vizionara>

mimetic actions “.⁶⁶ That is why, in his opinion, the architect willingly choose to remain anonymous, realizing that they are degrading the space in even worse manner that the war did it.

Second type of architects is the one that works in a well off company. They will mostly work on many different projects, including some corporate buildings or multi-family residence, but also an occasional single-family house. These houses are usually slightly different than a typical house and an architect will have a certain freedom during a design process. This still won't be game changing architecture, but it will have harmonious proportions and be pleasant on the eye. This type of collaboration is one of the most functional ones, because the investors are usually more open minded to accepting the ideas of the architect, and vice versa. The compromises are made on both sides in order to create something that can leave both parties satisfied.

Third type of architects will work mostly do high-end architecture for very rich people, such as the politicians or some successful business owners. The projects of this kind lean towards the modern architecture lately and these kinds of houses will mostly be located in a settlement outside the city. What the project usually comprises is a villa with many luxurious additions, such as wine basements, spas, gyms, large walk in closets that need to store several hundreds of shoes etc. The company and the architect usually have a lot of saying in the process, although the investor's desires are never neglected. During the interview with an employee of one high-end architectural office, N. D. said:

“It is important to be able to show them that the option you're suggesting is the best and to have a good interaction with the people. My boss is the one who works with the clients and he contacts them during the whole design process. I think that if you bring a finished design to someone, they won't be able to understand it as much. We usually just draw some quick layout that is far from finished and then we adapt it to the client's needs and desires. With these mini-meetings, we're slowly testing the waters and we get to know the person, which, in my opinion, is extremely important. An architect can have a perfect vision of space, but if it's completely different from the character and the habits of the client, then it can't work. The house needs to be a result of joint work of the architect and the investor.”

But still, these cases are rather an exception to the rule. The field of architecture has been on shaky legs for a while. The space in Banja Luka has been devastated for years by its citizens, while the architecture, as a method of making a functional and beautiful city has fallen onto the low branches and lost its meaning. One can start blaming the people or the architects, but the problem reaches much deeper. The main issue is the system, professional associations

⁶⁶ <http://sveske.ba/en/content/danas-u-arhitekturi-vise-nema-vizionara>

formed by the Government and incompetent ministers that don't know or don't want to regulate this field of business. It even goes beyond that – it starts with the highest political positions and it weaves itself through the whole social and political system in the country. The corruption, nepotism and bribery are present in every aspect of society, which puts incompetent people on the positions that they can't handle. This means that there can be thousands of good architects in the city of Banja Luka, but they won't get the chance to express themselves. Only when the right people come to the right positions, the changes will start to show in the constructed environment as well. Also, the economic situation is probably the biggest reason that the people won't step out of the mould of a typical house. A house is not something anyone will change on regular basis - people are making it to last for the rest of their lives. There is rarely anyone who will make more than one house during their lifetime. Considering this fact, it is in a way logical that they will go for a proven model.

The economic situation influences the architects as well as the people: In the world where the economy is bad and every day is a struggle to survive, not many architects can afford promoting their ideas. It is a struggle for them as much for anyone else to survive in the hard economy and many have just accepted their faith as a draftsman. It is easy to be an idealist for those that don't have to worry about putting the food on the table, but the reality is much crueller. If one architect doesn't do what he's asked to, the investor will find someone else. If the owner calls and tells his roof is leaking and water is dripping onto him while he's having a meal, they can't afford telling them to move their chair to solve the problem.⁶⁷ Architecture is an art that promotes beauty and harmony with open spaces, good lighting and the flow of the rooms that people aren't used to. For them, it will seem like it is impractical. And in Bosnia, practicality is the most important thing. Promoting art to the expense of it is just not possible, even if it's about only 1 cm² of space. And that is how the masses see the architecture: as impractical waste of space. However, as the architect Vedran Mimica sais during an interview: "If we want to address the challenges that architects face in the ex-Yugoslavian republics, I still believe that they have to remain critical and committed, in spite of a complex and often contradictory context."⁶⁸

5.2. The Client

What is important to understand, is that a majority of people in Balkan like to think they know a great deal about many things. Architecture is no exception. When it comes to such an important business as making a house, every person making it will suddenly become an expert in this field. On one hand, they are making a house for themselves, so they should have a final

⁶⁷ Reference to F. L. Wright's anecdote with the leaking roof of the Falling Water House

⁶⁸ Vöckler 2008, 49

word when it comes to all final decisions, but on the other, people will get stubborn and refuse to listen to the ideas of the others, primarily those of the architect.

“Another thing is that the younger generations are so obsessed with the stuff they find online and in the magazines, so they will practically consider themselves the experts in the matter, which will make you lose any desire you had to educate them about the culture of living. They already know everything, saw everything, read everything.”
(Architect S. B.)

For every investor, the process of the house starts by searching for a lot. As it came up in many interviews, the most important thing is the location. With the regulatory lines they get the first idea of their house dimensions. After that, the search for the ideal house starts. The internet and magazines are an endless source of inspiration and German and Austrian architecture are the best role models. Not a single investor will go to the architect (if they choose to have one) without having a photo, a sketch, or even a 3D model of what they want. They’ve dwelled on it, researched, learned about it and have a clear image in their minds. Going to an architect that will suggest that isn’t the best option, won’t unhinge them. After all, the architect that tells them their idea isn’t possible without any alterations just isn’t good in what he does. Something similar has already been built, which means that it has to work.

After the countless hours on dwelling on the design and talking it out with the architect, the investor now has to face the difficult decision of choosing construction workers to build his house. It is often that a lot of people do a lot of the work themselves, with the help of some friends and family. It is quite hard, however, to finish the house without the professional help, so the search for the professionals begins. The communication with the construction worker is no better than with the architect, but unlike the architect that follows the wishes of the investor, the workers will mostly do things their way. It is always a safer, but more expensive option to hire a company, but the supervision is often necessary even in this case. And thus the struggle of building a functional house begins, but the end result often looks different than expected.

“I didn’t know this at the time, but when we did the façade, we noticed that the walls weren’t straight. They’re slightly bent in the middle...the upper floors are not bad, but we had quite a lot of problems with the lower one. Especially when we were putting Styrofoam.” (B. M.)

The relations of the parties involved tend to vary depending on many factors, such as age, education level, vocation, implemented traditional values etc., that will make the investor lean towards trusting one side over the other.

