



**Glotzt  
Nicht so Ro-  
mantisch!**

**On Extra-  
legal Space in  
Belgrade**

An early play of Brecht's featured the banner "Glotzt Nicht so Romantisch!" ("Don't Stare so Romantically": instead, the audience had to assume a critical engagement. Hatherley, 2008: 101)



**Roof extensions are everywhere in Belgrade; no matter where you stand in the city, you are bound to spot one. This is a view from the author's balcony, with (at least) three roof extensions in plain sight.**

**Glutz Nicht so Romantisch!**  
**On Extralegal Space in Belgrade**  
by Dubravka Sekulić

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Above, extensions were made to the Russian Pavilions in Patrice Lumumba street. Upon their completion, the street was dubbed 'the Canyon of Patrice Lumumba', due to the extension's impact on the atmosphere of the street.



A typical extension of a Russian Pavilion, expanding its floor space as far as possible over the existing structure, thus enhancing the effect of a house sitting on top of another house. In the background, a glimpse of another extension in progress (photo taken in 2004).

I took this photo in 2004 when I first encountered the extensions of the Russian Pavilions. Roof extensions, or a house on a house, became omnipresent in Belgrade as the 1990s progressed. They were probably the most controversial urban form that appeared and blossomed in that period, beside the ubiquitous kiosks – increasingly permanent structures on the sidewalks and in other public spaces, which were the primary sites of the dominant street trade. The mere mentioning of either to any professional, whether architect or urbanist, would make their blood run faster. There was a general consensus among the profession: the roof extension was the most obvious sign of the “malign” transformation society was undergoing in the 1990s. This cry against roof extensions was even formalized in the 1997 Declaration against Roof Extensions, drafted by the Association of Belgrade Architects, but it did little to stop the practice. Nor did the continuous demonization of the kiosks stop their proliferation and upscaling.

What professionals failed to notice was the pivotal role kiosks, roof extensions and other forms of illegal constructions played in the wild, grey economy existing in Serbia in the 1990s. Even a wild self-regulated economy, like the one that existed in Serbia during the 1990s, due to war and isolation, produces surplus products, and needs something to absorb them. The illegal construction of kiosks, roof extensions and other buildings, although initially started out of the people’s sheer necessity to solve their immediate needs, was the urbanization needed to absorb the surplus. As the surplus grew, so did its spatial manifestation. Both in scale and diversity. Creating the perfect setting for romantic fantasies the outside gaze has on Balkan: crazy, bustling with life and empowering the

individual with “raw” energy. To the eye of the outsider, kiosks and roof extensions were the ultimate proof that urbanization can be democratized and that “ordinary people” can take control over the production of space and the city.

However, from either viewpoint, insider or outsider, there was something elusive about the extensions of the Russian Pavilions. They did not fit any of the already established “truths” about (illegal) roof extensions in Belgrade.

Firstly, they were much larger than any other known example, obviously made for profit and not as a result of ‘self-building’, in order to solve an immediate housing problem.

Secondly, the same “system” of extension was applied to numerous houses in the neighbourhood, not just in one isolated case.

Thirdly, as some of the extensions were still being constructed, when this practice was supposedly stopped by the political changes of 2000, it was obvious that this was not just a product of 1990s, but rather a spontaneous process gone awry.

Lastly, as the process upscaled, the illusion that illegal construction brought a dispersion of power in the production of space dissolved, and it became obvious that the power just shifted into the hands of developers, who merely used the illegal as their legitimate field.

According to the official interpretation, the extension of the Russian Pavilions could not be happening as it had done in 2004. Yet, the whole neighbourhood was one large construction site. It became obvious that neither romantic interpretation, whether judgmental or enthusiastic, were helpful to really understand the processes underlying the creation of the Russian Pavilions and that this romantic gaze had to stop in



A glimpse at the varying heights of housing in the neighbourhood predating the extensions. On the left the original Russian Pavilion, in the back the high-rise from the 1960s, and on the right a building from the late 1950s.



A view from the inner courtyard of the extension. Here the original pavilion structure has been modified to accommodate a balcony and a room extension.

order to really understand what was happening. I became aware of this discrepancy when I began my research of and around the Russian Pavilions. At that point I realized that the research had to go beyond the form, the appearance of the extensions.

Laws, in the manifestation of either building codes, urban requirements or other instances, in all their intentional or unintentional ambiguity, are translated into form. “Form then becomes one of the most important types of translations. Such a displacement from ideal to material can be extended to information. To provide a piece of information is the action of putting something into a form.” (Latour, 2005: 223)

The extension of the Russian Pavilions was the direct outcome of negotiations between the developers and the municipality on the one hand and the developers and the original inhabitants on the other. The negotiations (see page 132) with the municipality were, in fact, a process of continuous direct translation of what was stipulated in the laws and urban regulations, what could be stated when the rules were changed and the ways in which their formal materialization could influence future regulations. In such case, the concept and perception of legal undergoes such radical transformation that focusing on how building form is changed in time gives a good footing to trace such transformations and unveil the implications they have on the Law. What then was the information that the Officials wanted to convey through the form of the Russian Pavilions? What does this information convey about its emitter and, more importantly, what is the potential of that information to create a difference, both in physical and legislative space?



Incidentally, the moment I encountered the pavilions for the first time was also a crucial point in the genesis of the Russian Pavilions, in the extended form I was interested in, since the local municipality had just lifted the ban on construction, a ban that was proclaimed prior to the local elections that year. Consequently, the construction, albeit carried out according to much stricter rules, was resumed. Stricter rules were adopted to show that this kind of spatial practice had to be put to a stop and that the back door to the municipality was closed. Soon, however, a new door would open, one that would again bridge the gap between legal and illegal. It was the flirtatious play between legal and illegal that created the extralegal space that the Extension of the Russian Pavilions occupied. The physical occupation and transformation (see page 119) was created in a delicate play with the codes and officials, no matter how rough the final outcome seemed. But to truly understand how the Russian Pavilions came into being, it is important to look at the laws and their impact on both sides, legal and illegal.

Although it could be challenging to discuss the Extension of the Russian Pavilions in the context of what Keller Easterling defines as “non-modern space - a space that does not need to succeed or kill to exist but rather simply and easily includes and coexists.” (Easterling, 2012), what is more important for this analysis is to see where these objects stand in relation to the processes, of which they present both the end and the beginning. The rupture that appears between the seemingly ‘legal’ and ‘illegal’, which the Extension of the Russian Pavilions marks in the Gramscian sense, is precisely the one in which “a great variety of morbid symptoms appear” (Gramsci, 1991).

“The discipline, while endowed with a rich vocabulary for describing the object, is under-rehearsed in describing the evolving spatial consequence of the activity.”  
(Easterling, 2012)

There is no perfectly legal or perfectly illegal domain here. It is precisely this extralegal murky in-between situation of the Russian Pavilions that is the focus of my research. What I will try to do in the following text is to use the case of the Russian Pavilions as a guiding element in my attempt to chart and understand the propensity for the extralegal that exists in the local urban context, and give it a context within the broader urban issues related to legislation and legitimacy that are topical at present. But to understand the circumstances that lead to the Extension of the Russian Pavilions, and thus understand ‘the information encoded in it’, it is necessary to go back to the time when the original pavilions were built, and to chart the relationship between the legal and illegal from there onwards. Therefore, the book has two parts that complement each other: the first is a rigorous reading of the Laws and their transformation over time, especially focusing on the post-1990s period, while the second, ‘Dossier: Russian Pavilions’, analyzes the impact of these changes based on the example of the extension of the Russian Pavilions.



# The Right to Housing

“The right to housing is a basic legal institution, providing one of the most important means of life to the working classes.” (Conclusion of the First Yugoslav Forum on Housing and Construction, 1956)

This statement gives a clear idea of the general housing policy that prevailed in socialist Yugoslavia. After the split with Stalin and the idea of state socialism and planned economy in 1948, Yugoslavia started developing its own socialist model, also as a critique of the Soviet bureaucratic type of socialism. The new socialist model, based on the workers' self-management, led to the development of the socialist market. Within this context, the apartment was treated as a basic right of the workers and was not considered a commodity.

Yugoslavian socialism claimed to politicize the whole society and came up with new political forms of participation, epitomized in the self-management principle. At the basis of the socialist self-management principle was an individual with his particular interests, who was free to express, connect and harmonize his interests with the general interests and goals of the community.

“Self-management, as the basic organizing principle of Yugoslav society, was:

- a) a system of social relationships based on the social ownership of the means of production;
- b) a production relationship in which there is a return of the means of labour and management to the carriers of associated labour, and a social production relationship motivated both by special and common interest;

- c) social attitude and a system based on a person's sense of belonging to the fundamental values of society, qualified and responsible participation in the decision-making; the emergence of a new social organization in which, indeed, it will not be possible that everyone decides about everything, but which enables responsible volition under conditions of interdependence, mutual social responsibility, and solidarity that leads to individual liberation;

- d) the transformation of the state, its withering away does not ignore the state function, nor does it exclude the dialectical opposition of the state and self-management that results in the overcoming of the state as a power above society;

- e) a form of self-management and power of the working class and all working people;

- f) relationships and a system establishing many new human rights;

- g) regarding human relations, a system that naturally results in the policy of non-alignment.” (Encyclopedia of Self-Management, 1979: 876).

The implementation of self-management in the Yugoslav economy and society officially started in June 1950 with the passing of the Law on the Handover of Enterprise Management to the Workers.

Despite being introduced top-down, by the official ideologues and functionaries of the League of Communists, with Edvard Kardelj being the most notable, self-management initiated the decentralization and dispersion of political power into smaller self-management units, in which, ultimately, workers had the formal possibility to take decisions. State property was replaced by *social property*, the property of the entire society, no one was a single owner. Many new political institutions were formed that mediated between

different political levels of state and would accelerate Lenin's conception of the withering away of the state. Yugoslavia's self-management was a social formation which combined elements of both communism (the introduction of different social relations, different types of properties, the abolition of private land ownership, the domination of labour over capital, the internalization of the costs of social reproduction, an infrastructure for social, educational and healthcare facilities guaranteeing more access to all people) and capitalism (the introduction of market elements, managerial control over workers).

True to the concept of the withering away of the state, self-management was in a constant process of reshaping and evolution. In this process the relationship between 'communist' and 'capitalist', 'common' and 'market' elements of society were dynamic and in constant competition for dominance. As time progressed, the market elements came to prevail. However, the basic concept of social property and the treatment of commons stayed unchanged until the end of the 1980s. In this system, space was considered to be both an infrastructure and a resource, and the imperative was rational and fair use.

See Article 1

Among the numerous new human rights that self-management, and socialist Yugoslavia, established — improving women's rights (women's suffrage was gained in 1945), access to free education — *the right to housing* was one of the more important. It was prescribed in the Regulation on the Management of Residential Buildings, published in the Official Bulletin of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia Nr. 52/1953, as "a principle providing the permanent right

Law on Spatial Planning  
(Official Gazette SRS 27/1985)

#### Article 1

Through spatial planning, workers and all working people shall secure the rational use and regulation of space in accordance with the objectives of socio-economic growth, preservation, and the rational use of natural resources, protection and advancement of their living and work environment, in a single social planning system.

Spatial Planning and Development is based on the rights and duties of workers and all working people to handle space, preserve nature and the values created by labour, prevent and eliminate any adverse effects that are jeopardizing those values, and to ensure and advance social and economic development.

to use an apartment, following the regulations of the order in residential buildings.”

The right to housing effectively meant that society as a whole was responsible for providing housing for all citizens. The concept of the right to housing had such a strong impact on the professions dealing with space, viz. architects and urbanists, that the editors of the first issue of the architectural magazine “Čovjek i prostor” (Man and Space) published by the Zagreb Society of Architects had this phrase prominent on the cover.

Furthermore, since the Resolution on the Basic Principles of Housing Legislation, passed by the Federal Parliament in 1957, concluded that “the social and organizational basis for the management of social affairs in the area of housing relations and households, as well as the basis for everyday tasks for the improvement of towns, and the continuous growth of the material standards of society, should be the self-managed housing community of the settlement, or the community of citizens living in a housing block or settlement, who directly and through their elected representatives manage their basic common everyday social affairs.” (Stambena zajednica kao predmet prostornog planiranja, 1962: 13)

The housing collective, defined as “a social and territorial collective with the functions necessary for meeting the everyday needs of people, families, and the self-managed organizations of the citizens” (Stambena zajednica kao predmet prostornog planiranja, 1962: 22), became the basic planning unit in urbanism and a guiding tool for the Yugoslav urbanists who were striving to plan an ideal city for a socialism “that as a social process and adequate social order, which leads to the total liberation of man, also seeks its ‘social’ and



The first issue of the architectural Magazine ‘Čovjek i prostor’ (Man and Space), published in 1954, featuring the slogan ‘The Right to Housing’.

‘spatially’ ordered type of town and city.” (Stambena zajednica kao predmet prostornog planiranja, 1962: 19)

That was the theory. In practice, the implementation of the right to housing was regulated by sets of laws, the basis of which was formed by the Law on the Financing of Housing Construction and the Law on Housing Relations, which stayed practically unchanged until the mid 1980s.

See Article 1

The legislature required that housing policy be determined and effectuated by the BOALs — Basic Organizations of Associated Labour —, the main organizational unit in self-management. In these units all workers associated their labour, earned their income, took decisions about the allocation of funds to meet personal and collective needs. One of the first needs to be addressed was the demand for housing by the workers. Once that was solved, the collective would continue to invest additionally in workers’ holiday resorts and other provisions, as well as providing further investments for the development of factories.

See Article 3

BOALs were required to set up programmes for solving housing needs based on the demands for housing of their workers, the material possibilities of the respective BOALs, the workers and their families, either annually, or for a longer period of time. For these programmes to be effective, workers had to coordinate their own wishes, related to the volume, size and quality of housing production, and the existing financial possibilities and necessary investments in the future development of BOAL. The programme enabled each individual to assess when their housing need would be met.

See Article 6

Law on the Financing of Housing Construction,  
Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Serbia 4/1986

#### Article 1

Based on solidarity and reciprocity, organizations of Associated Labour, and other self-managed organizations and communities, as well as society at large, must take action and create opportunities for every man to realize his need for housing, as well as the fundamental requirements for social security.

#### Article 3

Based on the estimated housing needs of workers, their financial resources and the financial capabilities of workers and their families, organizations and labour communities shall set up perennial or annual programmes for solving the housing issues of their workers, and associations of retirement and disability insurance funds, shall set up programmes for solving the housing issues of retirees and beneficiaries of Disability Insurance.

#### Article 6

Housing construction is financed by:

- 1 Resources allocated to housing construction under Art. 8, 9, 10, and 12 of this Law;
- 2 Funds which are, after the Annual Financial Statement of organization, allocated to a housing construction in the mutual fund;
- 3 Private means of the working people;
- 4 Annuity assets per trusts of former Housing Construction Funds, and other loans for housing development;
- 5 Resources of socio-political associations which are allocated for housing construction;
- 6 Rent amortization funds;
- 7 Bank loans and other assets allocated for housing construction.

Law on Housing Relations,  
Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Serbia 9/1985

#### Article 2

Citizens who have moved into an apartment in societal ownership, under a contract of use of the apartment, obtain the right to the permanent use of that apartment to meet their personal and family housing needs under the conditions stipulated by this Law, and, pursuant to a special Law, participate in the management of residential buildings (tenancy).

#### Article 9

The General Self-Management Act, which sets out the basis and standards for distributing the Basic Organization of Associated Labour's net income, shall determine the allocation of funds intended for meeting the housing needs for workers in the basic organization.

The Self-Management Agreement, which regulates the basis and criteria of net income gain for the labour organization, also determines the acquisition of funds allocated for meeting the housing needs of workers in the basic organization.

Resources in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this article shall be allocated in the amount that shall not be lower than 2.4% of the paid personal income.

#### Article 3

Workers of a Basic Organization of Associated Labour, labour communities, contractual organizations of associated labour, basic cooperative organizations, collective farms and other collectives have the right to provide workers with apartments.

#### Article 12

Tenancy right holders are entitled to occupancy rights for one apartment only.

Therefore, the financing of housing was based on the principles of solidarity and reciprocity, which meant that apart from the funds allocated from the annual profit of the BOAL for housing, a monthly sum was deducted from each salary, which would go straight into the housing fund, regardless of whether the workers had their housing needs met or not. Therefore, the self-managed workers and citizens were investing collectively in the housing policy of society, which in return brought some rights, but also obligations. It is important to note here that the concept of 'worker' in socialist Yugoslavia extended beyond the position of a factory labourer. Every active individual in society was a worker in their own right.

See Articles 2, 9 and 3

Decisions about the distribution of the apartments within the BOAL were made by the Workers' Council, "an institutional form of the representative or delegated management or participation of the employed workers in the management of the BOAL." (Enciklopedija samoupravljanja, 1979: 866). There was an inherent problem in the fact that, at least nominally, the same body was responsible both for setting up and implementing the BOAL's housing policy, and for investing in the growth of the BOAL itself. In most cases, there was a limited amount of money. An unbalanced decision of the workers' council would reflect on the number of housing units available for distribution among the workers.

If the housing demands were met 'too efficiently', which the workers would obviously be in favour of, the future growth of the enterprise would be endangered and, as a direct consequence, their future investments in housing would be diminished and jeopardized. The fact that the enterprises were competing among

themselves on the socialist market just added another layer of complexity, as the BOALs were not isolated circles, but an interconnected system.

This paradox led the economist Benjamin Ward to describe the Yugoslav model as an instance of market syndicalism. Ward was analysing the causes of the high unemployment rate in self-managed Yugoslavia, which, together with homelessness, or the inability to solve the housing problems, was not supposed to appear. Therefore the system displayed a kind of structural blindness, unable to acknowledge the problem and think of solutions. In the case of unemployment, “because workers in labour-managed firms in Yugoslavia had the power to choose between new investment and individual incomes, they would limit the hiring of additional workers among whom net profit would have to be distributed. The conflict of interest between individual workers’ wages and other workers’ jobs was greater, in Ward’s model, under socialist ownership than under capitalism because workers’ power over labour-market questions had no constraints.” (Woodward, 1995: 12)

See Article 12, previous page

In order to alleviate the constant pressure on the housing market, the slogan calling out for more solidarity was often repeated “You got a house? Return the apartment!”.

Following this legislative, various large, modernist housing complexes were produced, such as New Belgrade in Belgrade, Serbia or New Zagreb in Croatia, and numerous other new urban housing agglomerations, from brand-new towns (such as Nova Gorica or Velenje in Slovenia), satellite towns or just housing blocks. The legislature paid less attention to the problem of the construction of individual houses.



Block 23 in New Belgrade completed in 1974 – a prime example of modernist housing blocks. The block consists of various typologies, both high-rises and slabs, while the inside of the block features various communal facilities such as a school, a kindergarten and various shops.





Block 23, New Belgrade – Apartments in New Belgrade and other housing blocks were distributed according to the 'Right to Housing' scheme. An enterprise would purchase a number of apartments in the same building and distribute them to its employees, thereby creating a diverse social structure within the blocks.

Housing was a common and shared need that was to be solved collectively. This attitude towards individual housing especially burdened Belgrade. As a capital city, Belgrade was expected to be the symbol of success of the principles on which Yugoslav society was based. In other towns, larger parts of town were designated by zoning to the construction of individual, single family housing and rules for obtaining permits and land-use permissions were made accordingly, but in Belgrade this was almost impossible.

Although envisioned as fair, this system created to fulfil the right to housing was not flawless, but it worked for a great number of people, especially workers, who for the first time in (Yugoslav) history were entitled to decent, humane living conditions. However, the production of housing units could not keep up with the demand that the pace of modernization and urbanization of Yugoslavia had set, especially in the 1960s, when the country was among the fastest growing in the world.

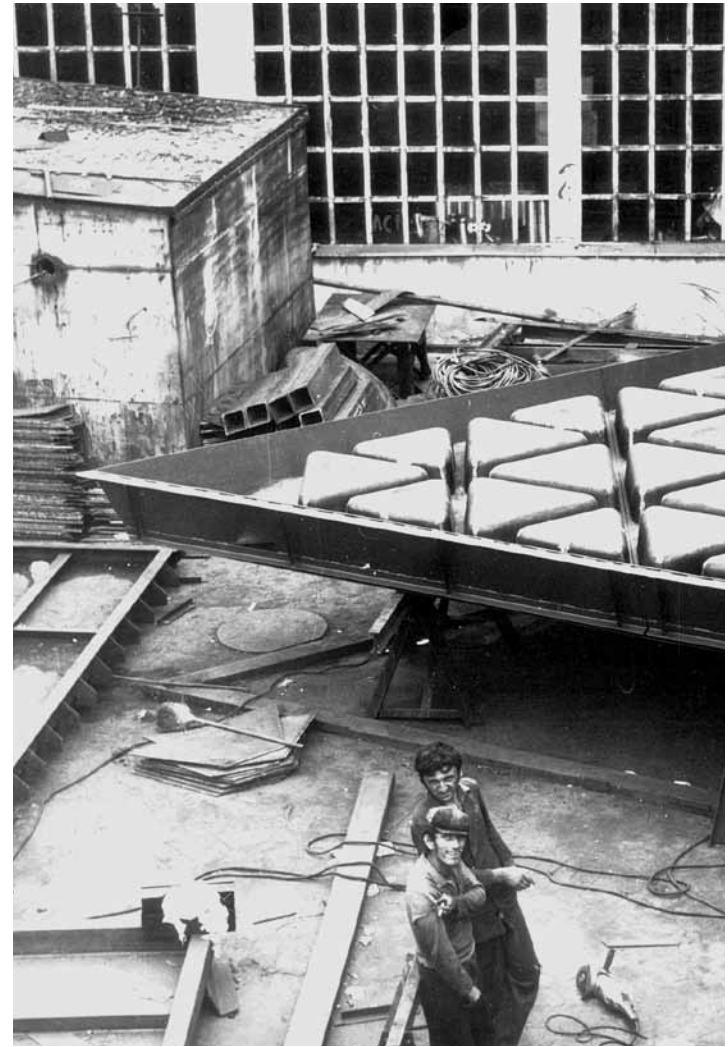
This caused injustice and even corruption, and some people being stuck forever on the waiting list. One of the reasons for this was the inconsistency of the legislature, as it was never defined what exactly were inadequate housing conditions, nor what parameters made a person subject to inadequate living conditions. The interpretation of these conditions was left to be defined by the rules for allocation of the apartments set by the official body of enterprise that distributed apartments. The size of an apartment was often a problem, as it was difficult to adjust the allocation of the housing stock to the personal needs of those who already had an apartment (e.g. the sizes of families grew or shrank, the standard of living became higher, people moved to other cities). There-

fore the institution of the ‘socially organized apartment swap’ was established, in which the holders of tenant’s rights could swap apartments according to their needs. The system of ranking used to determine priorities and apartment sizes was set by the same people competing for them, so it was subject to corruption, especially in the 1970s and 1980s when growth slowed down.

It is important to note this, as those who were waiting to have their right to housing had to look for a solution to fulfil their basic needs outside of the system, together with those who did not even have a chance to get on the lists, as they were either unemployed, or were temporary or permanent migrant workers, usually working abroad. The people who were forced to solve the housing problem by themselves often turned to illegal self-building on arable land in the outskirts of the major cities.

Furthermore, some of the enterprises were not profitable enough to invest in sufficient amounts of flats, or they would just give priority to investing in growth and expansion rather than in social provisions.

