

The new social reality of ex-socialist architecture

Abstract: *The architectural creative process implies the change of the existing context, which, due to its application of abstract intervention, suggests a certain level of utopia or ideology. The nature of the transformation is determined to the accepted abstract value system and the imaginary projection of changes. The reality in the period of socialism seeks to transform into an ideal type, a universal model, with the aim of optimizing living conditions. Architecture becomes a model of the transformation of social reality. The concrete user turns into an abstraction an objective norm, which brings architecture more to a system with macro perception. The period of post-modern and contemporary architectural practices overlaps with the contemporary political and economic context to the extent that they are vague boundaries of their separation. The problem of the manipulation of real and concrete is simultaneously portrayed as inseparable elements of the concept. The principles of social in architecture are examined within specific ideological frameworks by exploring the phenomenon of abandonment and devastation of case studies from the period of socialism, and their reuse within the new socio-economic context and current European migration crisis. Previous social functions of architecture are compared with their current use by migrants within specific local conditions and particular attention to elements of social context transformation and the role of architecture. Current use of facilities at the border of Bosnia and Herzegovina is critically examined within the contemporary theoretical research of bottom-up concepts and their social imperative, defining the real problem and its social benefits. Case studies are analysed in relation to micro and macro levels, investigating architecture through social processes with the aim of defining the level of a decision-making process, user-defined space, and the real significance for the community.*

Keywords: *Social architecture, migration crisis, politics of architecture, community and user defined space*

Micro and macro social level of spatial intervention

Architecture is inseparable from the social context in which it arises. It articulates this society, serves it, protects it, presents it with its appearance, and displays its past in parallel with the aspirations of the future. Whether it is Giddens' space as an element of social integration, Lefebvre's concept of social space, or Hillier's and Hanson's concept of the embodiment of social information in space (Mavridou, 2003), physical structures are the means and outcome of social action. Settlements and their architecture are the physical structures and

¹ University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Architecture. E-Mail: israt@af.unsa.ba

manifestations of the social order in which they arise. They incorporate potential and adopted values, norms, and orientations with all their positive and negative attributes. It is necessary to observe architecture within its social, economic and cultural context. Each object is an expression of the complex system of space in which it is created, but its construction works back to it while participating in the exchange of social, ecological and many other subsystems of space. In relation to the different definitions of the micro and macro social level and their connection with space, Anthony Giddens speaks of social and system integration, while Lefebvre differentiates them into everyday life and system. (Mavridou, 2003) These two levels that the authors associate differently with the spatial component are, according to Giddens, in a mutually complementary relationship, while according to Habermas and Lefebvre they are polarized in a particularly irregular relationship. The system in this relationship controls the micro level, regulating it and replacing it with the aim of the ultimate use of power and domination. The protection of the user in any spatial intervention implies a micro-social level. Nancy Fraser sees the struggle for emancipation in supporting various issues of lower level of activity, with equal representation of various social interests and the recognition of certain values in order to improve society. (Fraser, 1990) Individual interests must be equally represented as well as the collective interests of micro-society. The assumed use of communicative action (Habermas, 1987), co-operation, communion or social capital (Putnam, 2008) is viewed within the existing system of power. This implies the action with the basic function of a change of the existing power in the context in which it is at least represented. According to Giddens, the structure is directly linked to the use of power. With the autonomy of individual action domination of certain levels is achieved, they have special rights to resources. (Mavridou, 2003) In this sense, terms like centrality are directly linked to the application of power, and control is used as a tool for its realization. According to Lefebvre, the abstract space is used as a medium of domination, coinciding with the practical application of power. According to the author, these spaces are closed, sterilized and empty, destroying the behaviour and patterns of incidence that occur from within. Their application of abstract unity proves the instrumental character of these spaces and their embodiment of ideology. (Mavridou, 2003) In that sense, it would mean that the level of spatial control is reciprocated to the protection of individual and community rights, and their further harmonization of values. Particularly important is the political character of spatial action which is used to strengthen certain social groups. The duality in macro and micro social tendencies and the special dialectic of the individual freedom and social equality suppose their mutual involvement in order to bring a consensus-agreement. The participatory process for the purpose of its realization is called communicative action. Various interest groups participate in a spatial transformation with the goal of its ultimate improvement, reiterating that value determination is formed "from within". In this sense, the concerted action is necessary to be achieved within the equal positions of the power of all members in the decision-making process. The dominantly represented top-down decision-making processes, with centralized control and the inclusion of microelements in the communication form of consent (or as Habermas calls strategic action) (Vreg, 1991) exclude individual and micro interest groups. Ordinary and every day are significant categories of paracentric, marginal, dystopian, and are rarely treated concepts in the fields of architectural theory and architectural history, partly because of their durability, and partly because of the attitude of experts to these terms. This is a result to the extremely non-monumental character of the ordinary, significantly reduced role of the expert in relation to the achievement of the result and the changing