5.3. Construction Worker

After the phase of the ideas consonance, where the architect and the investor are the only actors, a new character comes to the show – the construction worker. For the investor hiring construction workers, one of the most difficult decisions is choosing the right one. There are several options: to choose a construction company that will send their worker; to hire some on their own, based on the recommendation; or, if the financial resources are limited, to engage some friends and family that are familiar with this field.

There are several sources that can be helpful in helping an investor choose the construction company/workers. The biggest source of modern day times is, of course, the internet. There are several dozen sites and forums that deal with the subject and help choose and hire the right type of men for the business, or, better said, to avoid choosing the wrong ones. The thing is, most types of craftsmen in the Ex-Yugoslavian countries are a very special kind of people and dealing with them can often be difficult. Stubbornness, incompetence, slacking etc., are only some of the adjectives that can be connected to them. Not only the internet, but also most people the investor will talk to are full of stories about problems with construction workers. Even the newspaper will often write on how to deal with them in order to get the work done.

It is an unwritten rule that one has to have a supervisory authority on the site who will make sure everything goes as planned. By supervising, measuring and talking to them, one makes sure that they get the house as drawn on the plans.

„I was the supervisory authority. It's not easy with the construction workers. [...] This one man... I mean, there's a project, you can read everything, especially if you know about that sort of things; if it's your trade. We were talking to the architect if he could make that apartment downstairs a little bit bigger, and the boiler room smaller. And he said that we needed one bearing beam. And there was one construction worker who did the casting. Once I've got there, I saw that the whole ceiling was flat. There was no beam in sight. So I asked him: ‚Buddy, what happened to the bearing beam ‘. ‚What bearing beam? ‘, he asked. ‚The one on the project ‘, I said. ‚Oh, we're just going to put some steel reinforcement there ‘he replied. I told him that it wasn't possible. It needs to hold two more floors of the house. So we had to cut the whole thing out.”(B.M.)

Making business with a construction worker, or any type of craftsmen for that matter, differs a great deal from the western type of making business. Every interaction is much more personal and a clear boss-worker relation isn't established. Even in the architect-construction worker correlation, the construction workers will always try and assert themselves as the executive party. If this is the case, for every investor/architect that have to deal with the given

situation, it is required to be very clear and precise about the design and the expectations from the executed works. Keeping the relations professional and requiring perfectionism is what gets the job done. It is also of great significance that the work isn't paid upfront, which is a mistake a lot of people will make. Finding a fine line between being affable and authoritative can create a functional working atmosphere in which every party involved contributes.

In a battle in which the goal is to get the investor's trust, the construction worker will often triumph over the architect. The years of experience and the presence in the building process establish a belief the construction worker is the best connoisseur of the way a building works. In experience of S. B., the relations usually develop in a certain manner:

“There are very few investors that are willing to listen to the architect from the beginning to the end. They'll rather listen to the construction worker that will try and do something the way that is the easiest for him, so they convince the investor that it's better that way. After all, he's doing this for twenty years, and he 'knows' that is the best way. This is especially the case with the older generations.”

In a way, their capability of convincing the people they know best often exceeds their actual knowledge. Many will fear the mere fact that they have to deal with the construction worker, but will still accept their advice before the one of the architect. And by being stubborn, the workers often get things done their way, because many people don't want to argue any further. By doing things their way, the job is finished as quickly as possible, without the regard to quality. There are countless stories where parts of the buildings had to be rebuilt because they were not done properly the first time around. For the investor, the moral of the story is that they have to control the workers in the future:

“If I were to build the house again, I would carry around this 2m lath and measure everything. It wouldn't have been a lot of work to fix that, but he just wanted to finish that as quickly as possible. And that is why we had the problems later. Everything was more expensive, harder to make and doesn't have the same quality.” (B. M.)

All of the craftsmen can't be put under one category and even though there are many bad experiences and urban stories about them, there are many more positive experiences that aren't being as paraphrased. There are many good workers in the branch that get the job done professionally, and there are menu nuances in between. The biggest problem is the status that the enjoy, as the best connoisseurs of the field.

Another interesting fact is that a lot people from Balkan work as construction workers abroad and they are often considered some of the best and most hard working people. Yet in their own country, with their own people, they'll take advantage of situation and do as least as possible for as much money as possible. This, once again, has a lot to do with the way the

business is conducted. It is not uncommon in Banja Luka that people who think they're underpaid don't do their job properly, if the person in charge is someone who doesn't implement strict rules. As some of the interviewed architects claim, if they insert themselves as the person in charge and state clearly that the job needs to be done properly, the parties involved will also collaborate. If a construction worker sees an architect as someone who got all of their knowledge from the books, without any practical experience, they will do things the way they're accustomed to.

The problem is, once again, much less superficial. Every situation is generated because of the bad economy. The good construction workers will cost a lot of money, which most people can't afford. That's why they hire the ones they can afford. The affordable does the work in accordance to the amount of money he gets. So the work itself is done badly, because they think they aren't paid enough, even if arranged price was complied. Also, since a lot of them, if they aren't in a company, are working illegally, there isn't a chamber the investor could file a complaint to.

5.4. The Collaboration

To summarize the hierarchy and put it in order, the investor comes first when it comes to making decisions, followed by the construction worker, with the architect at the bottom of the chain. There are exceptions as in every rule, but the people still don't understand the way the architecture can influence the space and make their living simpler and more comfortable. On the other side, there is the architect who never fully accepts the architecture of the people and the way people want to live. The architects know the house and the way it works, they understand the concept of living, but they need to learn about the people they're making a house for and make it according to their standard. "[...] In the main the architect's concern should belong not with what ought to be, but what is – and how to help improve it now."⁶⁹ The problem arises because there isn't a mutual understanding of the involved parties. The investors usually choose an image, a photograph from a magazine over the functional living space that the architect is suggesting, which, once again, isn't tailored to the needs of the masses. The construction worker understands the way house is built, he can read plans, but he often chooses not to, doing things their way, which is the easiest way, if they don't have the supervision.

Lack of communication between the three parties involved causes a big problem, but since everyone wants more or less the same house, the construction process is somewhat

⁶⁹ Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour 1977, 129

standardized. This, as the end result, has monotonous residential architecture that is the product of the work of each party individually, rather than the sum of their conjoined efforts. To create the good architecture, the collaboration of all the people who are involved in the design process is very important. The architect alone cannot complete this task “and the client has an indispensable role”⁷⁰. Everyone has more to contribute to design process than they realize, but it can only be achieved if everyone realizes the potential of the other parties involved.