A tell-tale example is the construction company Energoprojekt, from Belgrade, which was one of the most powerful construction companies in Yugoslavia, specialized in working in the developing and non-aligned countries of Africa, the Middle and Far East and even South America on complex infrastructural projects. The projects enabled these countries to modernize and the company proudly brought back to Yugoslavia revenues of hundreds of millions of dollars. Yet, it was constantly criticized by its workers for failing to provide a sufficient amount of flats.



Lagos International Trade Fair in Nigeria under construction. This was one of the most important and profitable projects the construction company ‘Energoprojekt’ undertook in the 1970s. Photo – a mould for the prefabricated concrete construction designed for the trade fair, manufactured on-site.

Quite often, the company's construction workers would come back from a construction site to the semi-finished houses they were building illegally in the outskirts of Belgrade. The modernization that they were bringing to many people around the world was slow in coming to their own apartments.

The inability to produce and distribute sufficient housing units, as well as the inability to even come close to full employment were among the fundamental paradoxes of Yugoslav's take on real existing socialism in the form of self-management. Problems of this nature soared as the state apparatus was, ironically, becoming more and more bureaucratized, despite the initial premise of self-management, of the withering away of the state.

The problems were systematically put aside and ignored, even in analyses of "the Yugoslav way" undertaken outside of Yugoslavia.

"One gets the impression that as a society we are quite inert when it comes to solving the problems of unemployment. We have difficulty accepting facts if they do not conform to our conceptions of plans. A progressive, and particularly a socialist society, cannot wait "optimistically" for so important and delicate a problem to be resolved spontaneously and cannot expect its members not to be exposed to great social and economic risk as a result.

Security of employment is one of the significant contributions of socialism, highly valued and popular, particularly in the ranks of the working classes of capitalist countries, something that we ought not allow ourselves to question.

We are aware of the fact that it is difficult to harmonize economic necessity and political opportunity, but we should not allow those difficulties to demobilize us" (Tripo Mulina, Yugoslavia, 1968)

Unemployment and insufficient housing were interconnected since "a collective incentive encouraged 'all workers and employees of the enterprise' to participate in raising productivity and 'realizing profits' by reducing the cost-prices of production: enterprises that earned more than their planned revenue by cutting costs had the right to retain a portion of that revenue for a 'managers' fund', which would 'raise the social and cultural level of workers and employees' by building new apartments, canteens, libraries, or clubs (and, not incidentally, also cut these expenditures from public budgets)." (Woodward, 1995: 103)

The idea of hiring new workers was always juxtaposed with the number of new flats to be acquired, and distributed, and other benefits that consequently would have to be shared between more people. In addition to this basic lack of solidarity, as Yugoslav socialism was dominated by the market, it was impossible to solve unemployment by artificially raising quotas as was the case in socialist countries with a planned economy. Already in the mid 1960s, after the economy reforms in 1965, unemployment became an acute problem. In order to solve it, the state had to open its borders and 'export' the unemployed. Special offices were established within the official state employment bureaus that would help people find work placement. There were two types of work placements available:

1) in 'friendly' non-aligned countries, usually in Africa and the Middle East, in government institutions as so-called technical assistance, usually highly trained engineers or other professionals; and

2) in Western Europe, usually Germany and Switzerland, on various positions, from factory workers to nurses, often referred to as Gästarbeiters

(German for guest workers). Gästarbeiters soon became a kind of entity in their own right, displaced both from the everyday life and culture of the country they were working and living in with their families, and from Yugoslavia.

The byproduct in the shadow of these problems was in fact uncontrolled or 'wild construction' – as it came to be known. Gästarbeiters became important investors in 'wild construction', either through the remittance they were sending to their relatives in their country, which would be invested in construction works, or by directly engaging in such construction. "There is an approximate tariff: it takes five years' work abroad to help support the family and save enough to buy the materials for a house. The building the family do themselves." (Berger, 1982: 209)

Channeling most of this money into 'wild' areas did not solely result from the whims of the migrant workers, but was also largely due to the inflexibility of the state, as Gästarbeiters, for instance, were unable to officially get or purchase apartments. They wanted to invest into good-quality property in their home country to come back to during the holidays, better than the ones they left when they went to work in Western Europe, and they were structurally forced to 'deal with' their problems in the extralegal, grey area. The connection between unemployment – guest migrant workers – and wild construction is therefore strong and is important to fully understand the process of 'wild' building prior to 1990.

The development of wild building can also be understood in the context of the re-appearing of class stratification in Yugoslavia. Although Yugoslavia proclaimed the end of class war as "the victory of the socialist revolution, carried out by the working class",

the principle [that every new organizational form in society brings a new class division] changed. The victory of the working class and its arrival on the stage of history as the subject of historical development does not indicate a new class division, but expresses the tendency of the working class to abolish all those sources of domination, exploitation and hegemony that can result in the class division of society. In this process, the working class abolishes itself as a class, which ultimately results in the formation of a classless society in which there are no more insurmountable social class conflicts.

In socialism – being the transitory period between capitalism (the last class society) and communism (the continuation of classless society) – the struggle of the working class leads to the abolishment of itself, which is specific to class struggles. It is not fought between two mutually opposed sides, but between the working class and all other social groups opposed to the abolishment of the classes. Those forces can be the remains of the bourgeois class and other related bureaucratic, technocratic, nationalistic or reactionary social forces" (Enciklopedija samoupravljanja, 1979: 125). However, nowhere was it more obvious than in the wild settlements in the unruly outskirts of the cities that the working class was losing the battle with itself, and that instead of the abolishment of classes, a new ruling class had formed.

The new class was dubbed 'red bourgeoisie' and its existence was put as the central case of the student protests at Belgrade University in 1968, "reforms of the Yugoslav economy leaning towards more economic liberalization and market socialism were a fruitful ground for a re-emergence of the classes in Yugoslavia, esp. the red bourgeoisie." There is a folk saying in

Yugoslavia: the snow falls on the hills not to cover them but to show the tracks of the animals. The June [1968] version of this saying was: the barricade is erected not to block the street but to show who is on the other side.

“For the students, workers and peasants of Yugoslavia the importance of the June insurrection [June in this quotation refers to the May-June 1968 protests that took place at Belgrade University, note by author] was precisely in unveiling their class enemies. [...] It would be wrong, however, to limit the results of liberalization measures to these negative phenomena.”

The fact is that to carry out their economic reforms, the League of Communists were forced to institute democratic reforms. What the League called self-management, i.e. the decentralization of low-level economic decisions, was at first interpreted by the working class as a giant increase in their responsibility and freedom in comparison with their earlier Stalinist experience.

The working people of Yugoslavia could not help but hope that self-management meant that they, not a particular clique, would be making the basic social and economic decisions. Out of this hope a new political current was born in Yugoslavia. Within the Workers' Councils and particularly at universities this current began to take the form of a political action programme for the realization of socialism in Yugoslavia. In June the students of Belgrade rose up, marched and fought for this programme. In June the enemies of socialism were unveiled for all to see. Who was on the other side of the barricade? None other than the 'red bourgeoisie', the League of Communists.” (Plamenic, 1969).

The red bourgeoisie was not immune to the 'perils' of wild construction, it just utilized it slightly

differently. Rather than using it as a strategy to solve immediate personal housing problems, it was used as a strategy to acquire secondary weekend homes, popularly dubbed as “vikendica”.

In time, some illegal settlements in the outskirts of Belgrade became the unlikely mixture of the first home self-builders, whose sole solution to obtain a decent home was to build far away from the basic city amenities, and secondary homes, often also self-built, which were used for weekend leisure purposes. Consequently, even in this zone, there was a mixture of emerging classes.

It is important to stress here that although the practice of illegal, wild construction was met with strong criticism, especially from urban planners, and that partial demolitions were carried out from time to time, the number of illegal units built before 1990 saw a slow but steady annual increase. Officials would never admit to it, but the wild constructions had their benefits. They alleviated the pressure from the already over-stressed system of the social distribution of apartments, as “a tolerated or overlooked supplement to the modern city planning”. (Topalović, 2012: 86).

The black sheep status of illegal construction was slowly turning from black to grey, with the occasional bursts of brick red. The starkest contrast between the organized 'official' housing and self-organized 'wild' construction was underlined by the sheer materiality of the opposing processes: the béton brut of the technologically advanced industrial prefabricated production of the modernist housing blocks versus the manually layered red brick. This material divide was perhaps most visible in the Belgrade suburb of KaludERICA 'the largest informal settlement' in Yugoslavia and a symbol in its own right of this type of production of space.



**'Gardens, without precisely balanced poles of activity like front and back, appear as neutral grass carpets on which the houses are simply and somewhat haphazardly placed.' – A view of Kaluderica settlement from the adjacent hill.**

Belgrade, being the capital of Yugoslavia, and burdened by the representational and symbolic weight of that role, was more than other cities prone to the flourishing of the ‘wild’, not only because it faced the largest migration pressure, but also due to the fact that the planning left little space for individual residential building, as the capital had to showcase the effectiveness of the “right to housing” system.

“There is a bewildering quality to the informal periphery of Belgrade: it is strikingly similar to a Western-style single-family suburb. Nothing about it is precarious, everything peaceful, normal, well-off. Still the sensation is puzzling; the similarity is alienating, uncanny.

At second glance, differences begin to reveal themselves and the picture starts to look like a carefully orchestrated subversion. Houses are large, expressing affluence. They appear unfinished, even though the setting is calm and looks long-since settled.

Building volumes give an impression of homogeneity, sameness, but even a careful search does not yield any precise repetition of details, elements or geometric forms.”  
(Topalović, 2012: 88)

Kaluderica became a safe heaven for all those who had been waiting for years to get an apartment of their own, and others who knew that they could never get an apartment. In 1986 the sociologist Branislava Saveljić did a survey of Kaluderica, which at the time had around 40,000 inhabitants. It was later published as a book with the title ‘Belgrade Favela — the formation and development of Kaluderica as a result of an illegal housing construction in Belgrade’.

The survey, the first of its kind, attempted to understand the social structure and motivation of people who built and settled in Kaluderica, despite its bad infrastructure and the permanent threat of demolition. It also aimed to get insight into the sources



A self-built duplex for two brothers and their families in Kaluderica; both floors in various stages of completeness. Due to the lack of proper public space, the front garden became a playground for the local community.



Following the housing privatization, new owners started making small modifications to their industrially produced apartments in order to suit their needs. The most common modifications were the expansion of living space to the balcony area, and the addition of visible, external air conditioning units, as seen here.

of financing the constructions. Saveljić's survey changed the then prevailing perspective that the illegal (self)builders were primarily people with a low income and limited education, and showed that Kaluderica was much more diversified than expected, consisting equally of highly educated people and skilled workers, and those who had had just a few years of elementary school education.

It also showed that a number of people were politically motivated migrants who wanted to relocate to Belgrade in anticipation of the unrest and wars of the 1990s, either from Kosovo, or Croatia<sup>o</sup>. This was an often overlooked aspect of the internal migration in the 1980s, that was usually attributed just to economic reasons.

- <sup>o</sup> Most of the internal migrants from Croatia stated that the reason of their relocation was the Croatian spring of 1972, the nationalist outburst, the first of that kind in Yugoslavia. 44% of those who moved to Kaluderica from Croatia were from Knin, a town that, in the 1990s, would become a capital of the short-lived autonomous Serbian province in Croatia during the war. (source Saveljić, 1988: 75-table 26)

Ironically, the most common profession among the self-builders of Kaluderica was construction-industry related. These workers would spend some months working on construction sites, operated by Yugoslav companies abroad, often in some African or Middle-Eastern country, and then come back and continue to build their homes with the money they brought home. The remittances from Gästarbeiters was another important source of financing in Kaluderica, and other wild suburbs, as well as personal savings, or proceeds from the selling of land or houses in the builders' villages of origin.



However, the survey discovered that the wild builders were often able to get bank loans for their constructions. The circumstances under which those bank loans were granted were not always transparent and seemed to point at possible corruption.

In 1975, the city of Belgrade passed a “Programme of Measurements and Actions to Diminish Illegal Construction” (Službeni List grada Beograda, 18/75). In the period between the 1950s up to the end of 1986 30,873 illegally built constructions were registered, as well as an additional 23,584 illegal adaptations and extensions. However, this number is cumulative, as it combines also the period before 1976, when the much stricter policy against wild constructions applied.

If one just considers the period between January 1976 and December 1986, the number of illegal housing objects is 19,029. 3,056 of these houses were demolished; 16,661 illegal extensions were built, 4,351 of which were demolished, so 26.4% of the buildings were demolished. The ones built before 1975 were mainly constructed before WWII and were erected in the areas in which organized housing was planned. (source: Saveljić, 1988: 28)

The programme was the first sign that the City was getting ready to deal with the issue of wild construction. Until then, the problem had been largely ignored, although all the laws regarding urban planning or construction prescribed heavy penalties if such construction took place. Once the programme was introduced, targeted demolition became a common practice in the campaign to deter potential wild builders. Yet, the number of illegal units grew steadily each year.





“The surface of the terrain, a former field, is clearly visible and stretches continuously beneath the buildings, unaltered. Gardens, without precisely balanced poles of activity like front and back, appear as neutral grass carpets on which the houses are simply and somewhat haphazardly placed.

No design, urban or architectural, situates the neighbourhood and its residents within a specific cultural or aesthetic milieu. The wild suburb does not reproduce or evoke any known urban or suburban models: it is not a garden city or cul-de-sac, nor even a village, but replicates nothing but itself.”

(Topalović, 2012: 88)

**The prevailing impression is that someone simply shook a sack of houses on a field and left them strewn about with no particular order. Eventually, a road was trodden between the houses. Urbanists largely turned away from the problem and failed to propose proactive strategies as to how the future spreading of the wild suburbs would be regulated rather than contained. Their plans basically came down to attempts to ‘normalize’ the conditions and make them resemble nominal urbanism as much as possible. Ironically, none of the official plans marked the wild suburbs – until the amended version of the General Plan of 2003 was drawn up. Wild suburbs were usually coloured verdant – indicating them as green, unconstructed areas.**

**Unlike urbanists, who turned a blind eye, the rest of society, especially towards the end of 1980s, was discussing the issues of wild construction and the theme was even present in popular culture, as it was often the peripheral story of many television films and series. The take of Television Belgrade on the genre of the coming-of-age series, “Zaboravljeni” [The Forgotten], popular in the late 1980s, among the main protagonists, mostly well-off high-school students,**

includes the character Danko, who lives in a permanently semi-finished house in Kaluderica. In one of the scenes, when his richer friends ask whether he could use his telephone, he bitterly replies: “Phone, man! This place has no running water, or sewage, no streets, this place doesn’t even exist on a map! All of this is illegal!” This sums up well the de facto situation.

“If we try to determine illegal construction by function, that is a form of the individual residential construction without the proper prescribed documents (building permit) and on an unauthorized site planned for other use. But that unauthorized site, as a rule, was the only possible space where the worker - a migrant, until recently a peasant, could build a house for himself and his family.

The selection of a certain location, is above all the result of the economic possibility, rather, impossibility of the migrant to solve the basic existential question - an apartment. Land and locations allocated by the city for individual residential use, and for which is possible to get a building permit (if there is at all an adequate land policy and urban plans) is for many new migrants too expensive. Therefore, many violate the regulations: build without a permit, on an unauthorized sites, often purchased for less from private owners.”

(Saveljić, 1988: 14)

But how illegal was Kaluderica in fact? The first illegal constructions in Kaluderica were completely outside of the law. Arable land close to existing buildings would be bought and houses would start to be built, sometimes almost overnight, and at other times in a long, painstakingly slow process, since the self-builders could afford just a small amount of money for construction works, often moving into the house long before it would be really habitable.

There were absolutely no plans for building any infrastructure, and dozens of houses would often rely on just one public pipe for water supply. Despite its

difficult start, Kaluderica started to grow, and with it the leverage its inhabitants had on the officials and the city. Little by little, sometimes with some corruption thrown in, and sometimes with the power that numbers can wield, electricity, water and other kinds of infrastructure became available. Roads were widened and asphalted, even if that meant that some of the people had to sacrifice part of their front gardens.

The more infrastructure came to Kaluderica, the less precarious its position was, at least for existing buildings. At the end of the 1980s, the Constitutional Court made an official ruling that it was allowed to connect illegal buildings to communal infrastructure. (This ruling basically condoned corruption necessary to plug into the grid in the first place.) This measure introduced another level of protection for the illegal buildings, at least as long as all the bills were paid. It can be said that Kaluderica, and other wild suburbs developed before the 1990s, were the training fields for negotiation of the grey, extralegal space that came to exist between legal, illegal and future legal, and that became the crucial survival strategy in the 1990s.

Additionally, as most of the property in the wild suburbs was privately owned, they were one step towards the condition desired in 1990, as the concept of social ownership was being slowly abandoned and liberalization of ownership was well underway.

In order to motivate people to invest personal funds in housing construction, from the mid 1960s onwards another form of ownership came into being: co-ownership. The right to co-ownership was not open to everyone in the country, only to those who had higher incomes, i.e. the red bourgeoisie.

It was a covert push towards the re-emergence of the classes, and capitalism in traces. Next to co-

ownership, in 1984, after pressure from Belgrade, the special Law on the Extension of Buildings and the Conversion of Common Spaces into Apartments passed, which would allow the construction of roof extensions and the conversion of common space in the societally owned buildings into residential space.

It was important to create a special legislature for this necessary process of densification, common especially in the central parts of Belgrade, as this practice was regarded as a restriction of some of the rights (availability to all, especially when the spaces in question were roof terraces on flat roofs, or commonly owned spaces). As this was a delicate issue, in particular for those who had to give up part of their rights, the legislature was precise in prescribing both the procedure for the extension and the procedure for acquiring the rights to one. In order to obtain a permit, it was important to prove that such action was of 'social interest'.

In 1987, conversions into office space or ateliers became also possible. Together with the concept of co-ownership, the conversion of socially owned spaces could be seen as preparation for the changes that Yugoslavia would undergo in 1989 and 1990, when the market won over socialism and private ownership started to be reinstated in the country. The attitude towards providing housing changed fast. Already in 1990, finding housing became a personal responsibility and ceased to be the task of society as a whole.

See Article 2

Law on Housing Relations,  
Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Serbia 12/1990

Article 2

Working people and citizens will meet their personal and family housing needs with their own resources with regard to the construction, purchase and lease of their apartments.

## OUR(s) is Mine



The English word ‘our’ is a homonym of the Serbo-Croatian acronym OUR (organizacija udruženog rada) – meaning Basic Organization of Associated Labour, which was the basic organizational unit of Yugoslav workers’ self-management, and, sort of a symbol of the idea of societal and common property and interest that marked the Yugoslavia.

I would like to thank Jelena Vesić for drawing my attention to this word play, which, as I will explain further, sums up the essence of the transformation that took place in the 1990s.

Kaluderica was not alone in its struggle for legitimacy in the 1980s; Yugoslavia too was facing similar problems. The bureaucratization of the state apparatus undermined the system and basic concept of self-management. The state did not exactly ‘wither away’ but was becoming lethargic and burdened by what seemed to be an everlasting economic crisis. The socialist self-management system was gradually degraded by the introduction of economic liberalization, much under the influence of the IMF which was guiding the structural reforms of Yugoslavia since the mid 1980s.

Ultimately, in 1990, Yugoslavia officially opted for democratization and capitalism, and the first multiparty elections took place. However, it turned out that the answer to the question posed by historian Dejan Jović “Yugoslavia is being held together by the ideology, which is kept together by the Party. Without the party and ideology, what is left of Yugoslavia?” (Jović, 2003: 472) was: nothing. The only thing left after Yugoslavia consciously embarked on capitalism was war. Although it officially denied any involvement, Serbia was up to its elbows in the wars that ensued in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a bit later on Kosovo. As is quite

common, the wars were a compelling factor in the mass migration of people. These migrations started generating new spaces rather quickly, especially in Belgrade. Economic sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia (then a Federal Republic, consisting of Serbia and Montenegro) encapsulated all these forces in almost laboratory conditions, where it was possible to filter which influences came from outside, and which did not.

All the links that bound the official production of space to the economic, social, political, and legal framework disappeared when the system of self-managed socialism was abandoned. Before the system had time to reconfigure to a post-socialist condition the wars broke out. The privatization of the housing stock was the definitive moment, together with the ensuing implosion of the construction industry and housing market in the making. The attitude towards space changed from societal, though it was not entirely clear what this meant, over to more private, so from 'ours' to just 'mine'. The changed attitude towards space was reflected almost immediately in the collective housing facades, as smaller and larger interventions started to appear. Balconies would be closed off and transformed into living or storage space and windows changed. The process of 'personalising' the uniform modernist facades of large-scale housing estates had started.

See Article 2

Given the fact that by the end of the 1980s, the 'right to housing' was showing serious anomalies, and that the needs, especially of the 'second generation', were not being met, "it was so easy to make arguments in favour of privatization because public institutions were so cut off and unresponsive and the public didn't feel a sense of ownership." (Klein, 2012) The radical renouncement of the common and collective, manifested

Law on Housing,  
Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Serbia 50/1992

#### Article 16

Under the terms of this Law, and upon written request, the person holding the disposal rights of an apartment in societal ownership and the owner of an apartment in state ownership (hereafter: holder of the disposal rights) shall enable the purchase of the apartment to the tenancy right holder, ie. the tenant who has attained that status up to the day this Law comes into effect.

Under the terms imposed by this Law, and upon express written consent of the tenancy rights holder, the holder of the disposal rights is obliged to facilitate the purchase of an apartment to the tenant's spouse and any children, whether born in wedlock, out of wedlock, adopted or stepchildren, living together in said apartment with the tenancy rights holder.



The hasty privatization of the housing stock left the issue of communal spaces and facades maintenance unregulated. The problem is the most obvious in the large housing complexes of New Belgrade.

in the privatization of the housing stock, was not a byproduct of the break of Yugoslavia, but integral part of that process. The privatization of the very category in which the majority of inhabitants of all newly created states invested is, above all, an ideological statement, necessary to establish a break with the previous regime. In fact, it was an eerily similar turn to the 1945 nationalization that was a prerequisite for the state to gain enough control over a social matter to implement a new system in every aspect of society. “This struggle should not, however, be understood as simply a transition that leads (back) from a society without private property to a society with private property. Ultimately, privatization proves to be just as much an artificial political construct as nationalization had been. The same state that had once nationalized in order to build up Communism is now privatizing in order to build up capitalism.

In both cases private property is subordinated to the *raison d'état* to the same degree—and in this way it manifests itself as an artefact, as a product of state planning. Privatization as a (re)introduction of private property does not, therefore, lead back to nature—to natural law. [...] Rather, a political decision was made to switch from building up Communism to building up capitalism, and to that end (in complete harmony with classical Marxism) to produce artificially a class of private property owners who would become the principal protagonists of this process. Thus there was no return to the market as a “state of nature” but rather a revelation of the highly artificial character of the market itself.” (Groys, 2008: 166)

The country’s economic rationale for privatizing its housing stock was simple: to take the money stashed in the mattresses of its people and feed the state budget.

After all, there was a war to be financed and the economy had collapsed. Ideologically, this privatization played another role: it fulfilled the “promise of homeownership” necessary to establish a nationalist patriarchal state, opposed to the “right to use” promoted by socialist Yugoslavia.

Once the government had decided to allow the privatization of societally owned flats, a special section was added in the new Law on Housing passed in 1992, which regulated the buyout of societally owned flats. This law regulated who had a right to buy out the apartment, and how the price would be calculated.