character of everyday life that manifests itself in its "imperfection". Although in the postmodern period there is a turning point regarding every day, discourses or spatial activities dealing with the ordinary environment remain individual and in minority. One of the reasons why ordinary is on the margins of the profession is the issue of control. The traditional spatial tools and educational system of architectural schools emphasize the role of experts - individual control of an architect which plans the outcome. This is a control that is only apparently individual because behind the work of experts is a social system of norms. Although there are many criticisms regarding control, it is undeniable that the shortcomings of the same can contribute to the development of some other difficulties in relation to users. The problem of uncontrolled development of cities in the last century proves the need for implementation of a certain level of control in order to solve individual needs with a parallel realization of the interests of the community.

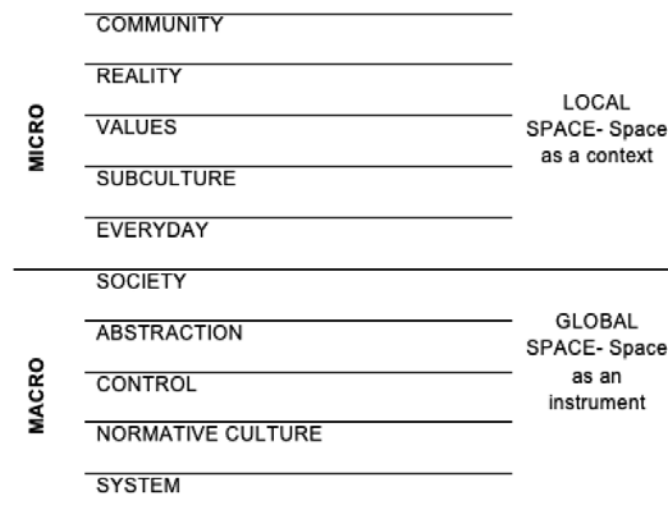


Fig. 1. Micro and macro social levels, their subspecies and connection with space.

The micro level is formed directly through the community, while system is realized as an abstraction. This concretization of individual action within the everyday life gives the quality of the real- based on essential values, while standardization within the macro level achieves the qualities of the abstract and ideological.

New social reality of migration crisis

After three years of the European migration crisis, 2018 was a year that tensions and anti-immigration sentiment rise. In this year there are even more right-wing decisions about border closure, turn-back policies and outer border control of immigration. The change of policies affected also migrant's routes. Bosnia and Herzegovina appeared as a new route in a so-called Balkan route. More than 23.000 of migrants passed in 2018, while 5000 of them remained under the circumstances of cold winter and border violence. (The Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018) Their stay in the transitional and post-war country with complex social and political circumstances developed a specific answer to the migrant crisis. Institutional mechanisms for migration are, very similar to other social

institutions in the country, slow, inadequate and inefficient. As a result, most of the migrants were on streets and in unprovided shelters what further provided intervention of international organizations,² informal groups, non-governmental organizations, and individuals. (The Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018) Majority of migrants are settled in the border zone of Una-Sana Canton, while all institutional centres are in the central part of the state. In the beginning, migrants were settled in devastated objects of the ex-socialist architecture of *Dom penzionera* and *Đački dom Borići* in Bihać. Afterward, they were relocated to *Hotel Sedra* and industrial hall *Bira*. First and second phase differ in relation to the ownership, but both are relayed on international organizations of IOM and UNHCR in the management of migrant settlement provision.³ These case studies are analysed in order to compare the social context of architectural interventions in ex-socialist and new transitional capitalism and defining the decision-making process, the role of architects and users and system/lifeworld impact on a spatial organization.



Fig. 2. Migrant in front of monument on Partisan cemetery Borići (photo Tatlić)

² Mainly UNHCR, IOM

³ IOM is providing adaptation of existing structures and meals, while UNHCR is providing health care.