⁷⁰ Allsopp, 1977, 87

6. The Construction Market

Among many other aspects of human life that the war has influenced, is the construction field. Not only because the traces of physical damage can be found in many existing buildings, but even more so because of the stagnation of all the construction activities. Although the construction stagnation has been forcefully imposed, the ideas are still developing, maybe even more so because of it. During the war and in the early post war years, people feel the need to rebuild, but the institutions and the companies are only slowly picking up, trying to get back to normal and, once again, resume where they left off. "Construction is in the pause position while ideas development is in fast forward mode."⁷¹ With the beginning of the millennium, the market has slowly started to pick up. Its development continued throughout the years, first by acquiring materials all over the world and now by catching up with the most recent mechanization.

The offer on the market and available materials can, to a large extent, influence the amount of available options when it comes to making a house, depending on the available offer. In most European countries the construction market is organized in the form of large chain stores, with their branches spread throughout the country. The main characteristic of the construction market of Bosnia, and Banja Luka for that matter, is that there aren't big chains that can be found in every city of the country. This means that the construction companies located in Banja Luka are specific only for this city only. However, this doesn't mean that these companies are small, or that they don't have big offer. They usually try to keep up with the current trends and have very diverse and numerous materials in the offer. There are around 20 such large scale construction companies in Banja Luka that do both smaller projects, such as detached houses, as well as large scale public projects. These companies will mostly supply all of the materials and follow through on a project. This means that if a person decides to make business with a certain construction company, they will mostly get all the materials from them, and sometimes even the manpower, until the project is finished.

When an individual decides to make a house, he mostly visits several companies in Banja Luka, usually based on the recommendation from a friend or a family member. Compared to some other, more developed countries, the way that the business in Banja Luka is done differs to a great extent. The whole collaboration can be quite personal. The investor will often even meet the owner of the construction company and agree on all the business with him. There are usually some deals made as well. If someone buys all of the materials in one place, there is a high probability that they will get some sort of discount or benefits. The construction company owners are the ones that promote this type of collaboration, realizing that because of the

⁷¹ Ibelings 2010, 6

current economic situation influences, it is the only way they can help people making houses, while keeping their company in business. Construction company owner P. T. says:

“It was always an honour for us to work with someone on their home and we always follow the progress, until it is all finished. When these people need, for example, two tons of cement urgently during the constructions, we will deliver it to them immediately, even though the transport costs sometimes exceed the profit. But we stick with them until the house is finished.”

Not so long ago, in the post war Bosnia, the situation with the grocery stores was similar, where the stores were much smaller (and with less supplies for that matter), but deferred payment, for example, was possible. Since they served a relatively small area, most of the customers were regular and locals, which made this type of business possible. This was important for the economically impaired citizens. There weren't any large supermarkets and for bigger procurement, people would go to the market place. Though the market place still stands and is still the most favoured option for the fresh groceries purchase, the small stores have slowly disappeared. They can still be found scattered across the city, but they aren't what they used to be. With the expansion of the supermarkets, the food market offers expanded to a large extent, and accordingly, the way that business is done has changed radically.

Now, when everything is being globalized and private entrepreneurs are being replaced by the large scale companies, the question of whether or not this will happen to the construction market as well is imposed. According to the owner of one of the construction companies in Banja Luka, that isn't going to happen anytime soon. One of the main reasons that large-scaled store chains haven't taken over the construction business is, of course, the economic situation. The business in the supermarket chains, for example, is clear: people go into the store, buy what they need and pay as they exit. Everyone has a grocery list, the budget for the shopping and it is an everyday occurrence. Building a house, on the other hand, is something an average person does maybe once in a lifetime. Planning and calculating is much harder in this case. People will often underestimate the costs, which will inevitably be higher than they planned. This is where the family friendly construction company steps in. Company owner P. T. can make a loan or let the investor pay in instalments in order to help them finish what they've started:

“It is a certain type of risk, starting that kind of business with someone. A person starts a house and notices at the end that he lacks the resources for the roofing tiles for example. But being a family friendly company, we often give a loan so they can finish it. Otherwise, their investment fails.”

In the first years after the war, there was a stagnation period for the construction market. There was a need to rebuild what was destroyed, but the necessary materials and

mechanizations were missing. Only later have the construction companies started to catch up and advance.

“By the same token, the enforced building freeze often acts as a catalyst for the development of ideas. Not just during a war, when nothing at all can be built, but even in the early post-war years, when building activities are only slowly picking up again, the turnover of ideas is usually too rapid for construction to keep up. Construction is in the pause position while ideas development is in fast forward mode.”⁷²

The expansion of the construction field has reached its peak from the year 2002 up to 2008. This was the period when most people decide to ensure a home for them and the future generations. “One could hear a mixer in almost every yard.” (company owner B. M.) Then came a period of stagnation. During and after the great recession period in Europe, the construction field has suffered a lot, which not only led to decrease of the demand for the construction companies, but also to a significant drop in the price of the construction materials. In 2009, the prices of some materials, primarily iron products and thermal insulation products, have shown a significant drop and there was also a slight drop in the price of the roofing tiles and masonry blocks. Even the price of the construction works was reduced. The price of cement has varied the least. Regardless of the price reduction, the demand was also diminished by some 40 percent, which shows the difficult economic situation in which Banja Luka was at the time and still is to this day.

The early years after the war were marked by the construction of many individual residential buildings. At that time, the multi-family housing was stagnating, since there were no investors that could undertake such a large-scale project. Today is the situation reversed. The multi-family buildings are being built at the expense of the detached houses, that are often removed in order to make room for a new building. Unlike the ones in Yugoslavia, that were offering cheap residential solutions, the ones that are built now are made by the private investors, that seek to get a significant revenue from it. This is the reason that the quality of the construction is questionable, but that has more to do with the desires of the investor than it does with the market offer. If one looks at the individual residential houses, the quality of the embedded materials is often at a very high level, even in those houses where the financial resources were limited. The construction quality of these houses is not questionable, it is the architectural and ambient quality that are brought into question.

⁷² Ibelings, 2010, 6.