See Articles 19 and 21

It is important to stress that this Law was written with sufficient care to consider the fact that the majority of potential buyers had invested in housing, some even for several decades, through the obligatory deduction from their salaries for the benefit of the housing fund. It was proscribed that the price of the flat be amended in relation to this. In line with Article 21 the purchase price had to be reduced by 0.5% per each year of work, both for the tenant’s rights holder wishing to buy an apartment and the holder’s spouse. The lawmaker, however, remained blind to the rights of those who had been investing into the housing fund through salary deductions but who had never managed to execute their right to housing.

The dispossession of this smaller part of the population in the process of the privatization of societally owned housing - people who, moreover, kept quiet and never asked for their ‘slice of the cake’ - generated the idea that social space and any other form of common and public space were up for grabs. Article 27. could perhaps explain the lukewarm opposition this process met with, as it proscribed that the means

#### Article 19

Terms of an apartment buy-out are:

- 1 The repayment period shall be 40 years, although it may be shorter with consent of the buyer
- 2 A mortgage shall be placed upon redeeming the apartment until it is paid off in full.

#### Article 21

The contractual price of the apartment is obtained when the purchase price of the apartment, determined by the terms of Article 20 of this Law, is reduced due to:

- 1 Fees for housing construction paid from the personal income of the person purchasing the apartment and their spouse, at 0.5% per every year of employment, not exceeding 30%, and
- 2 Compensation to the owner of the expropriated apartment, who had been given the use of the apartment based on occupancy right, up to 10%.

#### Article 27

The funds generated by the sale of the apartments under this Law, unless otherwise specified by Law, can only be used for providing loans financing the housing construction to those who, by purchasing an apartment, i.e. building a family residential object, are resolving the housing needs of their household, or wish to use the money to improve their housing conditions.

Notwithstanding paragraph 1 of this Article, the holder of the disposal rights can use a portion of the funds made through the sale of the apartment for its development.

The holder of the disposal rights, with his own regulations, shall prescribe the methods of recording and deciding on the use of funds derived from the sale of the apartments through redemption, as well as the terms, methods and procedure for granting loans from these funds.



collected in the process of privatization could be used to fund the housing loans of employees who had never solved their housing problem. But, it also stated that, in special cases, it could be used for other purposes. Other purposes prevailed in the early 1990s, a period of great turmoil in which many flats were bought. The money that was generated through privatization evaporated fast, either in the form of salaries for workers in struggling companies or due to hyperinflation.

See Article 27

The 1992 Law on Housing only selectively addressed the potential stumbling blocks concerning the future maintenance of the existing houses or the production of new houses. The ownership of common spaces in the apartment buildings was loosely transformed to their former tenants/new owners, without many instructions regarding the regulation of their upkeep and usage.

Although the privatization of the housing stock was seen as a kind of a formative act towards the 'brighter' future that capitalism and private ownership would bring, with hindsight it was the first step of a systematic dispossession that has continued until today, whereby the forms of social reproduction that are related to the concept of the welfare state are being reduced for the gain of a few. In that context, what happened under the guise of a post-socialist transformation towards capitalism was a neoliberal transformation par excellence, which reduced self-managed workers-owners of a means of production into mere clients.

The view on space had completely changed, from a common resource that should be shared fairly by the whole community to a readily available commodity

from which the privileged few can profit. Another important shift occurred that was even more driven by ideology than economy: overnight, the category of societal property, at the core of the self-management, was made equal to state property. State property means that the state, has ownership and control over a means of production rather than the producers or workers. Therefore when state property rules, it is not possible for the workers to manage the flow and outcome of their work. The state does, creating a net income for itself, bypassing the workers, who no longer have ownership and control of their interests.

The decision to equalize societal and state property practically meant that workers – previously owners – were dispossessed by their own state. It also meant that in future privatizations, the state would favour capitalists instead of former self-managed workers, who became minority shareholders, even if their plan for the restructuring of the company would be economically more feasible. This attitude of the state to put its capital needs before the needs of its society, soon also started to have an impact on other major decisions to do with space.

See Articles 7 and 19, next page

The process of commodification, which was started in 1992, when the former idea of housing as a right was transformed to regarding flats as commodities, was developed further with a new set of Laws, passed in 1995, regulating urban planning and the construction of objects and land. Construction land, until then considered common good managed by city authorities, obtained the status of a commodity (Law on Construction Land, Official Gazette Republic of Serbia, no. 44/1995 – Article 7). Article 19 of this Law planted the seeds for the future dispossession of other

Law on Construction Land  
(Official Gazette RS, No. 44/95)

Article 7

Construction land is marketable, unless otherwise specified by Law.

Article 19

The transfer of title rights transfers the rights to structures built on building sites owned by the city, the rights to the land underneath the structures and the land used for the everyday use of those structures.

Law on the Spatial Planning and Organization of Settlements,  
Official Gazette RS 44/1995

Article 6. paragraph 2

The area of the cadastral municipality outside the settlement (the peripheral area) is regulated as a space allocated for different types of agriculture, forests of various purposes, green recreational areas, in a way and under terms and provisions that restrict an excessive expansion of the settlement.

forms of societally generated property and common good, most notably the privatization of societally owned companies, by giving the right to manage the land beneath any acquired buildings to the owners of those buildings, thus opening a space for various emerging tycoons to privatize societally owned enterprises just because of the future value of the land they occupied, and not for their current production value. Finally, this Law also passed the jurisdiction on management of construction land to the city/municipality, allowing it to sell it. Quite naturally, the cities started treating the land as a source of income.

“Even now, like in its best time, Belgrade is building 10,000 apartments. Note however that 95% of these is built individually, and 95% of those without legal permission.”  
(B. Bojović, architect, weekly Vreme, Belgrade, 7 December 2000) (Džokić et.al, 2003)

The collapsed housing production and construction industry did not mean that production came to a halt, but that other strategies practiced in the shadows of the great modernization (housing) projects had to be utilized and step out of the shadow. Strategies of wild, illegal construction advanced - shyly at first - from the wild suburbs the wild suburbs and started moving to the centres. By the time they reached the centre, they became bold and grew in scale, but also in intention and the leverage they had on officials. Collective housing, industrially produced, usually utilizing prefabricated concrete construction elements, was replaced by pixelated individual housing, built manually using plain brick and mortar.

See Article 6. paragraph 2

The Lawmakers not only failed to foresee the impact of their decisions related to construction land

and the changes in spatial politics due to the transformation from market socialism to the free market, but also proved to be blind to the situation on the ground. Although at the time this set of laws was written in 1995, the problem of illegal construction had already existed for a couple of decades, and had, since 1991, effectively replaced the official production of housing for the market, there was no mention of the practice in any of these laws.

Article 6 of the Law on Spatial Planning and the Organization of Settlements, Official Gazette RS 44/1995, even regulated the condition of the borders of cadastre territories, usually hot spots for illegal construction, as if there was no construction whatsoever. This peculiar kind of structural blindness, whereby there weren't even any recommendations for plans to include adjoining areas that already had illegal constructions, was not only present in 1995 Laws, but continued to feature in many of the future laws to come.

What is even more striking was the context and the timing of introducing these laws in 1995. In August 1995, the war in Croatia ended when Operation Oluja (en. Storm) stormed the territory under control of a Serbian minority from Croatia around the cities of Knin and Benkovac, forcing between 100,000 - 250,000 civilians<sup>o</sup>, mostly of Serbian origin, to flee Croatia. They reached Serbia in an organized column. Upon arrival in the outskirts of Belgrade, the people in the column were scandalously asked what good would come of their arrival, by a reporter of the state television, which was entirely controlled by the Milosevic

<sup>o</sup> Numbers are disputed, as there are Croatian, Serbian and UN counts, ranging between 100,000 – 250,000.

regime. This was quite symbolic of the Serbian officials' denial about the wars they were involved in. The refugees were prevented from entering Belgrade and had to settle elsewhere. However, a great number of them still managed to find their way to Belgrade, where other refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and displaced people from Kosovo, started settling in the 'wild' suburbs, which were now expanding rapidly.

Neither the city of Belgrade nor the urban planners had anticipated this and no preparations were made with regard to the land in the vicinity of existing wild/extralegal suburbs, although they had all the information necessary to understand how the settlement in this space would unfold. All it took was to recall what had happened in 1972 or in 1991-92. However, the planners decided to turn a blind eye, and the refugees settled without any guidance, without any provisional plan. In the years that followed, urbanists continued to rage against illegal building and wild settlements, considering them a disgrace to a city. At the same time they structurally ignored their existence and did not come up with any professional remedies. In all plans these areas were marked as empty, green areas, indicating either undeveloped, or, more often, arable land. Not a single proactive plan was made or implemented to prepare and spread these territories.

Safely positioned in the blind spot, the lawmakers continued to draft new laws – for example in the Law on the Construction of Buildings – regulating construction, without mentioning the constructions without permits. The laws contained rather detailed and complex procedures of how to acquire a construction permit, although the lawmakers were

confronted daily with the consequences of constructions erected without permits. Yet, the procedure of acquiring a permit was not made more efficient, cheaper, easier.

See Article 9

However, what was noticed were numerous roof extensions that were spawning like mushrooms after heavy rains, and the need to regulate the process that lead to their erection. Until 1995 the construction of roof extensions was regulated by the Law on (Roof) Extensions, which dated from the socialist era. The Law had become completely obsolete by 1992 (the privatization of apartment buildings), yet it was the only law that ruled. The Law regulated what material was necessary for the project to be completed. The procedure was made more complicated, but, at the time, the very complexity of the procedure and the slowness of the process were used as an excuse for building, especially illegal extensions. (See page 166)

See Article 10

The Law does not mention constructing without permit or legalization; it is interesting to look closer at Article 26 of the Law. When the law was passed, in 1995, the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina was still going on and many Serbians sought refuge in Serbia. Serbia, however, was totally unprepared to deal with the huge demand for new and affordable housing.

The majority of refugees had to find solutions for housing by themselves and many turned to building illegally in the outskirts of the towns, especially in Belgrade. Although Serbia never officially admitted to being at war, the 'unforeseeable event' mentioned in Article 26 could refer to the complicated situation with

## Law on the Construction of Buildings (Official Gazette RS, No. 44/95)

### Article 9

The final design is made in accordance with an urban planning permit. The main project specifically contains:

- 1 Additional investigation works;
- 2 An elaboration of technical-technological and exploitation characteristics of the facility, with equipment and installations;
- 3 An estimate of the stability and safety of the structure, and the structural physics calculations;
- 4 A plan of the foundation works;
- 5 Technical-technological, and organizational solutions for the construction of the structure;
- 6 Access development to the corresponding traffic and other infrastructure, and landscape architecture;
- 7 Requirements for the protection of neighbouring structures;
- 8 Measures taken to prevent and reduce any negative impact on the environment;
- 9 Construction and maintenance costs;
- 10 Geo-technical documentation on the construction and observation of the structure.

### Article 10

The final design for extending a residential building and/or residential office building, in addition to the documentation required under Article 9 of this Law, includes an analysis of the extension requirements, confirming that:

- 1 An extension up to the planned height will not endanger the stability of the building, or of any adjacent structures;
- 2 An extension shall not deteriorate the usability of certain parts of the building with regard to their current use or any building usage requirements.
- 3 Upon completion, the building as a whole must meet all requirements with regard to stability, safety, and modern living conditions, i.e. usage.

#### Article 28

Building permits for extending residential and/or commercial buildings stipulate a deadline within which works on extension must be completed: the work may not take longer than one year from the date of the approval going into effect.

The building permit for the conversion of common parts in a residential or residential-commercial building into residential or office space, stipulates a deadline within which the conversion work must be completed: the work may not take longer than six months from the date of the conversion approval going into effect.

#### Article 26

Construction work on a building can be initiated without having previously obtained a building permit if the structure is being built immediately preceding, or during natural disasters, or other unforeseen events, for the purpose of the prevention or mitigation of any adverse effects, and to eliminate any harmful consequences of that disaster or event, immediately after its occurrence, as well as in a case of war or the imminent danger of war.

The abovementioned structure may remain permanent, if the Investor obtains a building permit within six months of the cessation of circumstances that caused its construction.

refugees and granted both officials and ‘illegal builders’ some breathing space.

See Articles 26 and 28

The construction of new buildings without permit mostly occurred in city suburbs. In urban areas illegal building was often limited to extensions to existing (legal) buildings. The roof extension became the most common spatial form. The Law on the Construction of Objects regulated the content of the project of extension and its deadlines once the extension started whereas the Law on the Maintenance of Buildings, also passed in 1995, regulated the relationship between the owners of the existing building and the ones wishing to extend it. The procedure further regulated the number of signatures necessary to get a permit and who had priority as investor. This Law was the first to address the confusing status of commonly owned spaces within a building after the privatization of the housing stock, who was responsible for their maintenance and who had the right to convert them into private spaces and in what way.

“Belgrade roof extension: houses for two brothers:

‘You could say that Belgrade’s most remarkable urban phenomenon is a house on a house; on a tall building next to Branko’s bridge two little houses are built, a kind of miracle of rural architecture!’ (Weekly Vreme, Belgrade, 7/12/2000)

The story goes that when building their houses right in the city centre some years ago, the brothers did not even realize they were visible. Soon, they became the focus of public attention and became the city’s symbol for ignorance of urban space. Recently, the ‘famous twins’ decided to transform their house on their own, with an indisputable building permission.

Aggravated by the constant media exposure, they started to rotate the sloping roof ninety degrees toward a new attic wall that would hide them from views. (Various sources)” (Džokić et. al, 2003)



Built with all the necessary permits, 'the houses of two brothers' became a slap in the face of the Belgrade architecture scene, covered extensively by the media. After some months, the brothers erected a huge wall to protect them from further exposure, claiming they merely acted within the remit of the law.

The case of ‘houses of two brothers’ sparked public outrage about the informalization of space. It was seen as a the ultimate proof of spatial arrogance. Two houses were built on top of an existing house, as if on a plot of land, and they were built with a construction permit, legally. The construction became proof of how clientelism, corruption, and “knowing people in the right places” were the modi by which society and the economy functioned. Any law could be sufficiently stretched to accommodate any wishes if enough connections and money were thrown in.

See Article 18

Article 18 of the Law defined who had the right to extend the roof or to privatize commonly owned spaces within the building, giving the option for ‘third parties’ to become investors – if it was proven that none of the inhabitants or their relatives were interested in becoming investors. Bearing in mind the state of affairs in Serbia at the time, the proximity of wars and rising criminality, the rule potentially opened space for extortion as interested third parties could use their power to “convince” other inhabitants that they were not interested in extending, or utilising the common space.

The lawmaker did little to prevent potential abuse, although, oddly, the Law defines the content of the contract between investors and inhabitants, which is usually regulated by other laws. The reason for this is the fact that this contract is a crucial document when applying for a construction permit, as it is the proof that the seeker of the permit has the right to construct. Article 19 contains a detailed definition of the responsibilities of the investors and the demands of the inhabitants/owners of the building-to-be-extended. However, the well-written contract containing all the

Law on the Maintenance of Residential Buildings  
(Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 44/1995)

#### Article 18

The building assembly, with the consent of those owning either the apartments, or owning other specific parts of the building (totalling more than half of the entire surface area of said apartments or other specific parts of the building) can decide on the execution of works on repairing flat roofs, or roof structures, which, in accordance with the regulations on Spatial Planning and Building Construction, can be built or adapted into new apartments.

The building assembly may decide that the works specified in Paragraph 1 of this Article can be executed by one of the owners of the apartments or of other specific parts of the building, or one of their household members, or a third party if it is determined that owners of apartments or of other specific parts of the building, or members of their household are not interested.

The relationship between the Investor, as mentioned in paragraph 2 of this Article, and the residential building shall be set out in a written contract notarized by the court.

The contract referred to in Paragraph 3 of this Article shall contain specific elements: the conditions under which the use of common areas of the building are granted; information about the building; Information about the works; the rights and duties of the Investor and the building; deadlines for the completion of work; deadlines for connecting buildings to the main public infrastructure; special duties for some owners, or apartment tenants or users of other specific parts of the building; legal consequences in case these duties are neglected.

The contract referred to in Paragraph 3 of this Article shall serve as evidence of the right to the construction in terms of spatial planning and organization, and building construction.

## Article 19

An investor, as mentioned in Article 18, Paragraph 2, is obliged to:

- 1 Pay for any defects and damages that occur on the existing part of the building due to construction;
- 2 Should temporary displacement from the apartment be required during the construction work, the Investor must provide an alternative, temporary apartment to the tenant or owner of either the apartment or of other parts of the building, which will offer equal living conditions. He must pay for the bare costs of moving to and from the temporary apartment and also repay any increase in expenses caused by the temporary displacement. Owners or tenants of the apartment in question will only move after they have given consent;
- 3 Give proper notice to the owner or tenant of the apartment or to the users of the other parts of the building with regard to the preparation for and start of the construction work, no later than 30 days prior to the commencement of the work.

## Article 20

Anyone believing that a decision made by the building assembly actually violates any rights or legitimate interests, based on the Law, may have that decision refuted by the appropriate court of law.

## Article 21

A building assembly may decide to convert the common area into an apartment or office space if the provisions on the regulation of spatial planning and organization, and construction of the facility have been met.

protective clauses was no guarantee that once the roof extension was started it would be finished within the assigned time, or indeed ever, as public notaries did not exist, i.e. the institution checking whether contracts were being respected.

See Article 18

The phenomenon of the roof extension is a great example of how, from 1995 onwards, seemingly informal constructions were actually clever architectural manipulations generated by careful negotiations between current laws and future laws (i.e. what was at that moment illegal, but would become legalized), although architects were rarely involved in the process. The extensions grew in scale and intention, from small self-built extensions of existing residential spaces that added “the extra room that had always been lacking” to entire floors built for profit. Roof extensions are the most obvious and direct physical manifestation of negotiations between the market, the state and its laws, between municipalities, urbanists, inhabitants and buyers. (See page 132)

See Articles 19, 20, 21 and 37

This law was unusual in that it was retroactive, meaning that all contracts made before this law was passed, which were in compliance with the requirements, remained valid. Although this law did give some structure to the disorganized process of creating roof extensions, it also provided room for them to become extralegal, rather than legal. Negotiations between inhabitants and investors were usually regulated by the rules set by this law, even when it was obvious that the investor did not plan to follow procedures further and ask for a construction permit, knowing that this could be both costly and time-consuming. Most importantly, it would delay the start of





This building from the 1960s was originally designed as a single unit with two separate entrances, for two owner-councils. This enabled two different investors to build two different extensions on the same building.



As time progressed, roof extensions in Belgrade grew both in size and ambition.

the construction, which would then decrease the possibility of a quick profit.

So, instead of diminishing the number of roof extensions, this law made investors enter the field of construction more boldly. Fairly quickly, in the centre of Belgrade all attics and flat roofs were “reserved” and even those living beneath them could not easily claim them. It was not just the number of extensions that grew, but also their size. Suddenly extensions were no longer modest additions in the form of a single room or additional flat for a large family living below, but additional floors from which profit was to be made. However, it was the 1997 law that was passed to break the vicious circle of illegal building once and for all that really pushed this type of construction overboard. Or, more precisely, over the legal limits. This was the Law on the Special Conditions of Issuing Construction, or Usage Permit for a Specific Object.

See Articles 1 and 2

The Law introduced *the retroactive issuing of permits*, meaning it gave ex post facto permission for the building of already existing structures. The very existence of this regulation, after the law was passed meant that the by then thousands of people living in precarious conditions could feel somewhat more secure, since the bottom-line was that this law implied that the bulldozers would not appear overnight and tear down their only existing roof.

Since a large proportion of the illegal builders were refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the decision to introduce this regulation was largely motivated by the social aspects of the problem. Unable to solve the housing problem for those who had fallen victim to Serbian war politics, the state bought social peace with its “build now and we figure out later what

#### Article 37 Paragraph 2

The decision of the governing bodies, or the written consent of the majority of apartment tenants to grant the use of common space as residential or office space, made by the date of this Law coming into effect, shall be the basis for achieving the rights as mentioned in Article 21 and 22 of this Law, and shall serve as evidence of the occupancy right for construction works in terms of the regulations on spatial planning and organization, and building constructions.

Law on the Special Requirements for Granting a Constructing, or Occupancy Permit for Certain Buildings  
(Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia 16/1997)

#### Article 1

This Law regulates the special requirements for issuing building permits for buildings, or parts of buildings, constructed without permits in areas zoned for the construction of buildings of this specific type and use according to the urban planning; it determines the status of buildings built without permits in areas not zoned for constructing such structures according to urban planning, or in areas for which no urban plans were made; it also regulates the requirements for granting occupancy permits.

#### Article 2

Building permits shall be granted, in accordance with this Law, for all structures constructed without building permits that can be conformed to the planning, construction, and other statutory building requirements, irrespective of their purpose, as well as for structures renovated and enlarged without building permits.

### Article 3

Buildings which cannot be conformed to the urban plan in regards to their purpose and location, or that are placed in areas for which no urban plans exist, temporary building permit shall be granted if such buildings meet the requirements in terms of stability, safety, as well as hygienic and sanitary protection.

### Article 4

Municipal, or City administrators (hereinafter: the competent authorities) shall inventory and survey the buildings as mentioned in Articles 2 and 4 of this Law, and determine whether said buildings, erected or reconstructed without building permits, meet urban planning requirements and other statutory requirements; they will also check whether these buildings were constructed in accordance with the standards and technical requirements established for that type of structure.

The appropriate authorities shall determine whether said buildings, erected or reconstructed without building permits, meet urban planning requirements and other statutory requirements; they will also check whether these buildings were constructed with building permits, being used without previously obtained occupancy permits, were erected in accordance with the technical documentation based on which said constructions were approved, and whether they meet other user requirements.

The appropriate authorities shall also inventory structures under construction.

to do” logic. The lawmaker did not foresee – and failed to take protective measures – that these procedures would be embraced by speculative developers, who, up to the mid-1990s, had shied away from investing bigger sums of money in the then totally illegal constructions.

Additionally, by the mid 1990s both wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were coming to an end, and it was becoming obvious that any war profits had to be invested in something else, and what was better than the extralegal field of construction. According to the law, constructions without permits had become extralegal, instead of illegal. Most importantly, after this moment, the process slowly started to move upscale. Whereas former extensions usually were small interventions on the top floor of buildings, the new extensions were becoming bigger and bolder, as the danger of demolition had diminished. The same forms of development were related to the need for subsistence as well as profit.

See Article 3

The law also introduced temporary building permits for cases in which illegal buildings were erected outside of the planned area or the perimeters of land use set by urban planning. A temporary permit was a sign that the building was built in accordance with the building regulations, which protected it from demolition. This practice was like a jab between the ribs of the urban planning profession, as it gave validity to any type of construction, regardless of where it was situated.

See Article 4

The law gave jurisdiction to the authorities of the municipality to implement the process of legalization. One of the necessary steps that authorities had to take before the deadline for registration for legalization had passed was to make the necessary surveys of what

was actually built on the ground, so they could check whether the buildings in question were in fact built before the deadline had expired.

This had a powerful effect: as the deadline approached, construction was booming. Once the deadline had passed, the work came to a temporary standstill after which the pace would then slowly pick up again. If this response to their law came as a surprise to the 1997 lawmakers, subsequent lawmakers had no excuse for repeating the same procedure, knowing what effect it would produce, as similar activities ensued when new deadlines were announced in 2003 and 2009.