6.1. Foreign is better

The materials that the construction market in Banja Luka has to offer are very diverse and of different quality. For the corresponding price, the investors can find what they seek right in their surroundings, from the materials of the premium characteristics, to those that have somewhat poorer performance. This is especially considered so by the owner of construction companies and construction material plants. Interviewed house owner M. O., owns a small concrete plant as well. From his point of view, Banja Luka market is not to be discarded easily:

“We have the materials of good quality around here. We mostly got the furniture from Austria because there’s more choice and the quality is a bit higher. But when it comes to building material, we have some high quality stuff here. You can maybe say that the same material in Germany or Austria is of better quality, but in percentages, I wouldn’t say it’s more that 1% of higher quality. People just tend to connect everything that is done here with poor quality, and it often isn’t so. Metal frameworks are extremely good here, maybe even better than in some more developed countries. Now, they have these mixed mortars, and we still mix it manually – we add all the ingredients, and abroad you can just buy finished mixture. When it comes to building, I think the quality is more or less the same. They could just be faster because they have better mechanization.”

People who are part of the building profession have been developing their business throughout different times and difficulties that the war has brought with it, so they can give the best insight of the range of possibilities that they have to offer. Although it’s sometimes hard to tell a professional opinion and personal tendency apart, the fact is that the post war Banja Luka was built by these companies and the quality of built structures has always depended more on the investment amount or the quality of the construction work, than it does on the available material quality and diversity. The merchandize itself is imported from “all over the world”, “from China to the European countries” and “not only from Ex-Yugoslavian countries”. (P. T.) If an investor has the necessary amount of money, they can find everything they need in one of the construction companies in the city, to make a stable and permanent house.

However, the opinion of the masses and those who are experts in the field differ to a great extent. Most people with sufficing financial resources have the tendency to discard the local production and companies and go straight to other countries to find the materials for their homes. There is still a strong belief imprinted in most people’s minds that the quality of the materials is better elsewhere:

„We chose the material of the best quality. We were looking a lot of things online. For example, the masonry blocks are of the Austrian production. We were looking for a good quality, knowing that both sound and thermal insulation will be good with these blocks. The same was with other building materials, windows, doors and all the other things. “ (M. D.)

And this is not just the case with the construction business; it is like that for almost every aspect of life. It is a clear reflection of the current state in the country: the whole social, political and economic situation is bad and keeps getting worse. When observing Western countries from the outside, it seems that every single aspect of life is better, material things included. So everything coming from (for example) Austria is a synonym for quality, while everything made in Bosnia is a write-off. In reality, this is often not the case. There are many people trying to achieve a certain level of quality in their business that is often being foreseen.

And while the quality of the materials that are built into the house is something that is at an enviable level, there are other aspects of the construction market that leave a significant place for improvement. According to the construction company owner, it is the better mechanization and organization that is a great advantage of the more developed countries. However, the biggest downside of the market seems to be the variety of the products regarding design, and this is where the large scale stores have an advantage. This is especially the case when it comes to interior decoration and furniture. There is, of course, a reason for that. Most people are accustomed to the certain type of interior design as well. Every epoch has its typical living room and it is so in almost every country in the world. For most Banja Luka's citizens, it is not something that they dwell on for too long. As long as it's affordable and comfortable, it's good enough for their standards. But for someone wanting to apply contemporary design that breaks the pattern, furniture purchase in Banja Luka, especially for reasonable price, is rarely an option.

For the architects that are in interior design business, the market doesn't have much to offer, because the "supply [...] is very low, next to nothing". They "mostly make furniture according to [their own] design". Some things are imported from nearby countries, primarily Croatia and Italy, "mostly deco and chairs", but when it comes to more contemporary pieces of furniture, it usually "comes down to finding a good craftsman that can make a replica." This way a contemporary piece of furniture is created for a decent price, since designer pieces of furniture that the market does have to offer, have "overblown prices" that "quickly repel the investor". (Architect L. S.)

To sum everything up, the range of materials that the construction market in Bosnia has to offer is quite adequate for an average house. Construction bricks, iron products, cement, roofing tiles etc. are all of good quality, enabling an average investor to make a durable house

that can withstand the test of time. Even for the interior design, there is a range of affordable products that offer comfort and simple design, which is what most investors will strive to. For those who want to make something more out of the ordinary, some resourcefulness is required. The crafts field is something that is still quite developed in Bosnia, with many independent craftsman operating in every city. Although the craftsmen, especially carpenters, have a bad reputation of being stubborn and breaking deadlines, they still offer a good quality work and inventiveness for a fair price. With all the available materials and manpower, an investor, even those who don't want a typical house, can find most of the materials right on their doorstep. For those who want to expand their possibilities and step out of the boundaries of ordinary, the market of the surrounding countries is the best solution. The combination of local and imported construction elements and furniture can result in a very promising architecture.

6.2. The Price of a House

The construction of the house is a big challenge for the citizens of Banja Luka. There are numerous factors that will influence such a project, with the economical aspect being the biggest part of the problem. The burden of every day survival, with an added loan to it, that most people will take in order to make a house, can be quite a challenge. Still, even with the limited resources, people will go into this investment, mostly underprepared, and hope for the best outcome. The price of a house can vary to a large extent, depending on the type of built in materials, manpower, size, city zone etc.

First big investment is buying a lot. As someone once said, three most important things that matter in property are location, location, location. It is no exception when it comes to citizens of Banja Luka. The vistas, the proper insolation and the greenery are certainly determining factors when someone decides to buy a lot. There are several locations that meet the requirements and can be taken into consideration. The determining factor for most people is the available financial resources. The price of the lot can vary from 20 KM per m² in the suburban areas, up to 300 KM per m² in the city centre. This is the reason that the suburban settlements are often considered a reasonable solution, since they're still relatively close to the city with the prices are much more affordable than in the city itself. In the urban, predominantly single-family settlements that belong to the 3rd and 4th city zone, the price ranges from 80 to 100 KM per m². For an average house, people mostly buy a 500 m² lot. This means that the price of a lot in these settlements will cost between 40 000 and 50 000 KM.