See Article 8

“The semi-legal construction of housing was created as a result of the deliberate institutional support for the construction of housing built without the proper documentation.

In many cases, constructions were based on a variety of documents that were part of the documentation necessary to acquire construction permits, but were not complete. In fact, it is very likely that most of the buildings marked as illegal actually belong to this category.” (GUP 2021, 2003)

Both Article 8 of the law and an observation made several years later in Belgrade’s General Plan 2021 acknowledged the extra-legal status of the host of illegal buildings that were either products of a construction with incomplete building documentation, or, more often, that over time had become extralegal, having plugging into the electricity or water supplies. When it came to infrastructure, even for the oldest suburban wild settlements the biggest challenge was to get connected to the city’s sewage system.

When looking at the statistics, it becomes quite clear that the effect that the 1997 Law on Legalization had on the prevention of this spatial production was

#### Article 8

The technical documentation as mentioned in Article 7, paragraph 1, of this Law shall contain: the architectural and engineering project, the infrastructure for electricity, plumbing and sewage, mechanical installations if present, and – if structures are not attached to the plumbing and sewage network, or there are no facilities connecting the structures to these networks – a description of the technical and technological solution for water supply and waste water drainage.

#### Article 11

This Law also regulates that building or occupancy permits can be granted if common spaces in apartment buildings are changed into residential space, if the work on changing this use has already commenced and the application for that change was submitted before 12 July 1995, provided that the Municipal Assembly has passed an act of change of use for those spaces.

actually opposite to what the lawmakers had in mind. In 1995 there were 33,594 illegal units and in 2001, this number had increased to 95,914 (source: Dzokić et. al; Vujović and Petrović). Instead of slowing down and eventually stopping the process, the law had in fact been crucial in accelerating it. In the period between 1997 - 2000, the law tried to solve an insolvable equation.

After 1997, the major Serbian cities, including Belgrade, were governed by the opponents of the Milošević regime; their response was to try and centralize the country to an even greater extent. The municipalities that struggled to keep the cities financially afloat turned to land speculation as a source of income. Therefore, the illegal building activities that in a way weakened the state, not only prevented the housing production from collapsing completely, but also created a loophole through which a considerable amount of “dirty” money (originating either from war profits, obscure business activities or shady privatization agreements, generated under the patronage of the government) could enter legal money flows.

Building was not the only activity that had to go “wild” in order to prevent everyday life from completely collapsing. Other spheres, too had to turn to informality to keep things going. Soon after 1991, and especially after the UN economic sanctions were imposed on Serbia and Montenegro in 1992, which escalated during and after the hyperinflation in 1993<sup>o</sup>, a lot of activities had exit their designated spaces in order to continue functioning. As a consequence, an average citizen of Belgrade, or any other town in Serbia, would go to a guy on a street corner holding a plastic bottle to buy a bit of petrol, to another person on the street to exchange deutschmarks for dinars,

then cross the street and buy cigarettes at a cardboard stall. As time went by, the cardboard stall turned into a kiosk, and even the system of public transportation in Belgrade was partly restored and given a boost by the system of self-organization.

The “Wild City” research, initiated by Stealth in 1998, provides a deeper understanding of the informal organizations and processes in Belgrade during the 1990s, and was the crucial inspiration for my research. Although already published in 2001, this research had little resonance with the professionals and authorities in Belgrade.

Although the majority of illegal buildings constructed until the Law of 1997 were residential and built to solve the immediate and basic need for housing, the situation started to change after this Law was passed. The wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina came to an end in 1995 and 1996 respectively, and the situation in Serbia was stable, or at least seemed to be stabilizing. The construction industry picked up, albeit much more so in the extra-legal circuit than in the legal one. The extensions and buildings (not just the residential ones, but quite often also commercial spaces) built extra-legally became bigger and more numerous. All kinds of developers were discovering that the “build first, legalize later” principle was providing much more manoeuvring space and profit margin, and they were ready to exploit it.

<sup>o</sup>The Yugoslav economy was no stranger to periods of inflation, especially in the 1980s. But the inflation that lasted from 1 October 1993 to 24 January 1994 was one of the highest ever recorded in the world, with the overall impact of hyperinflation:  
1 novi dinar =  $1 \times 1027 \sim 1.3 \times 1027$  pre 1990 dinars.  
Over that time period, the cumulative rate of inflation hit  $5 \times 1015$  percent.



The side wall of this Russian Pavilion extension is left unfinished in anticipation of a neighbouring extension that was never built, leaving exposed brick without any insulation or facade finish.

## When Attitude Becomes the Norm

In 1969 (22. 3. - 27.4.) Harald Szeemann curated the first major survey of Conceptual art in Europe – his final show as director of the Kunsthalle Bern. This seminal exhibition marked an important shift for exhibition practice. Artists such as Claes Oldenburg, Joseph Kosuth, Eva Hesse, Frank Viner, Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, ..., invited by Szeemann, were more or less free to contribute any work that they felt was relevant.

Since the artists, in Szeemann's words, "took over the institution," they also did their best to redefine the physical conditions for the show, entitled "Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form, (Works, concepts, processes, situations, information)." During the 1990s in Belgrade, extra-legal informality became the prevailing attitude; in fact, it became the norm.

Marcel Meili, in his essay "The Stability of the Informal" suggests that "it was only when the scale of operations rose sharply in the 1990s that what had begun as a manageable form of irregular growth span out of control. In the decade in which Yugoslavia collapsed, nearly all of the links that had bound informal urbanization to existing social, economic, political and legal frameworks were severed, and previously unknown phenomena and strategies evolved." (Meili, 2012: 26)

I would rather propose that what actually happened was not so much that the ties were severed, but more that the system of informal processes just dissolved. It is important to understand that there were two strands of extra-legal informality in Belgrade. One strand worked to protect the most basic life form. The other was created to make a profit. The former focused on survival and based its activity on the primacy of natural life over political life. The motivation of the latter was the accumulation (of profit)

through dispossession. To simplify, people struggling for *zoé* - bare life, were excluded by that very struggle from a political existence, while those acting for profits became a central players in the political arena, their behaviour drafting the rules. Therefore, the transition from socialist extra-legal informality to (neo)liberal extra-legal informality is, for one, a biopolitical question.

It is ironic that solidarity, as one of the main principles on which the previous system was based, and which was carried forward in small-scale individual extra-legality, completely lost its political agency. And how very ironic that the extra-legal informality of building for profit, with its street hustler mentality, gained this agency. During the 1990s, hustling made its way into the political field, and after the 2000s it was at the very core of the new norms.

Announcements of the every new law on Urban Planning and Construction, or changes in the existing ones, were observed as open invitations to start building, the larger the better, so that, by the time the law was passed, there would be something new to legalize. Usually these structures were larger, both in volume and numbers, and they were also made more cunningly, as it became more defined over time what could pass and what couldn't. Ironically, the same laws that were passed to put an end to illegal construction once and for all, in fact acted as an incentive.

However, although the term legalization was commonly used for the *retroactive issues of construction and/or usage permit*, neither the 1997 nor the 2003 law mentioned the term legalization. Planning and Construction in 2003, as it was passed three years after Milošević had been ousted from power, and was regarded as a *deus ex machina* act that would solve all

the issues inherited from the 1990s, which were a torment for the cities. It was passed just when the extension of the Russian Pavilions was at its peak, and the problem of “wild construction” was considered to be one of the largest problems to be solved. Yet, despite the importance of legalization, the articles regulating legalization were only inserted at the end of the law, in the interim and closing regulations.

An exception to this is Article 51, which allows temporary connection to the infrastructure (electricity, water supply, sewage, ...) if the building was registered for legalization in the municipality. Here, construction without a permit is actually mentioned before the final remarks. In reality, many of extralegal buildings plugged into the electrical grid, water and sewage system, and this Article only made that practice, of plugging in first and asking for papers later, official. The law set 13 May 2003 as the final deadline to register buildings without permits, and stated that everything built after this date would be demolished. However, this was seen as a deadline to build as much as possible (it coincided with implementation date of law itself), and subsequently it just stopped the construction briefly, and then extralegal construction slowly picked up pace.

See Articles 51 and 160

Although the law proclaimed that it would stop the extra-legal production of space in the cities once and for all, it was most effective in hustling “the smaller actors” out of the process, especially when it came to roof extensions, and to regulate the extremes. The Russian Pavilions are the most telling example. The extensions of the Russian Pavilions were at their peak when the law was passed, but this did not jeopardize the extensions that were under construction, it just slowed them down.

Law on Planning and Construction  
(Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 47/03 and 36/06)

#### Article 51

Buildings used for housing whose construction or reconstruction was completed without building permits before 13 May 2003 and which have been registered by their owners to the municipal administration before 13 November 2003 can, if these stipulations are met, get temporary connections to the power, heating, or telecommunications grid as well as the water supply and sewage system.

### XI. TRANSITIONAL AND CLOSING PROVISIONS

#### Article 160

Owners of buildings constructed or reconstructed without building permits must register these with the municipal administration within six months of the date of this Law coming into effect.

Apart from the application referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Article the following must also be submitted:

- 1 Proof of the proprietary right or lease on the construction land, or the proprietary right on the building, or the occupancy right on the undeveloped construction land, and notice from Paragraph 84 of this Law;
- 2 A geodetic survey with an outline of the plot, buildings and the surface area of the buildings.

The municipal administration shall inform the owner or investors of said buildings of the requirements for granting an approval for construction, or of the documents they are obligated to submit with the application, no later than 60 days after the deadline mentioned in paragraph 1 of this Article expires.



#### Article 161

Apart from submitting their application for approval for construction, owners of buildings constructed or reconstructed without building permits must also submit the following within 60 days of receiving the notice referred to in Article 160, paragraph 4 of this Law:

- 1 The design of the building;
- 2 Proof of the proprietary right or lease on the construction land, or the proprietary right on the building, or the occupancy right on the undeveloped construction land, and notice from Paragraph 84 of this Law;
- 3 Proof of regulation of the mutual relations with the authority, or organization that maintains the construction land.

Once the municipal administration has determined that the building in question meets all the stipulated requirements with regard to construction and use, they can grant an approval for the construction and occupancy permit through a unified written order.

#### Article 162

If the owner of a building constructed or reconstructed without a building permit fails to register said building within the deadline set in Article 160 of this Law, or subsequently fails to submit the application for issuance of an approval to build within the deadline set in Article 161 of this Law, the municipal administration shall pass a written order of demolition for said building / parts of said building.

However, upon completion of the Russian Pavilions, it became impossible to be straightforward about the “negotiations” with the laws and regulations. After eliminating the small actors and the extremes from the process, “normalization” could start, but this normalization actually meant internalizing some of the extra-legal procedures and embedding them in the everyday legal production of what was mostly housing space.

“If required for the successful sanctioning of the objects or houses, land use parameters or geometrically defined conditions may deviate from the norm as defined by this General Plan, provided that this does not result in a significant lowering of standards or lower quality of the organization of the groups of buildings, surroundings and public spaces that have been built according to the regulations of the General Plan.”  
(GUP 2021, 2003)

Beside the law, it was the ‘General Plan Belgrade 2021’ that defined the guiding principles and decisions on the basis of which the City of Belgrade made an official decision on the Temporary Rules and Conditions for Issuing Building and Occupancy Permits for Buildings built or reconstructed without construction permits up to 13 May 2003 – which was the main legal document for the work of all legalization commissions, in any municipality.

The General Plan Belgrade 2021, passed in 2003, did acknowledge the existence of wild suburbs, but it blamed illegal constructions as the source of all evil in Belgrade and as the reason for things not working out. This was still not enough to actually get the now extra-legal suburbs on the maps, as the territory they were occupying was still marked in plans either as arable land, or simply as the green belt around the city. This was finally amended in the 2006 update of the plan.

So, although fiercely opposed to the “wild elements that have been attacking the city”, the urbanists left an option for a plan to be changed in order to accommodate potential changes produced by the spatial practice they were trying to deny.

There is an inherent paradox here, the urbanists’ wish to set up the new master plan in the “traditional way” and incentivize normalization, actually prevented them to think of strategies, not only of accommodating the changes that extra-legal practices introduced in space, but also to navigate these better in future. It was not a surprise that extra-legal construction resumed after the plan was passed and implementation started.

“According to some sources, after 2003 several thousands of illegal buildings went up in Belgrade alone, 99% of which were built for personal use, not commercial use”, said Dragan Dilas, the Mayor of Belgrade in an interview with a daily newspaper on 13 July 2009, when he announced that the City of Belgrade was going to ask for an extension of the second “final” deadline for registration for legalization in 2009. However, several weeks later, on 23 August, another daily paper called “Politika” reported that “67 new construction sites had been discovered in the vicinity of Smederevo Road, and 230 on the territory of Grocka council... Which are still fairly small numbers when compared to the 50,000 ‘wild’ buildings that were supposedly erected in Belgrade over the last six years, or the 300,000 that have been built since the 1990s.” (Mučibabić, 2009) Oddly enough, the same issue of Politika also states that between 14 May 2003 and 17 July 2009 about 145,040 applications for legalization had been submitted.

This law not only regulated the procedure of the retroactive issuing of construction permits for

buildings built without one, but it also regulated the legalization of those parts of buildings with final outcomes that were different from what was proscribed in the permit. This became a pivotal aspect in extra-legal construction in the 2000s: now, initial construction could not start without a permit, but the final outcome would be larger than allowed, counting on the procedures existing in the laws, which could legalize aberrant parts post-construction.

The extensions of the Russian Pavilions became a perfect example of this practice. Since the 2003 law did nothing to ease the complex procedures for issuing construction permits, it was still faster and cheaper to build first and legalize later than to ask first and build later. The law on Urban Planning and Construction from 2009, which is still valid today (in 2012), finally tried to reverse this situation and make the procedure of acquiring the construction permit easier. However, the institutions failed to pass additional procedures and bylaws required to start implementing the new procedures, so for six months after passing this law, not a single construction permit was issued in Belgrade. The law, instead of creating an incentive for construction and legal ways of doing it, actually caused the market to come to a complete standstill.

“The revolution in Belgrade’s urban development was less one of scale than of rules.” (Diener et. Al, 2012)

*Legalization*, as a term, finally enters the law, and an entire chapter dedicated to the retroactive issuing of the permits is called “The Legalization of Buildings”. The novelty introduced by this law, in the section on legalization, is that it contained, among the necessary documentation for legalization, a survey on the static stability of the object in question. The quality of

construction, especially in the domain of extensions, was repeatedly scrutinized by the public, most often the resistance to earthquakes, and this law prioritized stability when deciding about the fate of extra-legal structures. Furthermore, the law gave jurisdiction to the municipalities to regulate the compensation amounts, allowing them to speculate with this depending on the size of their budgets.

Ironically, it thus became cheaper to legalize objects per square meter in the centres of some cities than in the outskirts of others, despite their sizes and positions being relatively similar. This law set a new deadline for registration for legalization, for 11 March 2010. As other deadlines for registration were also being met, around 700,000 objects in Serbia were registered. In order to keep track of the real situation on the ground and control if the buildings in application were really built before the deadline, the municipalities had to create an extensive cover of satellite images of the cities.

There were even cases where people quickly built mock-ups of constructions they were planning to build later, just to have them registered on the satellite image for future legalization. After this law was passed, the City of Belgrade and all its municipalities formed a special department to deal with the process of legalization.

See Article 185 and 194

Once again, this law repeats the procedures set by the previous laws regarding legalization. However, this time around, the economic crisis in Serbia put a hold on all construction activities, so it was difficult to see whether simplifying the procedure to obtain a construction permit worked the magic that other laws did not. However, this law continued the practice of

Planning and Construction Law  
(Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 72/2009, 81/2009 – rev; 64/2010 – Constitution Court ruling, and 24/2011)

### XIII BUILDING LEGALIZATION

#### Article 185

Legalization, in terms of this Law, is the retroactive issuance of a building permit and occupancy permit to a building, or parts of a building, constructed or reconstructed without a building permit.

Building permits as mentioned in Paragraph 1 of this Article shall be granted to all the buildings constructed or reconstructed or enlarged without building permits, or without approvals for construction, up to the date of this Law coming into effect.

Building permits can also be granted, under the terms of this Article, to buildings constructed with building permits or approvals for construction and final design, which subsequently, during construction, deviated from said issued permits or approvals.

The local self-governing authorities on whose land the object of legalization is located shall determine the compensation amount referred to in Paragraph 6 of this Article. – Legalization Compensation, amount determined by the recipient.

#### Article 194

Owners of illegally constructed buildings that have filed applications in accordance with the previous Law shall submit evidence stipulated by this Law within a 60 day deadline from the date of this Law coming into effect.

#### Article 199

Buildings for which applications for legalization has been submitted in accordance with the stipulations of this Law and which have been built before 11 September 2009 can temporarily be connected to the power, gas, electronic communications or heating grids, and to the water supply and sewage.

#### Article 200

Within 90 days of this Law coming into effect, the local self-governing authorities shall provide the ministry with a register of all the buildings constructed, reconstructed or enlarged without building permits, or without approvals for construction and final design, which have not been demolished based on prior legislation superseding this Law.

The register referred to in Paragraph 1 of this Article shall contain: the date of construction, reconstruction, or enlargement of the structure; use, surface area, name of the owner of the structure, as well as statements for the demolition order.

previously passed legislation, that is to say, it continued to blur the borders between legal and illegal since it entailed that some of the extra-legal procedures would nevertheless occur, so there should be space for them in the laws.

“For “legalization” is simply another form of re-appropriation in a dual sense: exterritorial forms of habitation are acclaimed by state authority and “repatriated” into the official social, political, and economic system.” (Mieli, 2012: 29)

Indeed, some of the practices developed after 2000 use precisely this dual character of legalization and constantly balance on the legal/extra-legal line in order to leave space for manipulation so that an investor can make more profit.

“The reality of Belgrade allows us to imagine and speculate about public policy in which economies of scale are substantially less important than economies of variety and flexibility. The new and desired institutional structure is then created not to reverse, but to support emerging processes with a clear, social agenda.” (Stealth, 2001/2002)

Nominally, the struggle for “normalization” commenced after 2000. The authorities decided to do exactly the opposite to one of the conclusions in of the Wild City research, and tried to reverse all illegal and extra-legal protocols present in the society, and put them under the rule of law.

However, in the context of the restoration of capitalism and the swift neoliberal turn that process took in Serbia after 2000, it was naive to think that investors, who had gotten used to the speculation in the grey extra-legal zone, where the largest profit margin was made, would be keen to give up on all that territory,

especially since the scale of construction rose as the country started to rebuild. The extra-legal bypasses and creative interpretation of the (future) rules had to become invisible. One could even argue that the extension of the Russian Pavilions (see page 119), which occurred after 2000 as a scheme of a few investors, who - together with the authorities - made creative use of the extra-legal roof extension protocols in order to create cheap, but extremely profitable housing, was in fact a (subconscious) experiment to see how far the borders of the extra-legal could be stretched without crossing into illegal territory.

That “intervention”, though brutal, also had an element of honesty. Every spatial decision made was geared towards maximizing the profit for the investor, and stretching the future legal terrain a bit further. In the case of the Russian Pavilions, the investors utilized all protocols developed during the 1990s, mostly by people trying to solve the basic need for housing, as well as the laws made to regulate them, in order to enlarge the grey space where they were making the most profit, in negotiations with the authorities. A very specific type of “normalization” process is at play here, whereby everyday people aiming for small-scale interventions were put under pressure to obey all the rules strictly, while those with capital, the big players, had a lot of room for negotiation.

Various cunning strategies for extra-legal building were practiced on new constructions as well as extensions, but the extensions of the Russian Pavilions is the site where this play between the legal, the illegal and the extra-legal was played out to its extreme. And in the aftermath a whole set of stealth strategies were developed that were implemented in later developments. The norm became an invisible, embedded



A small-scale, single apartment roof extension on the top-right corner of a 1960s high-rise.

extra-legality whose size is determined by the negotiations with the authority.

“In these negotiations, pressure and tactics will be just as significant as the vague legal norm. Now all the crafty strategies and experiences from the informal campaign of the 1990s will be secularized, so to speak - as a proven repertoire of legal dodges and design tricks to come to a successful conclusion in negotiations with the state.”  
(Meili, 2012: 57)

Dominant factors in the context of this embedded extra-legality were situational criteria and whatever leverage investors had with the authorities, whether through political connections, economic pressure, personal ties or good old corruption. One thing was for certain, the practice of extra-legal protocols became limited to an exclusive club of investors with sufficient power. Gone were the days when extra-legality was practiced equally by those who were in it for the profit and those who were in it for sustenance.

In fact, it became the norm to embed extra-legal construction within every legal project. From their inception, new constructions would be designed slightly larger than allowed by urban planners, and two sets of drawings would be made: one for the permit and one for the market. The size of the aberration would be determined in the communication with the municipality: the larger the aberration, the higher up in the administrative hierarchy the negotiating party had to be.

For example, since 2000 the most common type of development in Belgrade is the residential building of between 1000 and 3000 m<sup>2</sup>. Usually, an investor buys a plot of land with a single family house, and develops a building between 4 and 5 storeys high, with 2 to 3 apartments per storey. In most cases, former owners

get some of the apartments in exchange for their demolished house. As soon as a construction permit is obtained and construction starts, the building is put on the market; the sale then provides the necessary funding to complete the building. It is of crucial importance that the largest part of the building is sold in advance, as this is usually the only way the construction of the whole building can be financed. In the official design of the building, made for the permit, the space below the roof and parts of the top floor are usually designated for some kind of common, non-residential use - a common storage area, gym or something else, depending on how creative investors and architects are.

However, in reality these spaces only exist on paper, on the drawings in the municipality necessary to procure the construction permit. Everywhere else, on the drawings used on the construction sites and those used on the housing market, these spaces are yet more apartments, square metres ready to be sold at full price. The larger these extra spaces are, the larger the profit margins for the investors. Every contract for an apartment in a building comes with an annex, the permission for a (future) buyer of the attic to convert it into a housing space. The permission for refurbishment is often given even before the space in question is even built, making the whole process a paradise for speculation.

Once a building is completed, the problematic parts stay partly unfinished until the technical commission gives a usage permit, allowing the moving in to start, while the attics in question get the final touches that transform them into apartments. While the new owner is choosing the wall colours, the investors start the final part of this procedure, the



Most of the newly constructed buildings have extra-legal spaces embedded in them. The space below the roof and parts of the last floor are built as apartments and sold on the market, despite being designated as common storage areas in the construction permit.

legalization of the refurbishment, applying for a permit to convert the common attic space into an apartment, thus completing a circle. The procedures inserted in the laws to mitigate the precarious illegal conditions of people trying to solve their basic housing needs were used to create more profit. The laws became deregulated in favour of capital, as the extra-legal practice stabilized within every new construction, this time as a vent the city could use to facilitate all demands and wishes of the developers.

The plot-by-plot development described above is, in fact, the form in which developer urbanism manifested itself in Belgrade.

“The planning of developers. They conceive and realize without hiding it, for the market, with profit in mind. What is new and recent is that they are no longer selling housing or buildings, but planning. With or without ideology, planning becomes an exchange value. The project of developers presents itself as opportunity and place of privilege: the place of happiness in a daily life miraculously and marvelously transformed.

The make-believe world of habitat is inscribed in the logic of habitat and their unity provides a social practice which does not need a system. Hence these advertisements, which are already famous and which deserve posterity because publicity itself becomes ideology.” (Lefebvre, 2000: 84)

In Belgrade developer urbanism did not just start 2000, when the restoration of capitalism was in full swing and privatization became the dominant *raison d’être*, but already in the 1980s, when a powerful independent planning office lobbied successfully for the deregulation of the urban planning market.

At that time, it was also possible for detailed urban plans to be drawn up by other urban planning offices besides the official Urban Planning Institute, provided

the developer was known. In practice this meant that all large construction companies started making their own plans for the projects they wanted to executed, with little coordination with the, already outdated, master plan of Belgrade.

The primary objective was profit, not community. Additionally, the City ceased to invest in Detailed Urban Plans for those areas that had no interested investors, thus actively giving up on imagining a future for a city that would be different to the one imagined by the investors and developers. From this point in time, nominally still within the socialist era, Belgrade socialists already seemed to be championing neoliberal urban policies.

“Since the mid 1980s, neoliberal urban policy (applied for example, across the European Union) concluded that redistributing wealth to less advantaged neighbourhoods, cities, and regions was futile, and that resources should instead be channeled to dynamic “entrepreneurial” growth poles.” (Harvey, 2012: Loc. 688-92)

The post-2000 marriage of extra-legal and neoliberal urban policies, became the most empowering model of developer urbanism. The most empowering for the developer, while the City legitimizes these procedures and attitudes with the omnipresent claim that “capital needs to flow, and self-managed ways of socialism need to be forgotten”. There is no need to give up on this strategy.

Even today, in 2012, the extra-legal procedure is a valid go-to strategy and a project would only revert to the designated legal frame, if it does not get passed according to this strategy. What is at stake here is that extra-legal procedures, as a rule, entail that common space, but often also public space, gets sacrificed. As



The effect of plot-by-plot urbanism on the narrow streets of Neimar, Belgrade’s neighbourhood that was until the beginning of the 2000s, dominated by single family houses. Most of these were demolished, and 3-4 storey-high residential buildings were erected instead.



was the case in the construction of the “Ušće” shopping mall, where the size of the built construction was actually twice the size allowed in the permit, eating up the existing park on the plot almost entirely.

Ironically, what ostensibly started as a process of empowering people through their direct intervention in the process of housing production, had the opposite effect once the laws had dealt with it. And while we can discuss the undeniable democratic potentiality of such informal processes, labelling of all extra-legal processes as democratization, just because they are spatially similar, has a dangerously blurring effect.

The case of Belgrade shows how the supposed democratization soon became the empowerment of a few, who started using it as a tool of dispossession. The guise of democratization is in direct correlation with the strength of the value system inherited from Yugoslavia, which had the capacity to sustain a certain level of “spatial selfishness” while still keeping overall control of the process – considering society as a whole, and not just particular interests. As the system dissolved, dismantled by plot-by-plot urbanism, so did the democratization potential of extra-legal actions.

The individual actions of people solving their basic sustenance needs was never the issue. Rather, the problem was the state acting with the intention to regulate the extra-legal field, but in essence replacing the actions of common people with the systematic actions of investors. This was done by atomizing the issues of illegal development, trying to solve the illegal status of each individual constructed unit, and not looking at the system in which all those particles existed. This made it possible to draft laws in which there is no substantial difference between aberrations of a few square meters and those of a few thousand

square meters, and no difference between built-for-profit and built-for-zoé. There is no unified strategy for legalization, and often it even looks like each individual flat has arranged for its own legalization, instead of this having been done for the building as a whole. This is the most extreme case of the tendency to observe things particularly, whereby space is not considered as an infrastructure and unity, but as a collection of separate items, which can be commodified plot by plot - with the planning carried out accordingly.

However promising the heterotopic developments in the urban fabric of Belgrade seemed to be at the end of the 1990s, inspiring Stealth to describe Belgrade as a “trembling ground on which the rules for producing urban substance and the logic for preserving urban vitality are constantly reinvented” (Stealth, 2002), it is questionable whether they had the potential to reinvent the city, “since reinventing the city inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power over the processes of urbanization” (Harvey, 2012: 4), and the multiplicity of individual actions, no matter how self-initiated and bottom-up they were, never became a collective power.

Therefore, it is dangerous to look at the form of individual roof extensions perched on top of modernist buildings and hail them as democratization, as the process in which they were created has not led to the political emancipation of those who built them. Plainly, the multitude of self-builders never became a political subject capable of negotiating the rules in their favour and imposing their vision of development. The strategies they employed on the ground, however, led to the political subjectivization of the capitalists and it was their interpretation that finally got embedded in the laws.

## Extralegal is the Most Political

“As designers, our role therefore evolves from shaping, to steering - from being the “authors” of a finished work - into facilitators who help people act more intelligently, in more design-minded ways, in the system they live in. It’s a kind of deontic street theatre in which the regisseur-designer contributes questions, proposals and design concepts, but not finished scripts.”  
(Thackara, 2002)

While the extra-legal transformation of Belgrade was taking place, architects and urbanists decided to do exactly the opposite of what John Thackara proposed, that is to say, reflecting on the conclusions of Stealth’s Wild City research. To stay out of the process, without wishing to intervene and not understanding that “The Wild City evolved and sustained itself through economic, social and political ruptures. It is an architectural creed: it offers no certainty and stable solutions, it has no tolerance for professional prejudice. Instead, it allows us to enter the field of changes of a social and urban environment with ways to observe them and to navigate them.” (Stealth, 2001/2002) The determination of the profession to stay blind to the situation on site is very obvious, as can be seen in the example of the extension of the Russian Pavilions.

In the period between 2001-2003, when the whole area was a large building site, the Urban Planning Institute of Belgrade was commissioned by the Municipality of Palilula to make a new detailed urban plan for this area (see page 219). While they acknowledged in the plan that “some of the buildings were attacked by illegal constructions” the professionals continued to propose plans that would deal with this situation after the completion of the plan and extensions, whereas

there was not a single proposition for how the process could be steered in a better direction.

“Our economic system has traditionally reduced the architect (the planner as environmental designer) to the role providing culturally acceptable rationalizations for projects whose form and use have already been determined by real-estate speculation.”  
(Goodman, 1972:133)

Although Goodman wrote this in 1972, describing the position of architect in the American and Western European capitalist context, it translates well to the Serbian context. While architects were spending the 1980s dreaming of the liberalization of planning and the market, which would enable them to break free from the bureaucratized constraints of socialist planning, they failed to see the opportunity in the 1990s to re/invent the practice and recreate themselves as proactive agents facilitating negotiations that happen every day in the development of the city. However, at best they were reduced to facilitating the needs of a developer and producing drawings that would yield the maximum of square metres, i.e. profit.

However, in the situation of the (more or less permanent) financial crisis and the diminished production of new spaces, the majority of architects in Serbia earn money by drawing and preparing legalization documentation. To put it bluntly, they draw meticulously what has already been built, usually without any, or perhaps with a minimum of architectural input. The role of an architect is thus not only reduced to that of a plain draughtsman, but also stripped of the social recognition of the knowledge architecture holds.

In their wish to remain largely apolitical as a profession, architects failed to understand that in

order to put themselves forward as relevant actors, it is necessary for the profession to rediscover its politics and strive not to revert to the old politics. In this process of negating the contemporary moment, it was not only the profession that lost the solid ground on which to stand, but but as at least a small part of the profession failed to articulate themselves in relation to the diminishing social realm in the cities, society as a whole also lost. Were architects in fact capable of filling that void? Not only can they recognize the actors and spatialize their needs, but they can also build a discourse needed for negotiations.

“The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying, and the new cannot be born.”  
(Gramsci, 1991)

The rupture created by the extra-legal in Belgrade in the 1990s and 2000s briefly opened up a glimpse of where the new can be born, but also showed how it can quickly lead to appropriation. At the table of architectural and urbanist negotiation, where investor and capital have their positions entrenched in the logic of growth and where City and State are, at best, blackmailed into stimulating growth by deregulating the laws in order to allow urbanization to absorb the surplus (but mostly just believing that this will jumpstart the economy), a new chair has to be added, namely that of the actor powerful enough to break the bond between state and capital and plead for the common good. This could create a context in which a different idea of the city can be produced together with new politics.

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**Dossier:  
The Russian  
Pavilions**



**Overlooking the extensions of the Russian Pavilions from the top of a 1960s high-rise in Karaburma.**

Dossier: The Russian Pavilions  
On Extralegal Space in Belgrade  
by Dubravka Sekulić

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Project name	Russian Pavilions
Urban plan	Nikola Gavrilović
Architect	Jovan Bjelović
Contractor	Komgrap
Year of construction	1947 – 1951 1956 – 1957
No. of pavilions	82
No. of flats	328
Investors	The Municipal Factory for Bread, The Municipal Company for Traffic “Sutjeska”, The construction company “Gradina”

Law on Five-Year Plan  
Official Gazette of the People’s Republic of Serbia 36/1947

Article 16

- 1 Within the five-year period, finish the reconstruction of war-destroyed residential buildings in villages, continue to repair the destroyed buildings in cities and construct new housing colonies. Repair war – demolished and dilapidated buildings and build 15 million square metres of new residential buildings in cities, villages and colonies for the total sum of 30 billion dinars.
- 2 Create the mass production of prefabricated apartment buildings with standardized parts.

The Russian Pavilions was one of the first organized housing projects built in Belgrade, after WWII. They were constructed from 1947 until 1957 (with interruptions) as a new settlement between Karaburma and Rospri Ćuprija. A typical pavilion is a two-storey building that contains 4 apartments.

See Article 16

There is an embedded paradox in the fate of the Russian Pavilions, as they were initially built extra-legally, without a plan. The context for their construction was given by the Law on Five-Year Plan (1947), in a section related to the construction of new housing colonies (Article 16), after which the construction started, two years before the General Plan for Belgrade was passed (done 1949-1950, project leaders: Miloš Somborski, Đorđe Šuica, and Josif Najman). So their construction, too started in the extra-legal, grey zone. Without a plan, the Urban Planning Institute was issuing permissions only for locations that were outside of the borders of the previous plan, on large sites of state-owned land.

The construction plans greatly resembled the plan that were typical in the Soviet Union, but they were modified for local use by the architect Jovan Bjelović. The construction was semi-prefabricated and even for



those times considered slightly substandard. The investors were the Municipal Factory for bread, the Municipal Factory for Meat, the Municipal Company for Traffic “Sutjeska” and the construction company “Gradina”. The flats were distributed to the workers of these factories and companies according to the “Right to Housing” principle.

The same type of buildings can be found on two other locations in Belgrade, while the construction of the Russian Pavilions was under way. The two constructions are located in the streets Vjekoslava Kovača and Severni bulevar (North Boulevard). These neighbourhoods were smaller, the buildings were built with materials of higher quality and they are much better preserved than those in the Karaburma area.

An inscription, found on one building in Vjekoslava Kovač Street gives a lot of information about the context in which these three housing colonies were built: “Under the leadership of our glorious Party headed by Comrade TITO, in the midst of the fiercest enemy campaign launched by the leaders of the Soviet Union and East-european countries, Youth Work Brigades and experts from all over the country fought the battle to build this residential colony of 36 buildings for the working people of the capital city of our socialist country, from August 1949 to December 1950”.

Immediately after the war, it was the place where army officials had their apartments. When other parts of the city (especially New Belgrade) developed, with higher quality housing, the Russian Pavilions became predominantly a workers’ neighbourhood. The development of the neighbourhood came to a halt in 1951 and was resumed in 1956 - 1965, when four-storey buildings of better quality were constructed. The initial

urban plans were not detailed enough and not sufficiently in accordance with the construction process and many modifications had to be made on site.

In 1967, a new detailed urban plan for the neighbourhood was passed, and a new construction process started. In this period, other communal facilities, such as an elementary school, a kindergarten, a post office, a supermarket and even a cinema were added. The pressure to expand the neighbourhood and add new housing units meant that by the 1970s the Russian Pavilions, although considered sub-standard, remained unchanged, and slowly started to decay as the inflexibility of the “right to housing” scheme regarding individual interventions prevented the holders of permanent tenants’ rights in the Russian Pavilions to modify and renovate them according to their needs.

In 1992, when the privatization of the housing stock took place, this became possible, since the buildings were now owned by the inhabitants. However, during the crisis of the 1990s, in the poorer workers’ neighbourhoods, of the Karaburma still is, it was difficult to find money for home improvements. Ironically, while other parts of Belgrade were going crazy for roof extensions, the Russian Pavilions stayed unusually dormant. Except for one case of legal roof extension (See file K02, page 169), there were virtually no modifications until 2000.

The wave of democratic changes that swept Serbia in 2000 brought developers willing to invest in extensions to the Russian Pavilions (See page 217). The Russian Pavilions became a testing ground to see how the illegal/extra-legal/legal strategies developed during the 1990s would develop in the future. What will be possible and what will not? Where is the blurred border of the grey zone? The extensions of the Russian

Pavilions were always somewhat more in the illegal zone of the extra-legal than in the legal.

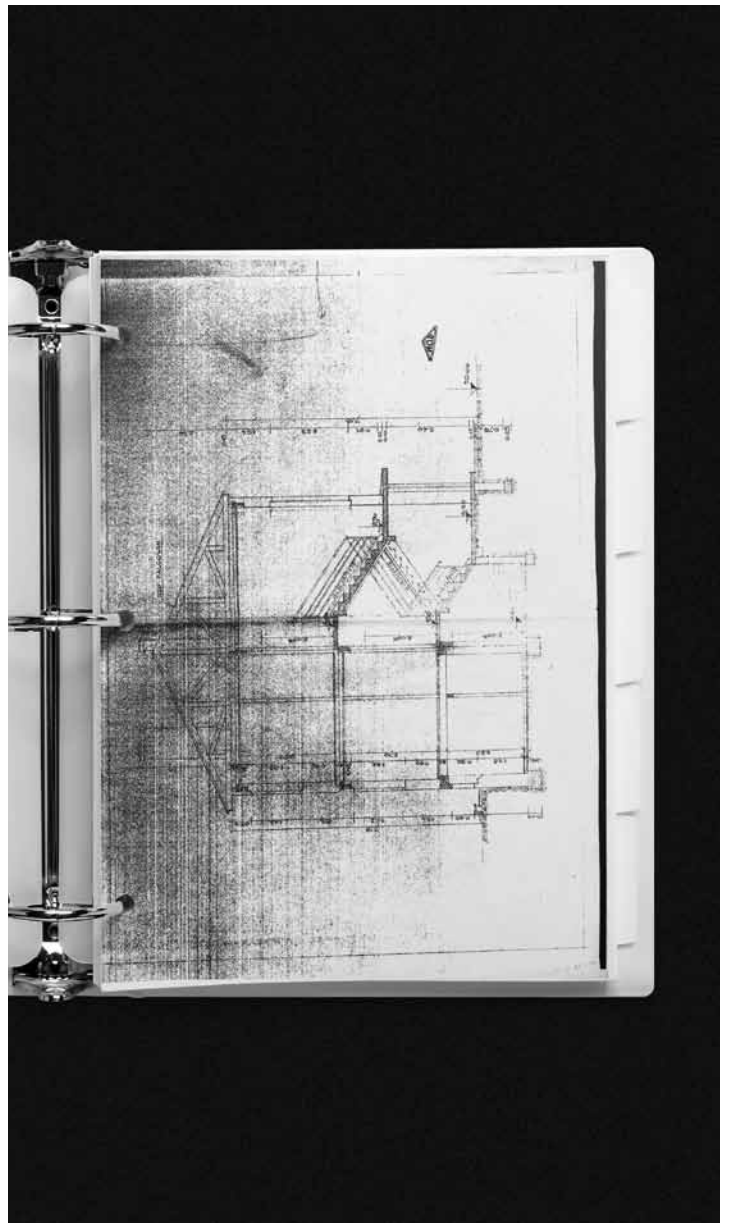
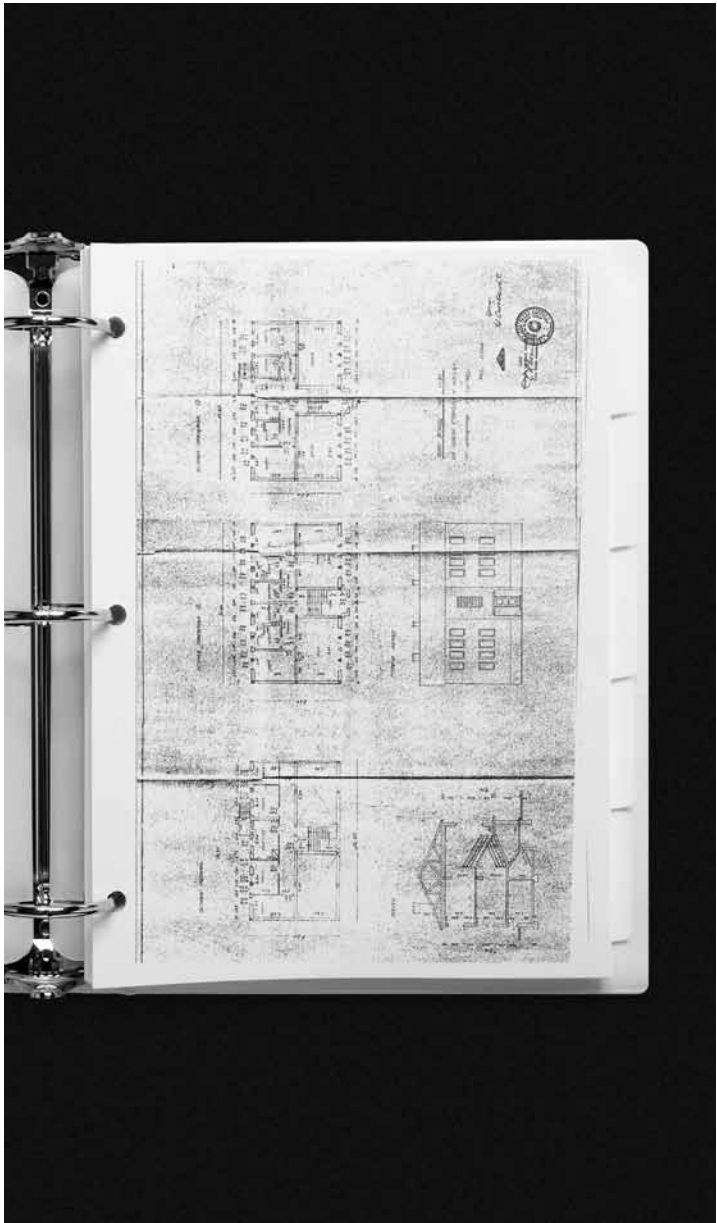
While the peak of extension-building was taking place, the Urban Planning Institute was commissioned by the City of Belgrade and the Municipality of Palilula to make a new urban plan for the area. (See page 219) Although they were aware that the situation in the area was changing on a day-to-day basis, the planners did not do much to intervene in the process. They just stated what was going on and gave a generic solution as to how to deal with buildings “attacked by wild constructions” – demolish if possible; when they are structurally safe, leave them untouched. However, it was instructed that new developers could build on the sites of un-extended Russian Pavilions. The making of the new plan for the area did not stop the extension process and neither did the Law on Urban Planning that was passed in 2003 and that introduced a deadline for legalization. What did put the extensions on hold and eventually stopped them altogether were the local elections in 2004.

When the elections approached, the municipality froze all construction works and when they were resumed some months later there were strict rules about how buildings should be finished. The ubiquitous mushroom roof had to go (See page 204) and not a single new construction could be commenced. The Russian Pavilions went back to the dormant mode, only to awake briefly by the call to register for legalization in 2009. (See page 154).

There is a controversy, almost a veil of mystery, surrounding the name “Russian”. Urban legend has it that they were built by Russian soldiers after the war. It is not clear whether they were soldiers of the Red Army or captive emigrants from Russia after the

October Revolution. However, Russian soldiers after the war were members of the Red Army, and were called Soviets, and a few texts that exist about this settlement mention they were built by the voluntary youth brigades. Indications are that the name comes from a project that was based on Russian typology.

On the following two pages – Photocopies of the original plans obtained for research purposes at the Archive of the City of Belgrade.



## Dossier: The Russian Pavilions Negotiations

Constructing without permit, called ‘wild building’, has existed in Serbia since the 1960s. One of the reasons this practice came into being was the inability of self-managed socialist Yugoslavia to produce enough, versatile housing for its inhabitants, which it was required to do by the constitution. Those who were not able to solve their housing problems within the system would build in the periphery of the system: in the suburbs. This practice was officially sanctioned, but unofficially tolerated.

The collapse of Yugoslavia also affected the production of housing units. One of the first things that the newly established states did was to start the transition from state socialism to capitalism. The first stop on this route was the privatization of the housing stock. Next to this, the production of the housing units was privatized and, for the first time, a housing market was established at the beginning of the 1990s. As Serbia was in a state of crisis at the time, a housing market existed, but the production of new houses was marginal and the impoverished population could not afford the houses on the market.

The majority of the housing production moved from regular to irregular – to the ‘wild’ sector, a.k.a. constructing without permit. Little by little this practice moved from the city suburbs to the centres and to the roofs that became an Eldorado to intervene and experiment with space and rules.

Roofs became the most used and contested space of the constructions without permit. They were seen by

the professionals, the architects and urbanists, as the most visible sign of the ‘decay’ of urban space and planning during the 1990s. In the beginning, a roof extension was a small-scale structure, usually built by the person living in the apartment below or elsewhere in the building. In most cases, these extensions were made to solve an immanent housing problem; they were rarely built for profit. It did not take long for this practice to up-scale.

One of the triggers for the up-scaling and expanding of this practice was the Law on the Maintenance of Buildings from 1995. This law was the first to deal with construction without permit and regulate the procedures of acquiring consent for extension from the inhabitants of the “building-to-be-extended”.

The next important moment was the Law on Housing (1997), which, for the first time, introduced the concept of legalization. After these changes in the law, the field of roof extensions was completely taken over by developers who started extending roofs for profit, often excluding from the process those who wanted to do it for personal use. Above anything, the building of a roof extension is all about negotiations—

- I With the municipality and ministries about interpretations of laws and rules for legalization, so what is built without or outside of the initial permit can be built in the knowledge that it will be legalized later. Or: “what is illegal now, will be legal tomorrow”.
- II With the inhabitants and owners of pavilions that have to sign a consent for the extension and give up their ‘part of the sky’ and airspace. Or: “above you, today, a leaking roof – tomorrow, 4 to 5 new floors to keep you warm”.
- III With laws and regulations, existing and future ones, skilfully using construction elements to map the blurred border. Or: “a wall that became a roof that became a mask”.

I What is illegal now, will be legal tomorrow

When the extension of the Russian Pavilions started at the end of 2000, the negotiation between developers and municipalities about the size of the extensions and buildings in general was already well-rehearsed.

As in the case of the Russian Pavilions, the developer would make preparations off the record at the municipality in order to enable that the building they were constructing would not be done entirely according to the permit issued and that some parts would need to be legalized. Or, they would just start constructing, knowing that there was an open channel to legalize the construction after the building is sold.

The size of the extension determines who is in charge of issuing the permit and monitoring the process of construction. In Belgrade, all new construction below 800m<sup>2</sup> is under the jurisdiction of the Municipality and above is under jurisdiction of the City. Developers of the extensions of the Russian pavilions were encouraged by the municipality, off the record, to construct over 800m<sup>2</sup>, so that municipality can, stay 'clean', while having made their promises. Nevertheless, when it comes to legalization, municipalities also get their fees, despite the original construction being under the jurisdiction of the City.