When paying this, for many sky high figures, the costs that follow will squeeze the last pfennig⁷³ out of one's savings or loan.⁷⁴

For the construction permits, the architectural design and the rest of the paperwork, it is required to set aside around 15 000 KM, with the price slightly ranging depending on the location of the house as well as its size.⁷⁵

The price for the construction materials and the construction workers is mostly the same in the whole region of Banja Luka. The construction companies that work by the principle of acquiring the materials and making the whole house without burdening the owner with any technicalities charge around 800 KM per m². This is, however, rarely the case, since most investors prefer to oversee everything. With some resourcefulness, they can somewhat reduce the price, primarily by engaging in the process of construction and finding the lowest bidder for the construction materials. The works and the materials for the interior cost the most. The price of the interior works is depending on the quality of the floors, walls and doors. The completion of construction works for one 100 m² house, regardless of its location, costs between 70 000 and 80 000 KM. By making three residential units under one roof, the price per 100 m² floor (which makes one residential unit) is lower, making people believe this is a much smarter housing solution. This is why a 100 m² house is a rare sight in Banja Luka.⁷⁶

Additional cost is for the furniture and the house appliances (again depending on the quality of the purchased items) for which the average price is around 8 000 KM. The installation of the heating system costs around 5 000 KM and the water and electricity connections, around 1 600 KM.⁷⁷

It is also required that additional government fees are paid, such as aero-footage fees, urban-technical consent etc., which, along with some other costs that will inevitably come up, makes around 2 000 KM.⁷⁸

This means that a price for some 100 m² house sums up to a total of ca. 150 000 KM. According to the Republican Bureau of Statistics, the average salary in Banja Luka for the last couple of years was around is around 830 KM. This means that the price of the house will "swallow" around 180 pay checks, which is over 15 years of work. Obviously, the whole pay check can't be set aside. If two people in the family work, it is usually one half or third of one pay check that is set aside, meaning that it takes much longer to pay off the loan. This is the reason why so many "unnecessary" costs are discarded in the process of construction. Anything that

⁷³ Monetary unit in Bosnia, 1/100 fragment of KM.

⁷⁴ Banjaluka 2016

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

⁷⁷ Banjaluka 2013

⁷⁸ Ibid

doesn't directly enable the house to function properly falls under this category. So the architect, all of the rents, the land survey, façade etc. are all of secondary importance and something that can be done "someday". There are also some other ways to save some money in the process. Friends and family that can be included in the construction process are a great asset. Also, most houses are rarely completed. Putting the roof is most important; finishing all of the interior works – not as much. Bigger, three floor houses, are rarely completed and usually it's only one floor that is equipped for living, while the rest of the house is being successively finished during longer time periods.

7. Legislation

Another factor that can determine the characteristics of a house is the law. The main guideline for the legal process of the construction is *The Law on Urban Planning and Construction* that has 199 Articles and was passed in April 2013. In December 2015 it was expanded by *The Law on Amendments to the Law on Spatial Planning and Construction*. The Article I states the content of this Law and all the aspects of the construction that it regulates: urban planning and development, everything regarding the urban planning documentation, Location Conditions and Planning and Technical Conditions, design and development of the construction land, issuing Construction Permit, the type and content of the technical documentation, the process of the construction and the relations between the participants in it, the way buildings are used and their removal, the legalization of illegally built facilities as well as the control over the implementation of the law and the work of the people and organizations that are in charge in conducting the law.

The law covers every aspect of the construction process and influences the overall form of the house – at least theoretically. The general problem with the laws in Bosnia and Herzegovina is that not every socio-economic aspect is taken into consideration, which makes it extremely hard to actually implement them under the given circumstances. The biggest problem is that certain taxes and annuities are too high for the economic standard of the majority of the population. That is the main reason why there are so many aspects of the law that haven't been conducted properly or even at all. The mere process of making a house, even without the documentation, is an enormous investment for most of Banja Luka's population. Additional taxes and costs that aren't directly connected to the functioning of the house aren't considered necessities and it is no wonder that there are many illegally built facilities.

As explained by the S. D. at a City Planning Institute (CPI), for every person who decides to make a house there are certain steps to follow. It all starts with the spatial planning and ends with one final product – a house that is ready for use. There are several documents that need to be submitted, before a family is allowed to settle in their new home: Location Conditions and Planning and Technical Conditions, the proof of the ownership and the right to construct on the given site, the main project, report on the control of technical documentation and a rescript on determining the amount of compensation for land and one-time annuity.

7.1. Spatial Planning

The base for every functional city is the urban planning. It determines the look of the individual city quarters and creates the connections between them that make the city function properly. However, the urban planning in Banja Luka is influenced by many outside factors. First, and probably the most influential one, is the illegal construction that arose as the direct consequence of the war. It all started shortly after the war when there was an increased need for the housing solutions and the city couldn't respond fast enough. There are many wild residential settlements in both urban and rural parts of Banja Luka that are built without any plan. In fact, Banja Luka is a city that seriously lacks planned single-family residential areas in the city core or even in the suburbs. These settlements are mostly just randomly positioned houses on a piece of land, that don't have properly resolved street matrix or the relation to one another. Regulatory plans for such settlements are either done after part of the settlement has already been built, with an attempt to fix the current situation, or they existed from the beginning, but they haven't been conducted properly. It is a closed circle of complicated connections between the bad socio-economic situation, the lack of applied urban planning and its enforcement, and the indifference of certain people towards the law.

For the houses that are positioned in the planned city zones, the Regulatory Plan of that zone is the first parameter that determines the shape of the house. Before there was even an idea of making a house on that place in someone's head, there was an outline on the paper that has already created certain features of a future project. These features refer to the dimensions and number of floors in a house, as well as its rough shape. There are some smaller deviations from the original parameters, but it's something that has to be complied during the whole process of construction.

7.2. Planning Documentation

The first set of documentation that needs to be submitted for the construction of the house is the Location Conditions. In order to get the Location Conditions, the lot has to at least have the access road. With this document, there are several other documents that need to be submitted. First of these are the Planning and Technical Conditions which are mostly referring to the spatial relations and the physical characteristics of the building itself, such as the position of the object, the number of floors – both underground and over ground, the dimensions, distance from the neighbour, building coefficient and occupation of the lot, lot design, some materials that affect the appearance of the house and its energy efficiency. Another part of these Conditions is referring to the infrastructure: the possibility of accessing

the road network as well as the connection to the water, electricity, sewerage, city central heating or any other infrastructure, among some other parameters. (S. D., CPI)

This is probably the most formidable part for any future house owner. Dealing with all the paperwork, the submission forms and going from one counter to another is often very frustrating. Even though exact procedure of acquiring and submitting the forms is defined, in praxis things still usually run very slowly and not without difficulties. Generally speaking, getting a Construction Permit in South-Eastern Europe is more complicated than in some Western-European lands, primarily because the process is quite expensive in relation to the average salary. The problem is also partially connected to the mentality of people, since a many will seek to get a three floor house at any cost, even if it means skipping a few steps – which is the usually the required paperwork.