II Above you, today, a leaking roof – tomorrow, 4 to 5 new floors to keep you warm

The Law on the Maintenance of Buildings (1995) regulated the procedure of how any investor obtains permission to build an extension. Regardless of the size of the extension, the procedure is the same. To get

a permit to build an extension the investor or developer needs to get 51% of the flat owners in the “building-to-be-extended” to sign a consent.

Nevertheless, the larger the extension, the more the developer has to offer to the inhabitants of the building-to-be-extended to get a consent. During the process of the extension of the Russian Pavilions the developers ‘negotiated’ a consent offering:

- A Additional living space: inhabitants could choose between 28m<sup>2</sup> of the finished space in the extension or 33m<sup>2</sup> of the unfinished space (in the so-called “grey phase) that would have to finish by themselves.
- B Extension of existing space: additional terraces or even the extension of existing rooms in the old flat would be built at the expense of the developer of the extension, if the position of the building in relation to the street allowed columns supporting the extension to be distanced from the building.
- C Improvements: a signature could be exchanged for new windows and a facade of the pavilion, or a new entrance door and an intercom.

Depending on the negotiating skills of the owners of the building and their unity, one or more of these concessions would be won.

III A wall that became a roof that became a mask

The main principle behind the construction system used for the extension of the Russian Pavilions was the maximization of profit. This means that priority was given to a construction that yielded more m<sup>2</sup> for the market, not to the most ‘elegant’ one. It is a system in which m<sup>2</sup> is ultimately a commodity to be sold and in which quantity takes primacy over quality, urban planning and living standards. Also, the construction

had to ensure that the process of building the extension could take place without dislocating the people living in the pavilion at the basis for the extension, as that would mean additional costs.

The construction that bears the weight of the extension is statically completely independent of the old pavilion. Columns made of reinforced concrete form a basic grid around the pavilion and are connected with beams, thus forming a cage on which load-bearing slabs are put. This creates the foundation on which the rest of the extension is constructed. It can be argued that the extension is a structurally separate building. Ironically, since the pavilions were made as semi-prefabricated structures and the extensions with bricks and mortar, the extensions, although built 50 years later, were actually technologically a step back.

The position of the columns was determined by the position of the existing pavilion on the plot. If the construction line was different from the regulatory line, the columns were then put on the regulatory line. This way more square meters per floor could be built. Space created inbetween the pavilion and the columns could then be filled by terraces or added space to existing flats below.

The load-bearing beams on the columns are usually projected outward, depending on the proximity of the neighbouring building. By making a cantilever, sometimes just 30 cm wide, additional m<sup>2</sup> for sale are created.

Architecture is a camouflage: When the size of extensions exceeded the permitted limit, ghost floors came to feature mushroom-shaped roof envelopes. Construction remains construction, while the architectural envelope becomes a cover-up.  
(Džokić et al, 2003)

The mansard, or mushroom roof, as it became known in Belgrade, is created to mask the top floor or the top two floors. This way the extension appears smaller on paper. Instead of stating that the extension amounts to 4 or 5 floors, it is stated that the extension covers 2 or 3 floors with potential living space under the roof. During negotiations with the municipality this space under the roof can be turned into 2 additional floors.

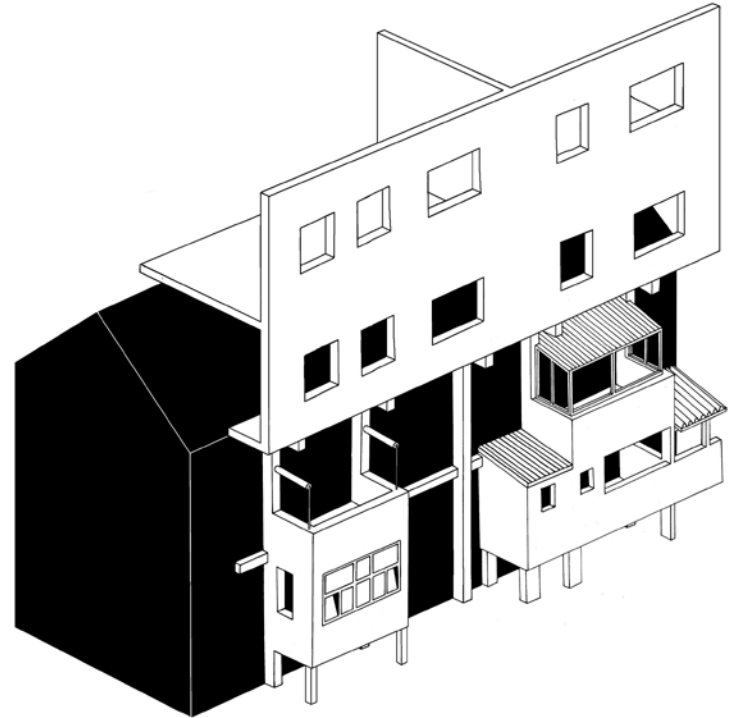
One of the reasons for this state of affairs is jurisdiction, as mentioned before. Every extension over 800m<sup>2</sup> falls under the jurisdiction of the city, and not the municipality, so suggesting to the developer to build over this size protects the municipality from any responsibility, but gets them an even larger profit when the legalization is a fact.

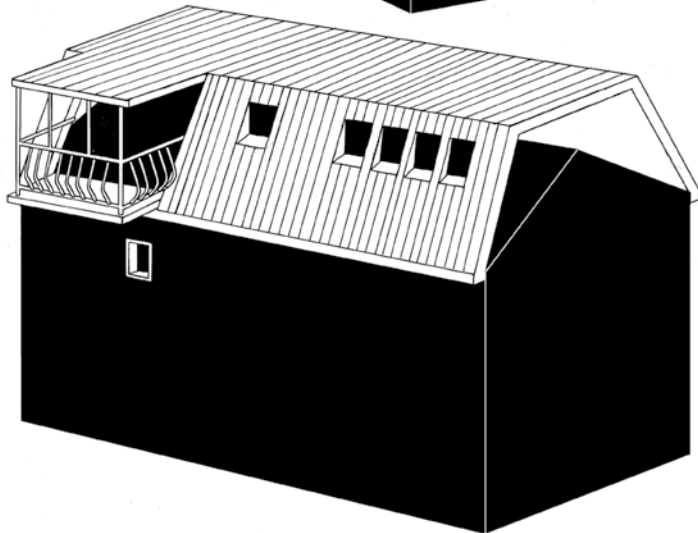
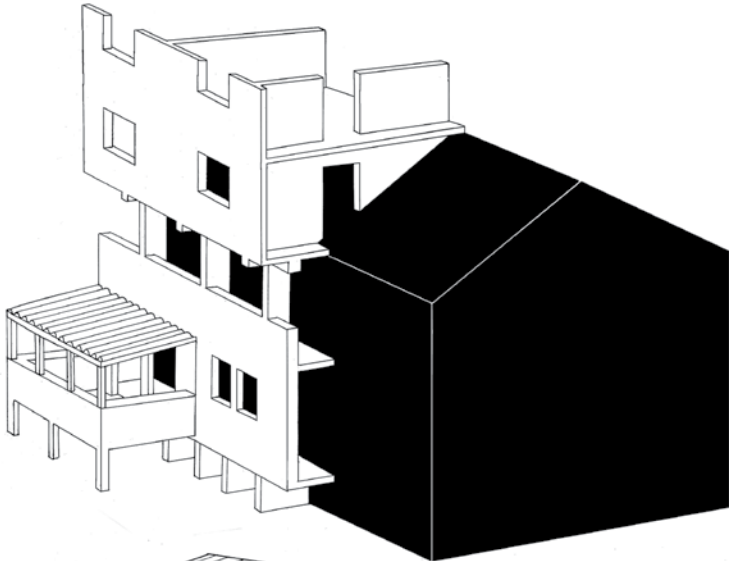
In 2004, what seemed to be a smooth process of extending the Russian Pavilions, was abruptly stopped because of upcoming local elections for the municipality. After the elections, the political party in power had changed, and the mushroom building was no longer an option. This meant the end of the extension of the Russian Pavilions.

## Negotiation case studies

### Extension of existing space

- 1 If the pillars supporting the extension are placed adjacent to the pavilion, skillful negotiation by the tenants can convince the developer to add a couple of shorter pillars, in order to support balconies and room extensions to the base pavilion.





### Negotiation case studies

#### Additional living space

- 1 As a result of excellent negotiating skills, a maximum amount of floor space is gained from the extension. The existing pavilion floor space is extended and an additional balcony is attached to it.
- 2 Inspired by the larger Russian Pavilion extensions, (but also threatened by them) some owners realized that the best way to protect their airspace was to build an extension by themselves, although smaller in size.



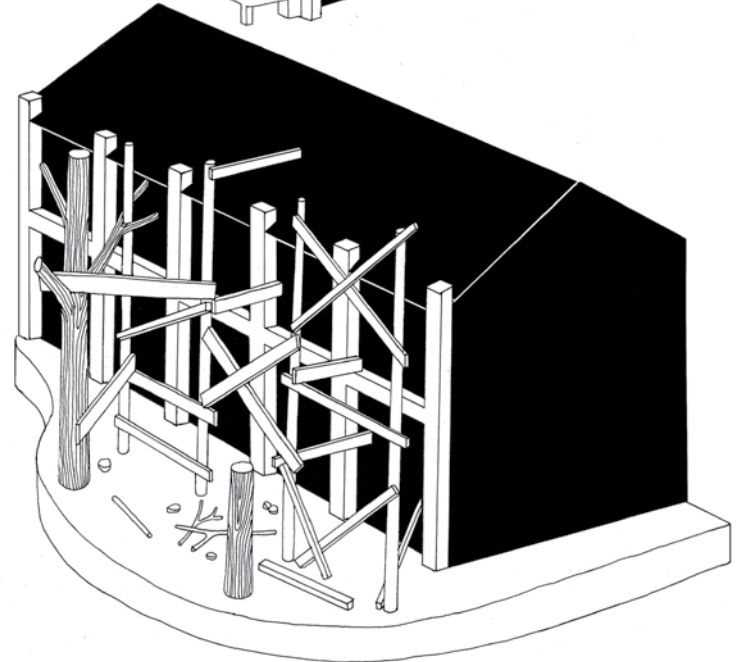
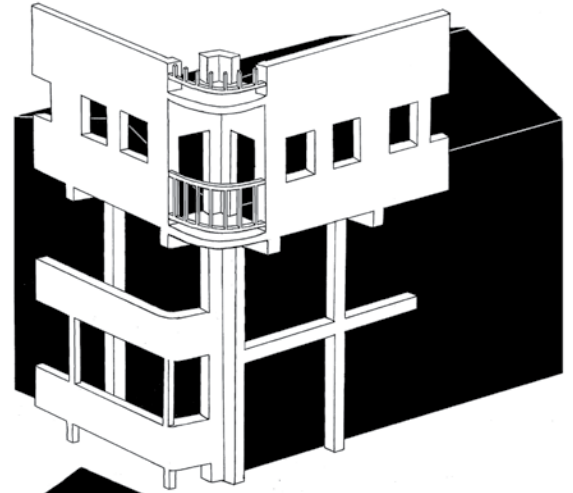
## Negotiation case studies

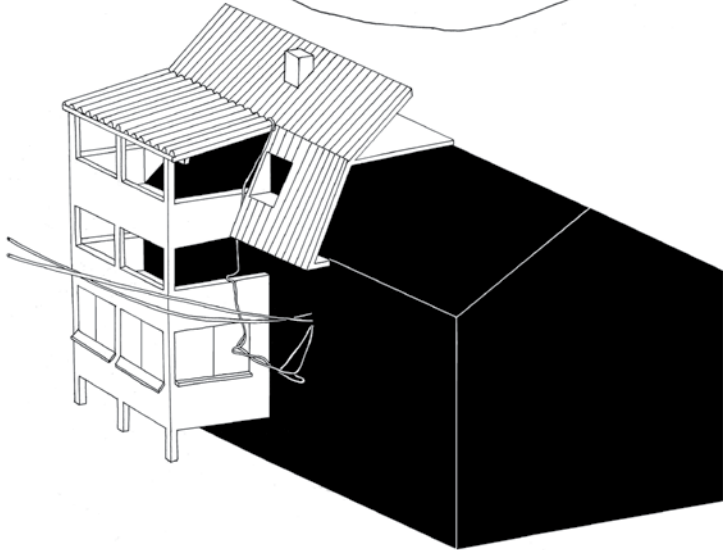
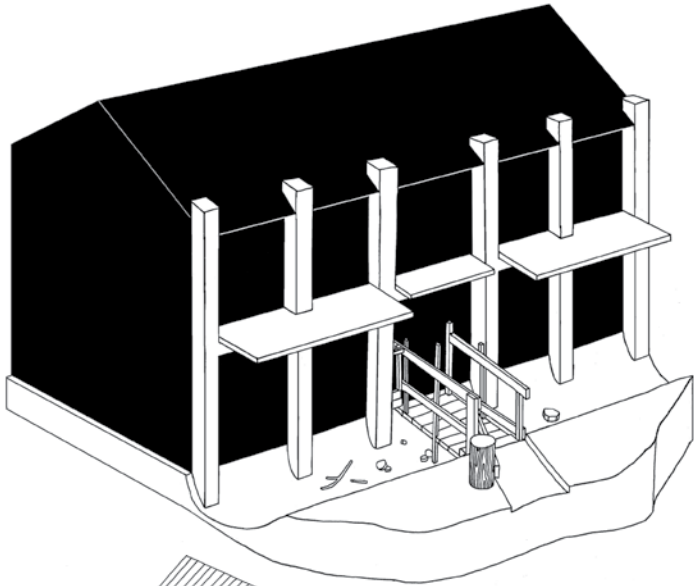
### Maximum profit and maximum failure

- 1 If the position of the pavilion doesn't allow for additional balconies to be added on the front side of the building, there is always the back!

Elaborate angles such as the one depicted here also add 'architectural quality' and 'expression' that can help sell the building and raise the profit.

- 2 Nevertheless, the owners of the old pavilion sometimes bet on the wrong developer, and they end up getting stuck with a mess of unutilized pillars blocking their view.

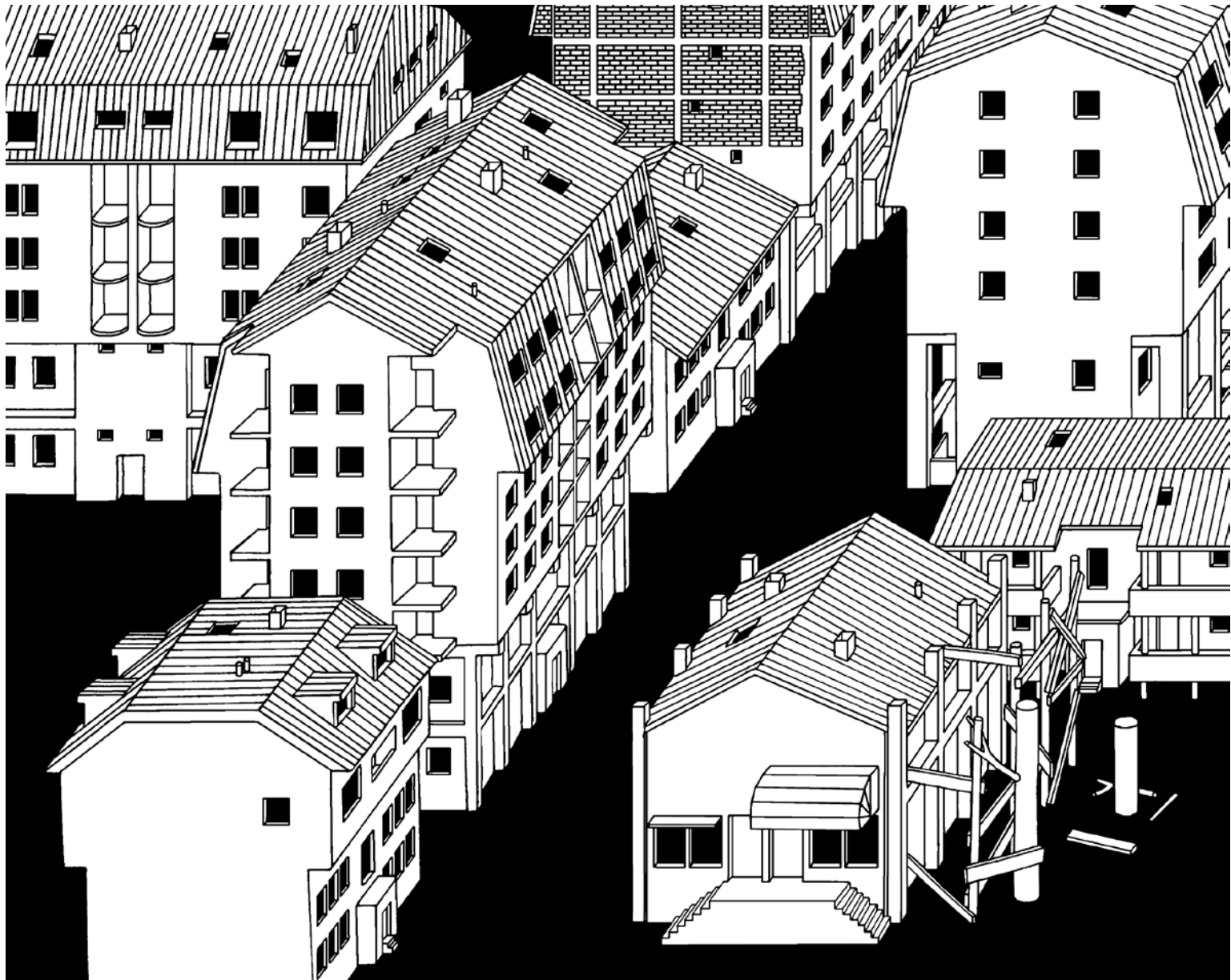




## Negotiation case studies

### Self-built improvements

- 1 The aborted extensions cause as many problems as completed ones to the owners of the flats in the original pavilions, as the pillars fast start to endanger the existing construction. In some cases, small roof-like structures had to be added to prevent leakage.
- 2 Unfinished extensions can become an inspiration to the owners in the existing pavilion, and the unused pillars can become useful after all. Depicted here: additional balconies and a small extension added by the original owners of the pavilion, after the 'big' investor disappeared.

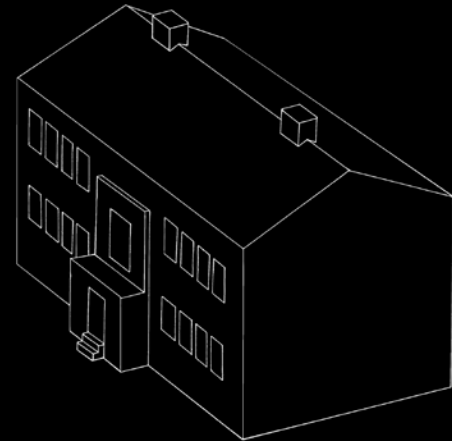


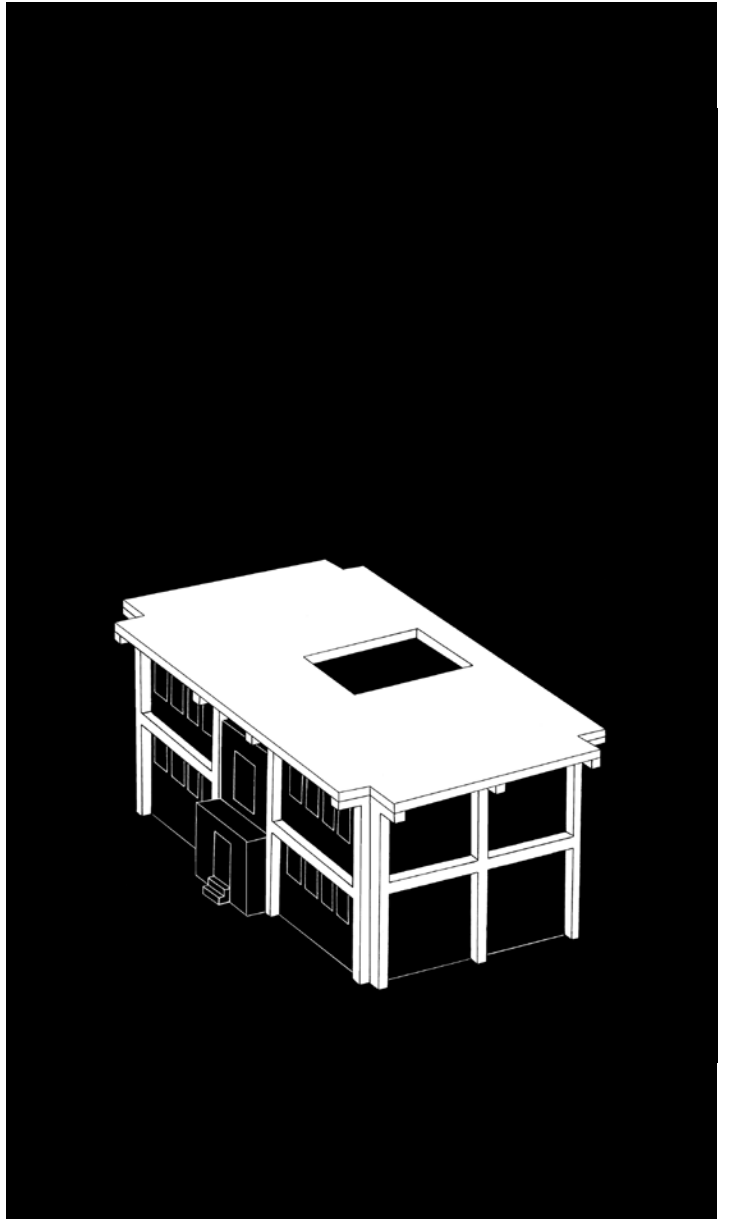
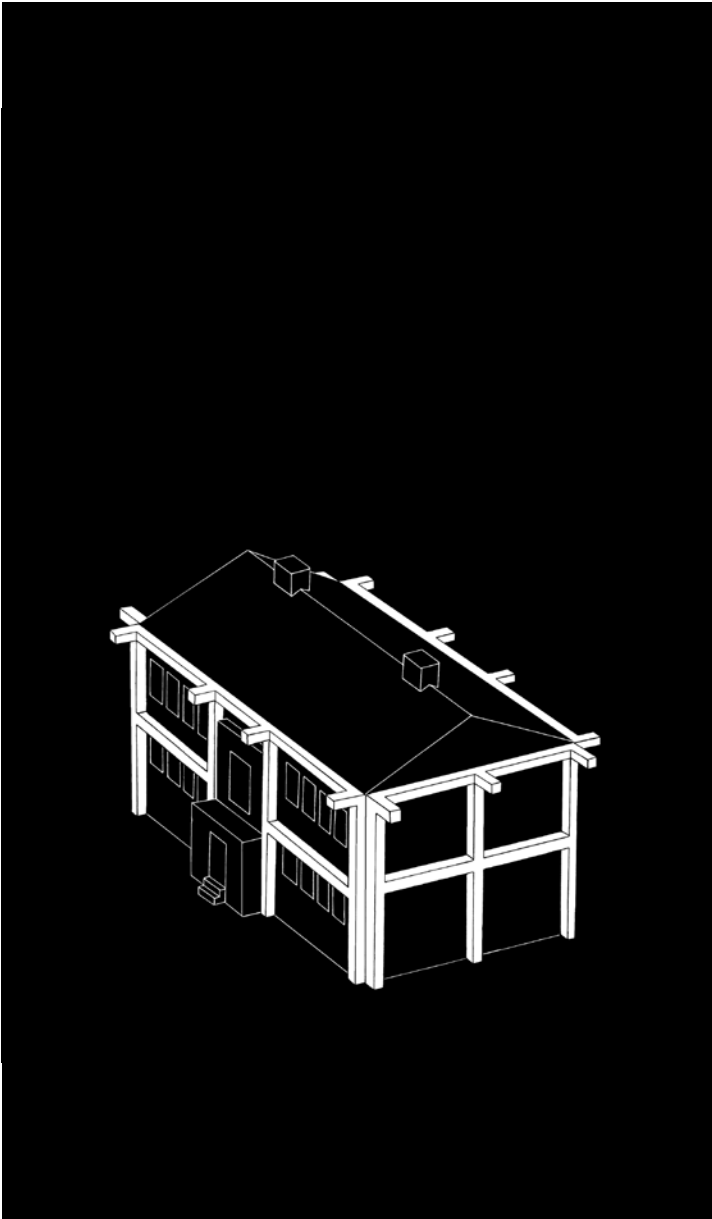
## Extending a Russian Pavilion in five steps

### Part 1

- p. 149 – The “original” Russian pavilion, waiting to be extended.
- 1 p. 150 – Pillars to support the extension are added. The new structure thus becomes structurally independent from the base. Depending on the position of the pavilion in relation to the street, pillars are positioned either next to the base, or projected outward to gain more space.
  - 2 p.151 – The roof of the original pavilion is removed and a concrete slab is constructed. The slab becomes the base upon which additional floors will be added. The slab itself is, again, slightly projected outwards to gain more living space.