7.3. Compensation for the City Construction Land and Annuity

After the analyses regarding the conditions on the lot and the house project, an application for Annuity and Compensation for the city construction land is being submitted. The amount of Compensation for city construction land and the amount of the Annuity is determined per unit of usable area of the house (KM/m²)⁷⁹ in accordance with the conceptual design that is done by an architect and submitted along with the Local Conditions. Calculations for the Compensation for the city construction land are based upon the accessibility of utilities such as the traffic infrastructure and its quality, hydro technical infrastructure, street lighting, telephone and cable TV connections, heating infrastructure etc. The price is the highest when the lot is fully fitted and it reduces in percentage when some utilities are missing. (S. D., CPI)

When it comes to rent, each city zone has a fix rent, with the city centre having the highest one. It is calculated in percentage for the final average price by m² of usable area of the residential unit and it has to be paid only once. There are four city zones in Banja Luka and the price varies depending on them. Due to bad socio-economic situation, there is a possibility of paying in instalments. The amount of compensation in this case is directly connected to the city zone in which the house is located. In the *Official Gazette of the City of Banja Luka* No. 15, passed on April 17, 2014, as stated in Article 23, the construction land of the city is divided into four zones. The percentages amount: for the first city zone – 6%, second city zone – 5%, third city zone – 4% and the fourth city zone 3%. Within the first city zone there's also an extra zone for which the rent is increased by additional 20%.

⁷⁹ KM or a Convertible Mark is a monetary unit in Bosnia and Herzegovina. One euro (€) is around 1.96 KM.

There have been some issues with the payment of these fees and annuity. Even though the economic crisis and negligence of the payers are main reasons for this situation, part of the problem is also insufficient information of the payers and their distrust towards the government when it comes to these fees. The laws are changed very often and sometimes the new laws exclude the old ones, which has led to some confusion in the past. They were cases where people were paying different compensations and after these were found invalid, their money wasn't reimbursed. The main problem remains the proper communication between the governmental institutions and the people, not just in construction related issues, but in general. There is a huge gap between the two sides and the lack of information exchange. As long as this remains, the people won't pay and the institutions will not function the way they should.

7.4. Resolving the Property Relations

One of the most important documents required for issuing a construction permit is the proof of ownership, which means that all property relations need to be resolved. During the issuing of the location conditions it is not something that comes up. But by the time the construction permit needs to be issued, there can't be any questions and doubts regarding the property relations. The lot in the land registry and especially cadastre has to be 1/1. If the lot in the land registry is not 1/1, every co-owner has to sign an agreement about the construction in the public notary's office. These land registry copies are often very comprehensive and complicated in the region of Banja Luka. It is not uncommon that some of the land owners are deceased or that some are untraceable, which makes resolving this situation extremely difficult. One of the main downsides of the laws in Bosnia is that they aren't adaptable for any extraordinary situations, often making paradox situations that can't be legally resolved. (S. D. CPI)

The occurrence of the problems that regard ownership over the land is complicated primarily because of the co-owners that can't be traced, but even more so, because of those that can. One of the most common cases in the Minor Offences Court is the litigation over ownership and at the same time one of the biggest reasons for family disputes. The socio-economical state in the country has led to the fact that a piece of land is validated more than family, causing family members to completely turn against each other with the goal of acquiring the whole property for themselves. This is especially often in the rural areas, where the land represents means of survival, so there's not much room for compromise.

Alongside the bad economic situation, the problem of unresolved land ownership is one of the biggest reasons why there are so many illegally built houses in Banja Luka.

7.5. Construction Permit

After all of the planning documents have been assembled and all the questions regarding the ownership are resolved, the construction permit can be issued. Before the construction can start, there is a 15-day period in which any of the people that are affected by the construction of the house can file a complaint. During the location conditions, all of the neighbours have to be questioned and listened, which can be a very big problem. There are all kinds of neighbours that will resent anything. The border between two plots is frequently a reason for dispute between the neighbours, but if the land surveyor marks the confine, there's not much anyone can do. If all the conditions are met, every complaint isn't taken into consideration. There are actually people who will oppose something out of pure spite, but they still have the right to be listened to. All of the location conditions need to be delivered to the people that gave the statement and they can file the complaint when the construction permit is issued, within this 15 days' period. (S. D. CPI)

After that period, if there are no complaints, the construction can start. The construction permit contains the information of the period of time in which the object has to be built. Before beginning of the construction, the investor has to submit an application in order to be able to start. This is something that is rarely followed through. Investors of the large scale objects always do that, but with the smaller, single family houses, it is something that is quite rare. (S. D. CPI) This application requires for a geodesic company, which is mostly private, to do the marking of the building. Considering the fact that the company is private and this small act costs a lot, it is clear why this step often isn't followed through. By the mere logic that it isn't something that is a "must", it is discarded at the beginning.

Another thing that has to be done before the construction has started, is to conclude the contract with the construction company and to name a supervisory authority. Supervisory authority is responsible for everything that happens on the construction site and signs the books. During the construction process itself, there aren't any legal frameworks or paperwork required (other than the control of the supervisory authority). Now that the owner has finished the phase of dealing with the government, the phase of dealing with the construction workers starts, which isn't any less tiresome.

After the building is finished, the investor has to submit an application for the Certificate of Occupancy along with all the previous documents, the statement of the supervisory authority, the built design, and the snapshot of the building. After the local authorities have received these documents, the commission for examining the house is being formed. This commission needs to establish if everything is built accordingly with the paperwork. If there are no remarks,

the house finally gets a Certificate of Occupancy which is in a way an ID of the house. With this Certificate, the building is being registered and only after that is when the city sees the house as existing.