This principle allows people who occupy the old part of the building to continue living there even during the construction period, thus preventing the developer having to pay additional costs for temporary relocation.

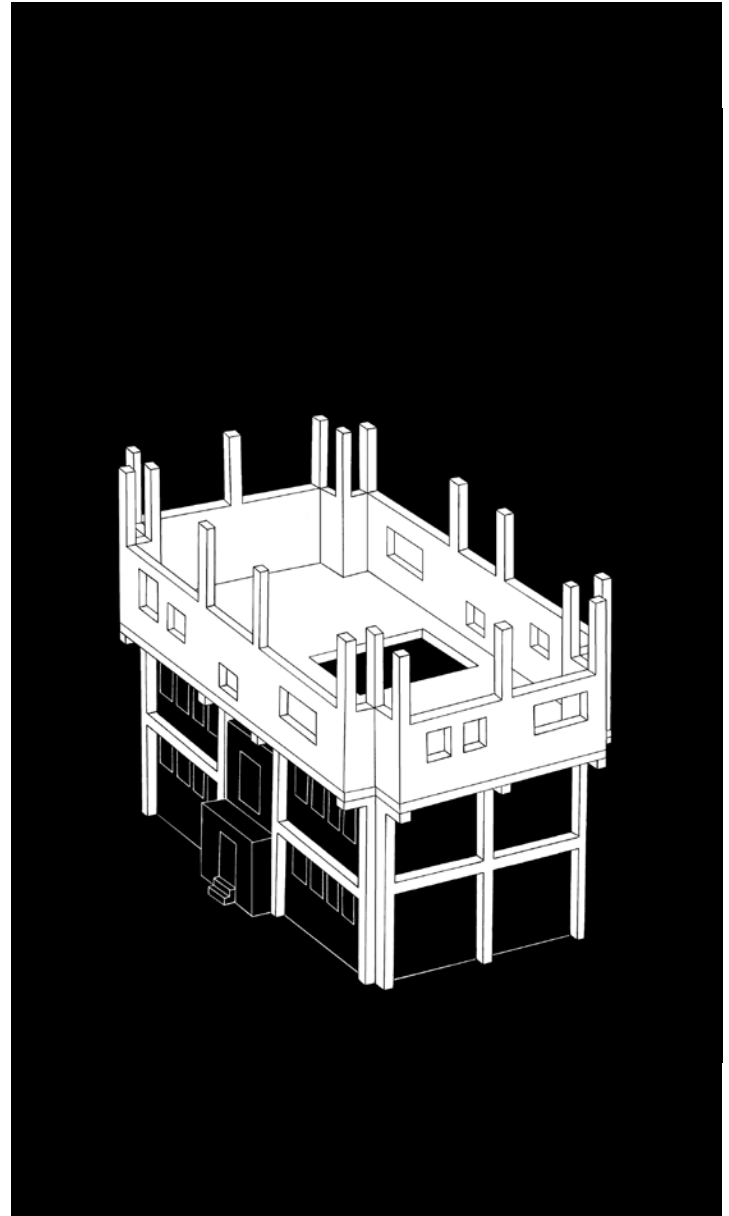


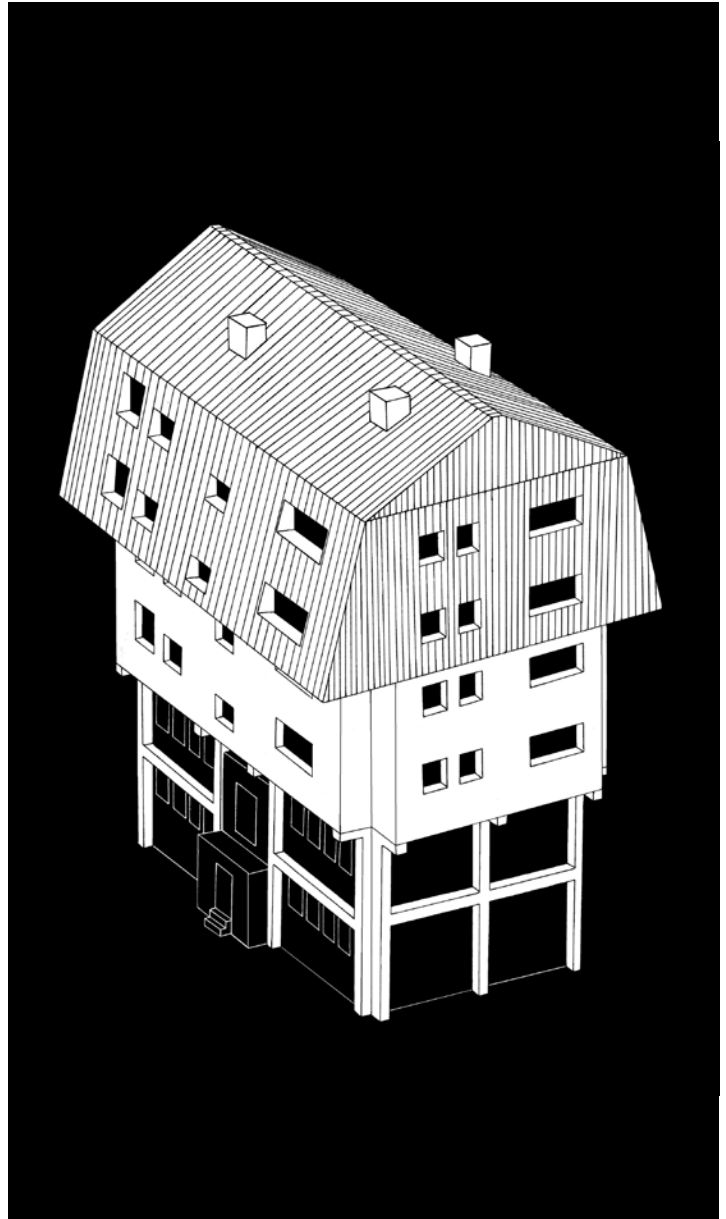
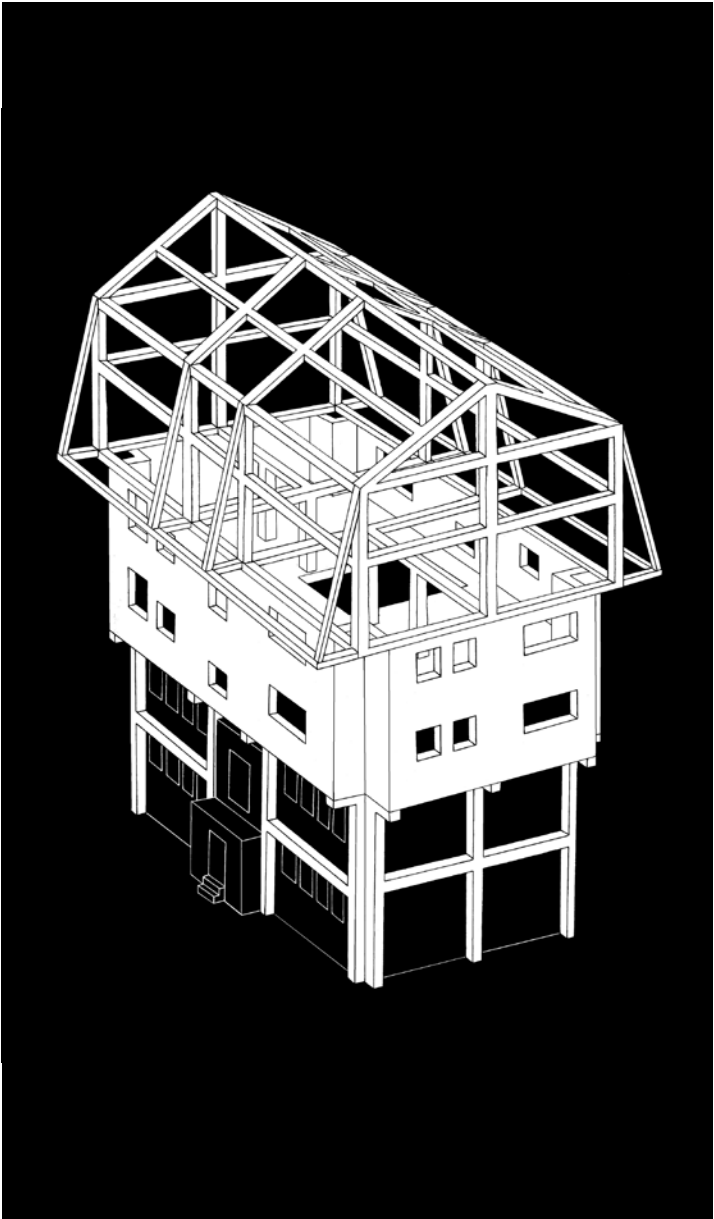


### Extending a Russian Pavilion in five steps

#### Part 2

- 3 p. 153 – Individual floors are constructed, depending on the demand of the market.
- 4 p. 154 – After approximately two (or three) storeys of the ‘regular’ part of the extension are constructed, the last two floors are concealed within an exaggerated mansard roof.
- 5 p. 155 – The happy new owners can start moving in, as all four or five storeys of the pavilion extension are completed.





# Dossier: The Russian Pavilions Legalization

No. of Pavilions extended after being granted a permit	1 / 82
No. of Pavilions extended without any permit	44 / 82
Flats still waiting to be legalized	956

Legalization was regulated by the Law on Planning and Construction (2009) and the Rules on the Criteria for Determining the Charge In Proceedings (2009) issued by the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning. In the case of the Russian Pavilions, further instructions were given by the City of Belgrade and the Municipality of Palilula. Requests for legalizations were submitted to the municipality where the building was situated.

After the Law on Planning and Construction was passed in 2009, the deadline for applying for legalization was 11 March 2010. After that date, every construction without a valid permit would be demolished. By that date, 346,056 requests were submitted in Serbia, 119,225 in Belgrade. If one also includes the requests submitted previously, the total number of requests for legalization currently being processed in Serbia is 617,658. The process of legalization is started when a building or flat is registered at the municipality. After this, it is legal to connect the building/apartment to the communal infrastructure: electricity, water supply, heating, sewage, if this had not already been done through a “loophole”.

Documentation necessary for the legalization is the following—

- 1 Request for legalization
- 2 Technical report with the drawings of the built object: “the project of the built design”
- 3 Photographs of the object
- 4 Proof of property rights

“The project of the built design” is a peculiar thing. Probably for the first time after the construction of the original Russian Pavilions or indeed of most of the buildings being legalized, architects were employed to make precise drawings of what was already constructed and “translate” the situation to architectural language, thus making it valid. This is actually the reversal of the usual order, in which the architects conceive the space in a drawing and then have the building constructed. The direction: paper → space, is reversed to: space → paper, while the architect becomes a mere interpreter.

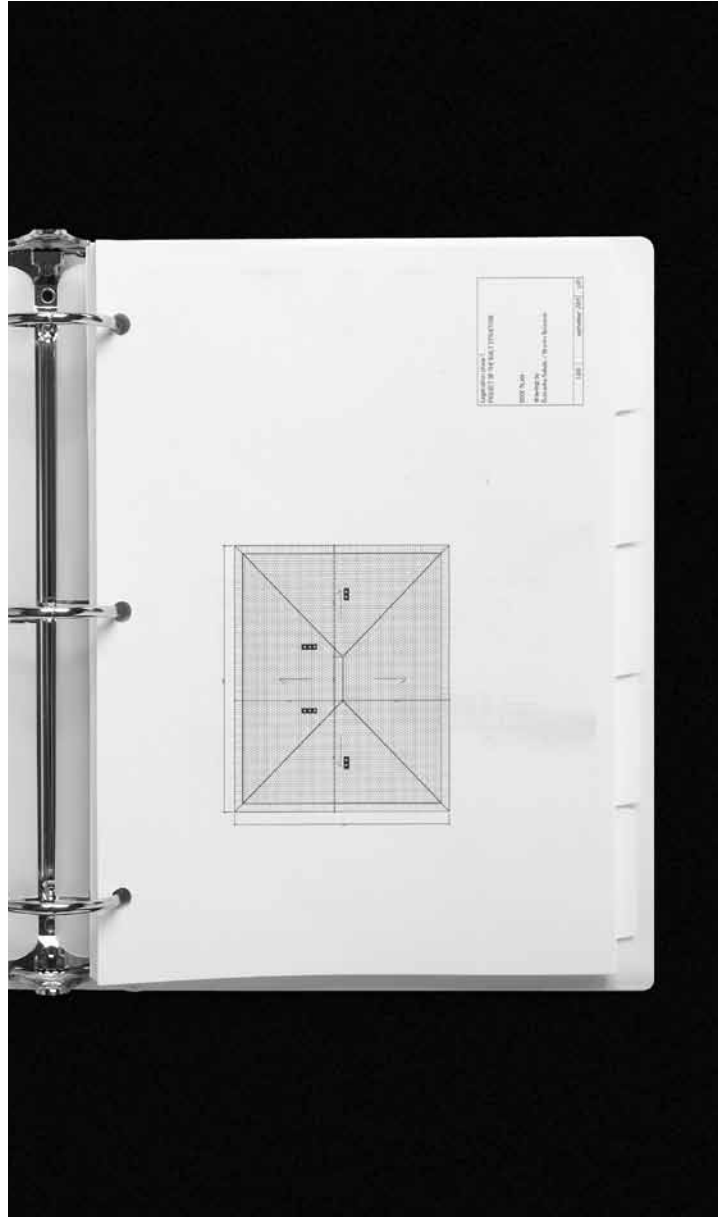
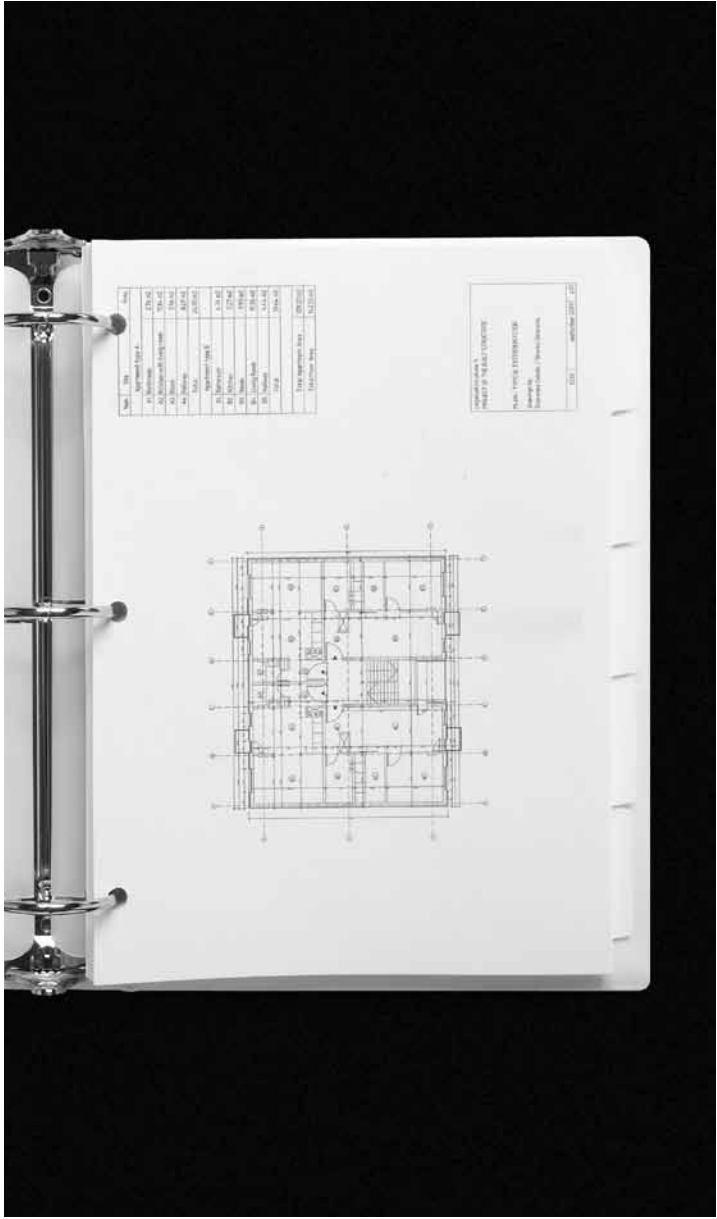
An individual flat in an apartment building cannot be legalized, the entire apartment building has to be submitted for legalization, and for that to happen all owners of the flats have to communicate and organize things together.

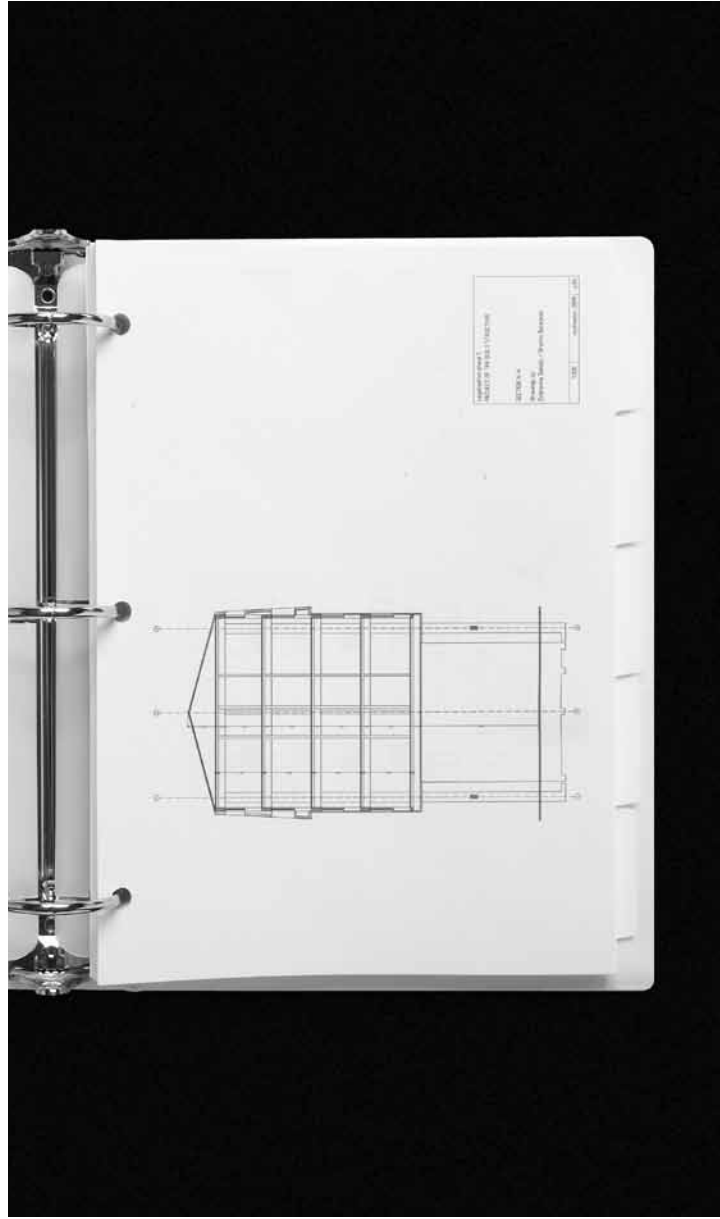
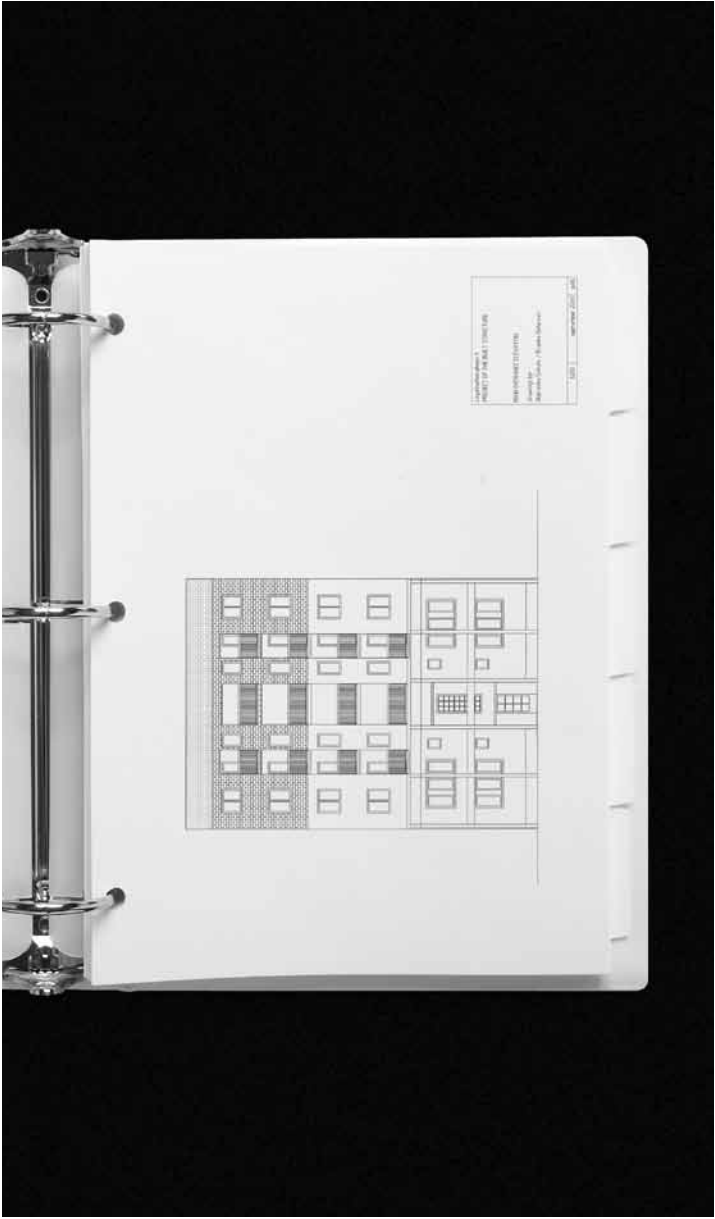
Legalization drawings look exactly like the usual technical, architectural drawings, with one big difference. They are not instructions for what to build, but just documents for what has already been built.

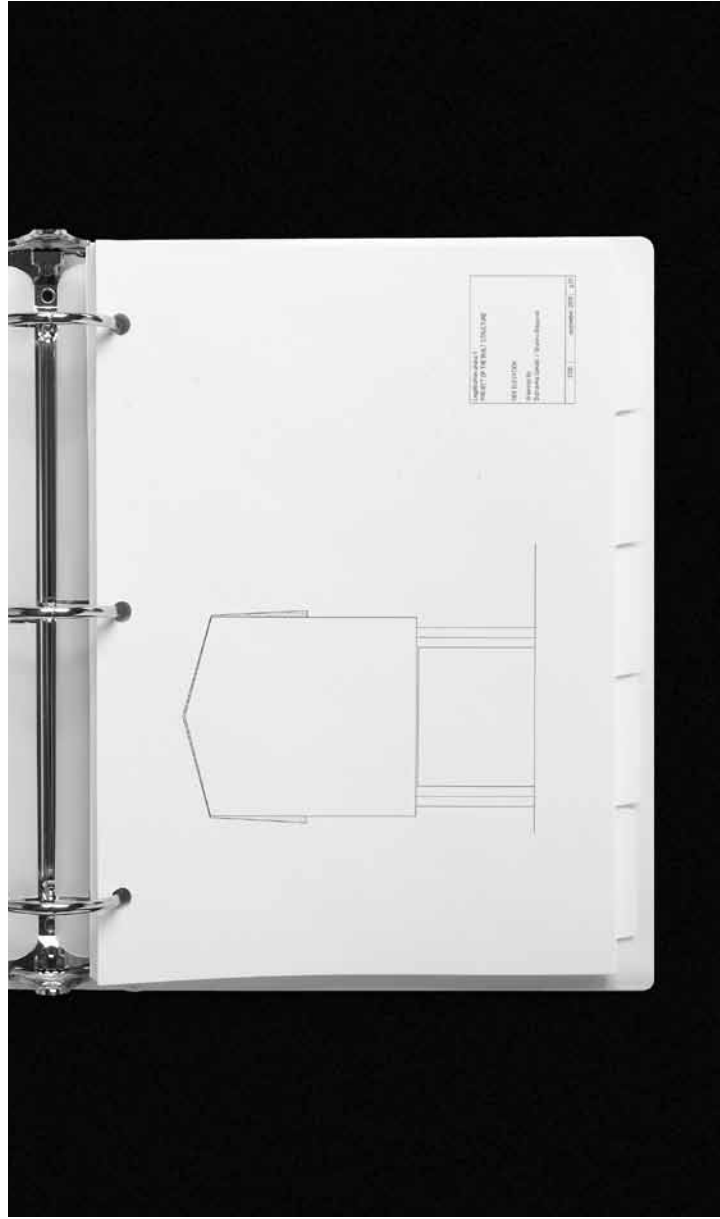
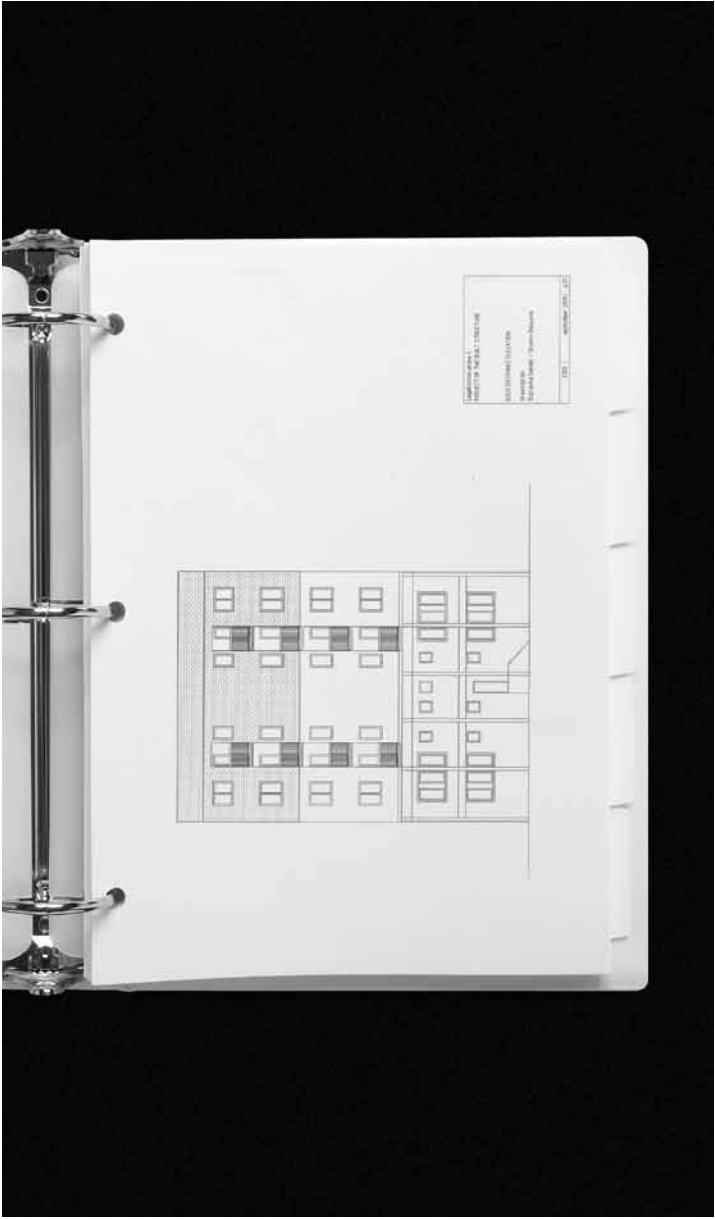
The following pages feature sample studies of what these drawings could look like, if the whole building was to be legalized in one go. In most cases, however, each apartment applied individually.











## Dossier: The Russian Pavilions Extensions

Total no. of extensions	45 / 82 pavilions
With permit	1
Without permit	44
No. of existing flats	170
No. of new flats added	956
Total flats after extension	1126
Amount of m <sup>2</sup> added	30,150
Time frame	2011 – 2005
Main developers	Delta Legal, Gradevinar Kocić
Average price per m <sup>2</sup>	500 EUR*

\* Nearly half of the average price of “official” flats in that area and similar areas in the city.

The deregulation of the laws regulating roof extensions made this practice attractive for developers, especially to developers who were much more into speculating than developing. Roof extensions are much cheaper to develop: there is no need to buy land, all the infrastructure already exist on site, and the procedure to obtain an extension permit from the municipality seems easier. All that needs to be done is to negotiate the consent for extension.

Developers realized that the Russian Pavilions could be extended on a much larger scale than was the case for other roof extensions in the city centre. Each individual pavilion originally had just four owners and it was easy to negotiate a consent, as not many new apartments had to be given to them. As the original pavilions only had one floor, there was enough space to accommodate more floors. In the neighbourhood there were 82 similar buildings, so it was possible to apply the same construction principles at multiple locations.

Once everything was in place, developers could stack new floors on top, as long as they camouflaged the floors above the 3rd or 4th by means of a roof. The brutal market logic of developers turned absurd, with additional structures being 2 to 2.5 times larger than the existing one. This changed some of the streets so radically, especially Patrice Lumumba Street, that it became known as “the Canyon of Patrice Lumumba”.

The extensions were made of substandard materials and involved much manual labour. Usually made either of brick or lightweight autoclaved aerated concrete blocks (siporex), which were manually layered, mixed with concrete and poured on site, they were technological inferior to the houses they were built on top of: the original Russian Pavilions were built as semi-prefabrications, with more industrially produced elements. The roof extensions are more than 50 years younger than the original Russian Pavilions.

The following pages contain a partial documentation of the current status and transformations of 23 pavilions.



**Location** Srnetička 11  
**Year** 1949

**File No.** K01

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300

**One of the few Russian Pavilions left in its original form,  
without any modifications.**



**Location** Srnetička 5  
**Year** 2000

**File No.** K02

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	-	-	18
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	318

**Status** Extended with permit, completed in 2000

The only legally extended pavilion. There was a six year time frame where one could legally extend a pavilion by just 18 m<sup>2</sup>. A year after this building was completed, a building across the street was extended extra-legally and now casts a permanent shadow over this unfortunate pavilion.



**Location** Srnetička 7  
**Year** extension aborted in 2003

**File No.** K03

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300

**Status** Extension aborted

**In 2003, an investor solicited signatures to extend this pavilion. The works commenced, pillars were put in place, but there was not enough demand for the apartments and the construction was aborted. The investor vanished, and some of the future tenants ended up buying air instead of apartments.**





**Location** Diljska 8 – 10  
**Year** 2001

**File No.** K04

#### **Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 2	12	900
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 2 (faux roof)	60 (6 x 10)	1,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 7	72	2,400

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

The very first pavilion extended in the neighbourhood, using extra-legal strategies and utilizing the construction method whereby the extension is self-supported by a system of independent pillars, while the existing pavilion does not bear any structural load.



**Location** Srnetička 4  
**Year** 2001

**File No.** K05

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	2 + 2 (faux roof)	20	600
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 5	24	900

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

**This enormous extension casts a permanent shadow over the only legally extended pavilion across the street.**



**Location** Srnetička 21  
**Year** 2004

**File No.** K06

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 2 (faux roof)	35	750
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 6	39	1,050

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

**The infamous pink extension.** The same investor extended three pavilions situated on a corner, creating an agglomeration of apartments larger than most of the current new constructions on other sites in Belgrade. Clearly visible is how the top two floors are masked to look like part of the mansard roof whereas they are in fact regular floors.



**Location** Pane Đukić 6 – 8  
**Year** 2004

**File No.** K07

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	8	600
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 1 (faux roof)	40	1,200
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 5	48	1,800

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

The second part of the infamous “pink extension” conglomeration.



**Location** Srnetička 23 – 31  
**Year** 2003

**File No.** K08

**Extension details**

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	16	1,200
<b>Extension</b>	4 + 1 (faux roof)	74	3,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 6	90	4,200

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

The position of the pillars supporting the extension is utilized to add balconies to the existing apartments, thus raising the quality of life. This is a typical situation in the Russian Pavilions, in which airspace is exchanged for horizontal extensions in the shape of balconies.



**Location** Pane Đukić 3  
**Year** 2003 – 2004

**File No.** K09

**Extension details**

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 2 (faux roof)	25	750
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 6	29	1,050

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

A very unfortunate close encounter of two extensions as a result of trying to gain a maximum amount of built space. This shows there was very little communication between different investors, even though they were using the same legal strategies and construction methods. Especially unpropitious are the balconies squeezed in the narrow space left between the two buildings.



**Location** Pane Đukić 5 – 7  
**Year** 2005

**File No.** K10

**Extension details**

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	8	600
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 2 (faux roof)	50	1,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 6	58	2,100

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

Two joint pavilions, both extended by the same developer in one go. Unlike the side of the building visible in the picture, which utilizes the space to add balconies, the opposite side remains unfinished with exposed brick. Following the unwritten rules of extending the Russian Pavilions, the mansard roof is just a mask, so that in the eyes of the authorities, this extension still appears as a regular addition of 3 floors with additional living space below the roof.



**Location** Vlašička 1 – 3  
**Year** 2003

**File No.** K11

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	8	600
<b>Extension</b>	2 + 2 (faux roof)	24	1,200
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 5	32	1,800

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization





**Location** Vlašička 4 – 10  
**Year** 2003

**File No.** K12

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	16	1,200
<b>Extension</b>	2 + 2 (faux roof)	55	2,400
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 5	71	3,600

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization



**Location** Vlašička 5 – 7  
**Year** 2003

**File No.** K13

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	8	600
<b>Extension</b>	2 + 2 (faux roof)	39	1,200
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 5	47	1,800

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization



**Location** Vlašička 12 – 18  
**Year** 2004

**File No.** K14

**Extension details**

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	16	1,200
<b>Extension</b>	2 + 2 (faux roof)	60	2,400
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 5	76	3,600

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

**Here, unusually, no balconies or room extensions were made, even though there was enough space between the pillars and the old pavilion. A sign of bad negotiation skills?**



**Location** Stevana Dukića 5  
**Year** 2002

File No. K15

#### Extension details

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	2 + 2 (faux roof)	32	600
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 5	36	900

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

The pillars project more than a metre from the base of the extension; they ultimately create the impression of an extension straddling the old pavilion in this example.



**Location** Stevana Dukića 7 – 9  
**Year** 2005

**File No.** K16

**Extension details**

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	8	600
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 2 (faux roof)	60	1,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 6	68	2,100

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

Here the apartments in the base pavilion were improved by the addition of balconies.



**Location** Stevana Dukića 19  
**Year** 2003

**File No.** K17

**Extension details**

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 2 (faux roof)	25	750
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 6	29	1,050

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization



**Location** Stevana Dukića 23  
**Year** 2004

**File No.** K18

**Extension details**

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 2 (faux roof)	24	750
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 6	28	1,050

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization



**Location** Patrisa Lumumbe 74 – 78  
**Year** 2005

**File No.** K19

**Extension details**

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	12	900
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 1 (faux roof)	60	1,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 5	72	2,700

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

Completed after the temporary construction freeze in 2004, this extension lacks the exaggerated mansard roof masking the additional floors, as this practice was rendered illegal by the authorities. One can also notice how the owner of the apartment in the original existing pavilion of the building used pillars to support the extension in order to build an extension of a room.





**Location** Patriska Lumumbe 68  
**Year** 2002

**File No.** K20

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	4 + 2 (faux roof)	30	900
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 7	34	1,200

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

Built by a different investor, this extension, using the same extension strategy, nevertheless masks the additional roof in a different manner than usual. Elaborate corners flirt with architectural intention.



**Location** Patrisa Lumumbe 33  
**Year** 2003

File No. K21

#### Extension details

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	4	300
<b>Extension</b>	2 + 2 (faux roof)	24	600
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 5	28	900

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

One of the most “moderate” extensions, as the position of the base pavilion in relation to the street did not allow for much modifications.



**Location** Patrisa Lumumba 19 – 23  
**Year** 2002

**File No.** K22

**Extension details**

	<b>Floors</b>	<b>Flats</b>	<b>Size m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	12	900
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 2 (faux roof)	72	2,250
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 6	84	3,150

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

One of the first completed extensions, which spans over three pavilions. It forms a part of the infamous “Canyon of Patrice Lumumba” – the formation that the Russian Pavilions extensions are most notorious for.



**Location** Patrisa Lumumbe 30 – 34  
**Year** 2002

**File No.** K23

**Extension details**

	Floors	Flats	Size m <sup>2</sup>
<b>Pavilion</b>	Ground floor + 1	12	900
<b>Extension</b>	3 + 2 (faux roof)	72	2,250
<b>TOTAL</b>	Ground floor + 6	84	3,150

**Status** Without permit, currently in the process of legalization

The opposite side of the “Canyon of Patrice Lumumba”. The side of the extension is left in exposed brick and without thermal insulation or a proper facade finish in expectation of the extension of the next pavilion in the row – which never took place.

# Dossier: The Russian Pavilions Testimonials

## I. The Homeowner aka the Man who Extended Legally

I decided to extend my apartment when I bought it from the state in 1993. It was a basic Russian Pavilion unit of 54m<sup>2</sup> and I needed more space for my children. I had lived in the Russian Pavilions my whole life and I didn't want to move, which in 1993 was not an option anyway with the inflation and all. The idea was to extend it for my children and I didn't want to start building without a permit, so I applied for one and entered the game.

I'm not sure I would do it again, knowing that it took me six years to finally obtain a permit. Six years of bureaucracy; at one point I was close to giving up. I have about 10 kilos of paper documentation, almost one kilo per square meter they allowed me to build in the end. To get the permit I had to have the project drawn at the specific architecture office that the clerk at the municipality told me to turn to. It was not the office I had chosen and I had already paid for the project. So I paid twice.

In 1999 I finally secured the permit. I could build an extension of 18m<sup>2</sup>. There could be no bathroom on the new floor. Some days after the permit was issued, while preparing to start the construction, the NATO bombings of Serbia started, so the permit was suspended. When the bombings were over, it took me a couple of months to finish the construction works. At the beginning of 2000, we moved in.

In 2002, a developer approached my neighbours in the pavilion next to mine, and secured their



The extra-legal extension casting a permanent shadow on the legally extended pavilion.



The effects of extensions on the neighbourhood. The extended pavilion looks like a giant next to the unextended one, transformed so much by the additional balconies that there is hardly any resemblance left with the original structures.

permission to build an extension. They set up a makeshift scaffolding, made of wooden planks, and positioned the columns. Then the process stopped. The developer would show up from time to time, almost always in a different car, with new customers. And then he stopped showing up altogether. The building was never resumed. He had sold air. Fortunately, the construction never progressed beyond the columns.

The reason why the planning department and municipality did not allow me to build higher and larger than just 18 m<sup>2</sup> was that it might otherwise obstruct the view and incidence of light of my neighbours across the street. Just a year after my extension was finished, a local developer struck a deal with the inhabitants of the building across and started extending. Flats were cheap and in demand, so in the end the new extension amounted to 5 floors. There is no longer direct sunlight in my house and the five-floor extension across the street from my pavilion was constructed without a permit.

The new urban plan for our block allows potential developers to demolish our four pavilions, i.e. 16 flats in total, and to build new ones from scratch with garages in the basement. But there is no developer willing to do that yet. The profit margin is too low. I would like that to happen, since I don't have any sunlight anymore. For 40 years, this was a sunny apartment, and then it just stopped.

## II. The Developer

In 2000, shortly before the elections that got Milošević finally ousted, a group of three young men and an older person approached me and the other owners living in my pavilion, with the plan to extend it. This was the

beginning of the extension of the Russian Pavilions, and our building in Diljska street was the first one to get transformed. The four of us, all owners of the building, agreed that it would be an excellent solution to solve the increasing problems we had with the building, so we gave permission. Each of us got a new small apartment on some of the upper floors. At the time, I had just lost my job and had my severance paid, and I thought it would be good to invest in the next extension they were planning, so I became a partner in one of them.

These four men were the main developers of the Russian Pavilions, in various constellations and under various companies. Following various political changes, the practice of extensions not only continued, but it became a common thing in our neighbourhood. My three young partners strategically joined three different political parties, just to be sure.

Good political connections, especially with the municipality, enabled us to do what we were doing. There was a written statement by the municipality that they would legalize all extensions, but we nevertheless tried to maintain friendly relations with people from the municipality in order to get things done more easily. The Russian Pavilions were an Eldorado for extensions for almost four years and when the next elections approached the whole system was in place. We knew that we could not build beyond 4 floors but we would mask the extra floors as a roof and we had that nod from people in the municipality, which meant that they would let us get away with that. But with the approach of the local elections in 2004 people at the municipality became nervous and started pointing fingers at each other. The municipality abruptly decided to freeze all the construction works that were at that moment being carried out at the Russian Pavilions.

Among the frozen construction sites was the building I had invested in. We were just a few months away from completion, but at least the people who continued to live in the original pavilion that we were extending did not have to deal with leakages. Every day that the construction site was closed cost money, and money was scarce.

The thing is, I didn't enter this extension venture with some extra money I had put aside. I sold both the original apartment my family was living in and the one we got when our building was extended. The waiting was killing us. In the end, after the elections, the municipality gave us a short period to complete the construction. Those who still did not make it to the roof had to comply with the new regulatory plan and could not have the elaborate mushroom roof as a mask. The owners of the new flats had to deal with the legalization by themselves. In some other cases, they had to arrange the plugging into the communal infrastructure.

Those who entered the Russian Pavilions stories as developers before the municipality froze the construction profited a lot. The initial expenses to start a construction were minimal and the size maximized the profit, even if some of the apartments had to be given away to get the permission to extend. It would not have been that way if there had been more owners to be reimbursed with flats, which is why it was such a good idea to extend the Russian Pavilions.

### III. The Urbanist

In 2002 the city took the decision to commission a regulatory plan for the area between the streets Višnjčka, Marijane Gregoran, Husinski rudari, Laza Stefanoić, Partizanski put, Triglavaska, Vojvode Miška,



The urbanist view on the extension of pavilions and transformation of the neighbourhood.

and Mirijeovski bulevar. The plan was part of a set of plans to make the new Master Plan for Belgrade, Belgrade 2021, which we were working on, more effective. Belgrade 2021 was important, the previous Master Plan was almost 20 years old, made for socialism and the self-management system, and what it contained no longer applied to the existing city we were trying to get a grip of. We had high hopes that the Master Plan would help us deal with all the pathologies that had appeared in the city during the 1990s. But it didn't really work out as we had hoped.

When we started working on the project we realized that a big part of the standardized buildings that were built just after WWII, which were known as the Russian Pavilions, were under “attack” from illegal construction. Some of the extensions were even being built while we were working on the plan. This annoyed us, as it constantly changed the parameters we were working with, and because we knew that the more extensions got completed, the less chances our plan had of being fully implemented.

Here is the thing, the standard of living in the Russian Pavilions was below contemporary housing standards, mostly due to the restricted size of the apartments. That part of the housing stock had to be marked for replacement. It was impossible to fix this in any other way. We were very surprised when we found out that some flats in the extended parts were even smaller than the original flats. When we completed the survey, we came upon the shocking fact that the average size of a flat was reduced to 34 m<sup>2</sup> gross constructed area, or 24 m<sup>2</sup> net, whereas previously the size ranged between 44 and 54 m<sup>2</sup>.

We were not naive, we realized that the developers making the extensions were communicating with



people from the municipality, as they were trying to follow some rules and bend others. There was a system to their illegality. For example, if you take a closer look, the buildings always extend in such a way that it seems there are no more than four “normal” floors, which is what we suggested in the plan for new constructions at the site. It was the size of the buildings built in 1965. The developers tried to stay legal when it came to the number of “official” floors, and they used the mushroom roof to mask the “pseudo-attic” spaces. In the roofs they hid an additional two, sometimes even three floors. We decided to treat these buildings for what they were in the plan we were drawing: 6 or 7-storey apartment buildings, without elevators. We would not be fooled by the camouflage.

In the cases in which the pavilions were not extended, the aim of the plan was simple: they would be demolished and the plots offered for new housing projects to be developed in a ration of 5,22m<sup>2</sup> for each 1m<sup>2</sup> that existed. For the pavilions that were “attacked” by wild, illegal construction, we initially proposed three different strategies:

- 1 All illegally built objects that were inhabited or had been completed with people waiting to move in should be kept in their existing volumes. The others, regardless of the level of completion, should be reduced or completed to 4 floors, and the existing building of a pavilion should be replaced, new foundation added, as well as a new garage. In cases such as the “Canyon of Patrice Lumumba street” we recommended demolition, even though they were inhabited.
- 2 All illegal structures, completed or not completed, inhabited or vacant, should be reduced to a maximum of 4 floors.
- 3 Demolition of all illegally built structures.

None of this happened. We were working on a plan and the problem that plan was supposed to solve was getting bigger and bigger. The more people bought and moved into the extensions, the less chance of us doing anything. No political party in power would risk their re-election. I am sure that many extensions would have been constructed if it hadn't been for the elections. They changed the division of power in the municipality and brought the building of extensions to a stop. We realized how powerless we were.

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