7.6. Illegal Construction

Although the city needs the proper paperwork in order to see a house as existing, for the owner, the built structure is much more important. After all, they require the house they can settle, not the paperwork. Among many other problems that the construction and architecture field are struggling with, not only in Banja Luka, but also in the whole country, is the number of illegally built structures that are still, to this day, being built. It is a frequent occurrence that an object is built with only partial or even without any paperwork. Around 20 000 houses in Banja Luka are built illegally.⁸⁰ New regulations and legislations that bring many incentives have been passed in the last decade in order to legalize all the illegal facilities. The last legalization process began on the January 1st 2016 in order to legalize as many built structures as possible, but there are still new houses that are being built without a permit and the whole process runs slowly. The prices for the legalization are significantly lower compared to the amount of money that one would need to legally build a house, but they've also dropped compared to the previous Act that has been passed in 2008. The organization within the Department for Urban Planning was restructured in the year 2015 and it has shown some progress since this restructuring, but those are still very small steps and the number of illegal objects is still high.

As previously mentioned, poor economic situation is the main reason why there are so many obstacles in creating a functional system that hinders the occurrence of the illegal construction that runs simultaneously with the legalization process. The unresolved property ownership can also cause the problem, since any request for legalization has to be denied if this is something that isn't resolved. Still, it's primarily the inability of the system to adapt to the needs and financial abilities of the citizens that prevents advancement. Considering the heavy economic situation and the repeated exploiting, it is no wonder that the people with limited financial resources will often skip a few steps on the way of putting a roof over their heads.

There are many exemptions when legalizing the house: no location conditions are required and only thing required is for a land surveyor to come out to the field and make the photographs of the house. All the objects up to 400 m² can go through a short version of the documentation process, where the only documents that are required are the ownership document, land registry entry, copy of cadastre and an excerpt of the regulatory plan. Since

⁸⁰ Press, 2014

the beginning of 2016, the new amendment of the law has stated the new prices for the legalization of unlawfully built objects, that are almost symbolic:

- Up to 100 m² – 100 KM
- 100-200 m² – 500 KM
- 200-300 m² – 1000 KM
- 300-400 m² – 2000 KM

The deadline for the legalization is 2016, after which the owners of such objects won't have any legal protection and the faith of their houses will depend on the inspection. The houses that can't be legalized are the ones whose construction was started after the current Law on Spatial Planning and Construction was passed.⁸¹

Besides the fact that there are many houses built without any paperwork, it is even more often so that they are built with partial paperwork, following only some of the regulations. That is why there is a need for a strong building inspection. Most of the people start building illegally and willingly make a decision to legalize the house later. With the given situation, people are not as much to blame in this case, as much as the government and the economic situation. The fact is that people think in a certain way: they have to give 5-15 000 KM for the documentation only and for that money they can already make the foundations. These houses are mostly built on the city outskirts or the suburban areas, where the inspectors really don't have time to control everything that is being built. The point is, everyone would like to have their house built legally, but the current situation just doesn't allow it. (S. D., city planning institute)

There are often examples of the people that started building something and a problem with their neighbour over the plot boundary emerged, which stopped the further construction and gave the location of the house that was built illegally. This is almost a regular issue that the people are arguing over the boundaries, which is often taken to Court. It just shows how much people value the land over the neighbour.

A whole other problem, that affects the look of the neighbourhood, but also has much worse effects, such as the negative ecological consequences, is the lack of the facades on the single-family houses. Every house without the façade is directly built to the problem of the illegal construction, since the Certificate of Occupancy can't be issued if the house is not completely finished. The Department for Urban Planning is the one in charge of conducting the law in this case, but as with all the other laws, the problem remains the same: the lack of financial resources of the investor. Most of people will focus on finishing a house by putting the roof on it and making one floor suitable for living. The only thing that can make anyone to finish a house and get the Certificate of Occupancy is if one is trying to get a mortgage for their house.

⁸¹ Vecernje Novosti, 2015

The bank requires a registered object in this case, so it's the need that makes a person to legalize the house.

The deadline for the legalization that was supposed to end in 2015, was meant to be the last one. There has been another one since, from 1st of January 2016 to 31st of December 2016. After the last one, the number of illegal buildings still remains very high, so it is to be seen what kind of destiny awaits them. Until now, removing illegal building has been rarely conducted. The whole process of removing a house is not simple and the cost for such venture is high. There is also no registry of the illegal structures, which makes it hard to even find them in the first place (see *Figure 50*).

The illegal aspect doesn't only comprise the individual units, but often the whole settlements. There are several parts of the city that are known as the focal points of illegal construction. These illegal settlements kept moving away from the city, creating urban sprawls, which not only create the problem of the lacking infrastructures and supporting facilities, but make it virtually impossible to create a unified regulatory plan of the city. They even cause much bigger problems, such as the interference with the flood protection system.



Figure 50: Preparation for demolition of illegally built house

7.7. Energy Efficiency

In the current law, there's very little mention of the façades. There are new changes of the law and a new draft is supposed to be made. It contains much more regulations that are connected to the energy efficiency of the object. Every house will have their energy efficiency chart. Logical conclusion is that if an object doesn't have the façade, that it can't get this chart. This is something that comes from the western countries and the government of Bosnia is merely copying the laws, but because of the financial situation, it is something that can't be applied. For the nowadays projects of the houses this energy efficiency has to be calculated and the type and thickness of the thermal insulation as well as the types of windows and doors has to be stipulated. This is something that is inevitably coming and the new laws will probably be more oriented towards this. A big problem is that Bosnia still lacks the experts in this field.

7.8. Deviations from the Regulatory Plan

The Regulatory Plan has three parts, the general, the textual and the graphical. This graphical part is what allows some deviations from that what is given in the graphical part. This means that if someone wants to make some changes to the Plan, the textual part will provide some loops, so it can actually be done. For example, the textual part says that it is possible to deviate from the perimeter of the object. But if the changes that the interested party wants are more radical, the regulatory plan can be amended. Every citizen can submit the proposal for the alteration of the regulatory plan and the Department for Urban Planning decides if this is something that can be done or not. And this legal procedure is transferred to the Parliament, which decides if it's going to be passed or not.

It was the same case with the legalizing the objects. The house could be legalized if it meets certain conditions: the house could have up to three storeys as long as it doesn't step out of the dimensions. If that was the case, the changes of the Regulatory Plan had to be made.

However, even more often, the Regulatory plan is changed to meet the requirements of certain people who want to build something on a specific location within the city. If his future investment doesn't coincide with the plans of the city, then, with the proper amount of money and connections, the changes can be made. These types of investors often seek to get as much revenue from their investment as possible, creating a space that doesn't pay enough attention to its surroundings, but the money and power are the main actuators in Bosnia. This is not something that happens that often in the field of private residential construction, but such investments are often built at the expense of it.

8. New Architecture

The turbo folk architecture has drawn much attention in the official architectural discourse lately, primarily as a sociological phenomenon. The average residential architecture is not something that has been discussed as much, simply because it's not "obscene" enough to be interesting. And the official architecture is still in the developing process, so it doesn't cause as much debate. Though, according to Ibelings, there are some good examples spread across the country:

"What is being built in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the twenty-first century is no world changing architecture; at most it is an architecture that makes practical, aesthetic and functional amendments to the world as it is."⁸²

In the Banja Luka itself, in the sphere of public planning are several projects that can be considered successful. In the private sphere, less experiments are being conducted. There are only several villas around city and some in the broad city area that step out of the typical Banja Luka house mould. If this architecture is valuable or not is a completely different subject, but the importance of these houses lies in the fact that they are quite atypical for the area, which shows that people are slowly starting to embrace something different. This type of house is, for the time being, connected to the upper social layers, but it is still a major breakthrough, since it means that turbo is slowly being replaced by contemporary. The most important characteristic of these new houses is that the number of floors and the surface isn't as extravagant as it used to be. This is an important step towards the reduction of underutilized space, that is a big problem in the city.

Clean lines and minimalism is something that doesn't agree with many people. "Now, fifteen years after the end of the war, everything is starting to get back into step and architecture, too, is approaching normality."⁸³ The approaching to normality is connected to the experimentation in the architecture of different typologies. The new upper social strata villa now has clean lines, flat roof, there are no ceramic figurines and the façade is simplified, without the colourfulness of the old model (see *Figures 51-55*). Still, the number of these villas that are scattered across the city is still quite humble, but it's still a clear vision that some preferences towards contemporary architecture are being developed. Usually the members of upper social strata are those who set the trends, and it is still left to be seen if something will change in the future.

⁸² Ibelings 2010, 8

⁸³ Ibid, 7



Figure 51: Contemporary house on the city hill with dental clinic; view from the south-west



Figure 52: Two sections weekend house – one residential and one for social events (the two parts were originally meant to be connected by an underground passage, which was enabled due to the proximity of the river; view from the west)



Figure 53: Urban villa in the city core; view from the west



Figure 54: Recently built contemporary house, adapted to the slope of the terrain; view from the north-east



Figure 55: Recently built contemporary house, adapted to the slope of the terrain; view from the north-west

9. Conclusion

Banja Luka, as the city that emerged as a product of diverse cultures and ideologies, has a very rich architectural background. Sadly, instead of synthesizing these cultures by using the best examples of Ottoman, Austrian and later modern architecture, the city chose to succumb to the construction trend that seems to be dominant in the whole South-East Europe. A house in modern day Banja Luka is many things, but a work of architecture is hardly one of them. By being a primarily a sociological phenomenon, it degrades the ambient qualities of the city to a great extent. The house itself is not the primary problem; it is the illegal construction that creates dysfunctional neighbourhoods and even the whole city quarters. However, it is the consequence of many factors that must be taken into consideration.

There are many reasons why the house typology has experienced drastic transformations. The transition from the eastern to western culture at the end of the 19th century has put the Ottoman architecture in the background, by “correcting” the irregular street matrix and shifting the development of the city in other direction. Although the existing architecture wasn’t destroyed, a completely different system of construction has marked its end, leaving it to the ravages of time. During the later periods, what remained of the eastern influence, has slowly deteriorated.

The most vivid advancement in the field of architecture the city has experienced during the times of Bosnian independency, between the two world wars. Many new public buildings shaped the city and enriched its culture. By following the world trends and combining them with traditional building systems, this period’s residential architecture has left some of the best examples of urban villas. Due to the lack of financial resources, they remain in the city structure mostly neglected and forgotten, serving as a reminder that the residential architecture of Banja Luka was once in the hands of the architects.

After the formation of Yugoslavia, the goal was to keep all the nations united, by suppressing the individuality. The collective housing became the centre of interest, while the individual housing received very little attention. This is where the architects slowly let the rains and a mass production took over. Then came the war and the aftermath, that worsened the situation much further. The process of transition and the new order created two problems. First one was the weakening of the institutions, leaving people to themselves to find the housing solutions. This is where the building of individual residential units became something that belonged to the people. The second problem were the new capitalistic and cultural trends that promoted extravagancy and the importance of making the money. This was expressed through the new “turbo” houses, that were the combined as many elements as possible, in order to show their importance.

According to many architects in Banja Luka, a typical house is a big problem and a degradation of space. They would want to catch up with the world trends and contribute to development of living quality, but it's the people who hit the brakes and aren't willing to let go. A typical house is primarily the product of the people, which is why it can uncover so many information about the state of mind. The importance of the analyses lies in the understanding of reasons behind a certain house typology. Before passing the judgement, one has to understand. "We look backward at history and tradition to go forward [...] And withholding judgement may be used as a tool to make later judgement more sensitive."⁸⁴ What the analyses established is that the biggest problem of the single-family residential architecture is the unconscientious process of building, that causes underutilized spaces to be created. In this way, compared to the other types of vernacular architecture, the one of Banja Luka can't be commended as practical. That is why the importance of an architect is more about finding socially acceptable architectural solution, rather than to impose what he considers is aesthetically pleasing. "A building should not be a vehicle for an architect's ideas [...]" Compared to the informal settlements around the world, such as favelas, shanty-towns, barrios etc., the house in Bosnia is not created out of a need to survive. It is not a temporary shelter, but something that is there to last. Its characteristics show what is important to people and that is what architects need to embrace. The work of an architect "has to be completed by other people"⁸⁵

Considering the current situation, it doesn't seem like the single-family architecture is going to bring something new anytime soon, at least on the large scale level. This doesn't mean that there aren't any exemptions, but these are rather lone examples. Before there are visible changes in architecture, there have to be changes in the way people live. This, above all, includes better economic situation and a positive change in the governmental institutions. People need stable country so that they can live in the present, without the fear of the future. Only when the state of mind changes, the architecture can change accordingly.

⁸⁴ Venturi, Scott Brown, 3.

⁸⁵ Allsopp, 1977, 46.

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