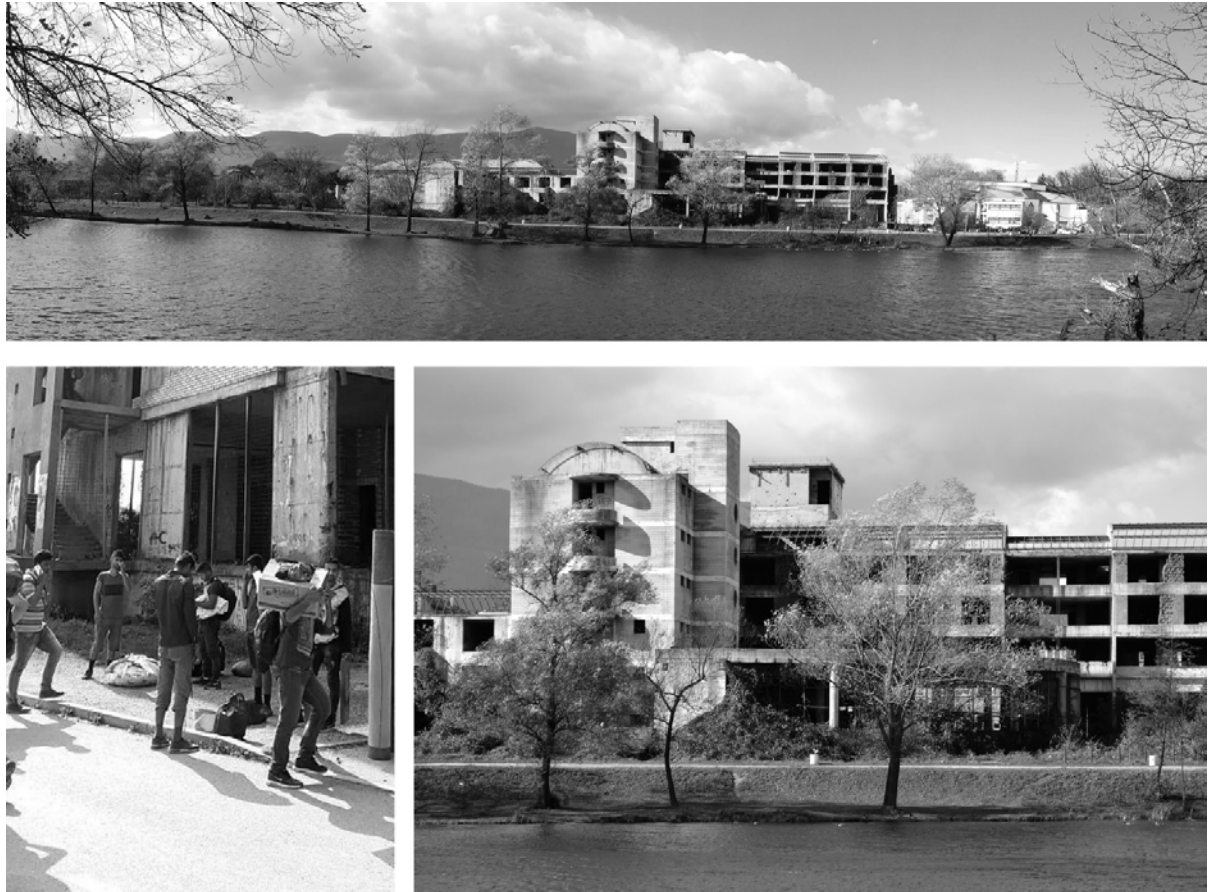


Figure 3. *Dom penzionera* (photo Tatlić)

The first provided shelter was an occupation of a never-built structure of *Dom penzionera*⁴. This unfinished and destroyed structure in the centre of the city stands for the last decades as a monument to the past social system and care for pensioners. Its ruins, now already belonging to a city identity, were for a different period a shelter for homeless and drug addicts as a result of a vague transitional and post-war privatization process. Like many other examples in a state, complexity and unclearness of ownership have stopped the appropriation of public property. The owner of the building is Federal Pension and Disability Insurance Institute, while the site belongs to the City of Bihać with one part as private property. This situation of unresolved papers enabled its sale (Hromadžić & Čavkić, 2016), and changed it to fragmented efforts for privatization. As they were still considering it as community property from the previous period, in the first few years of transition it was the Pensioners association that tried to raise the fund needed for adaptation. During this process, they realized the true meaning of transformation of social and communal property to the state as an owner, where workers and the local community had lost the right to different social spaces. After two decades of unchanged status, Federal Pension and Disability Insurance Institute changed the strategy for privatization. They released tender for an architectural project and choose the cheapest offer. Architects, which had no project task or even purpose for the new building, had to finish a project in a very short deadline, and during the process, they had limited communication with the owner without basic information needed for any spatial intervention. (Jusić, 2019) The final design was a design attempt to answer to the needs that weren't

⁴ Retirement home

provided, with no feedback or input from owner, city, community or users. This type of spatial intervention is common in the transitional process of appropriation and corruption, where the process of intervention isn't transparent- leaving it open to different changes due to manipulation dynamics of the process of legalization and sale. The result is a design of an undefined structure that can be a hotel, or even retirement home, adapting its volume and design to the changing circumstances of ownership and limits. The user, community, experts are completely excluded from the process of spatial intervention.

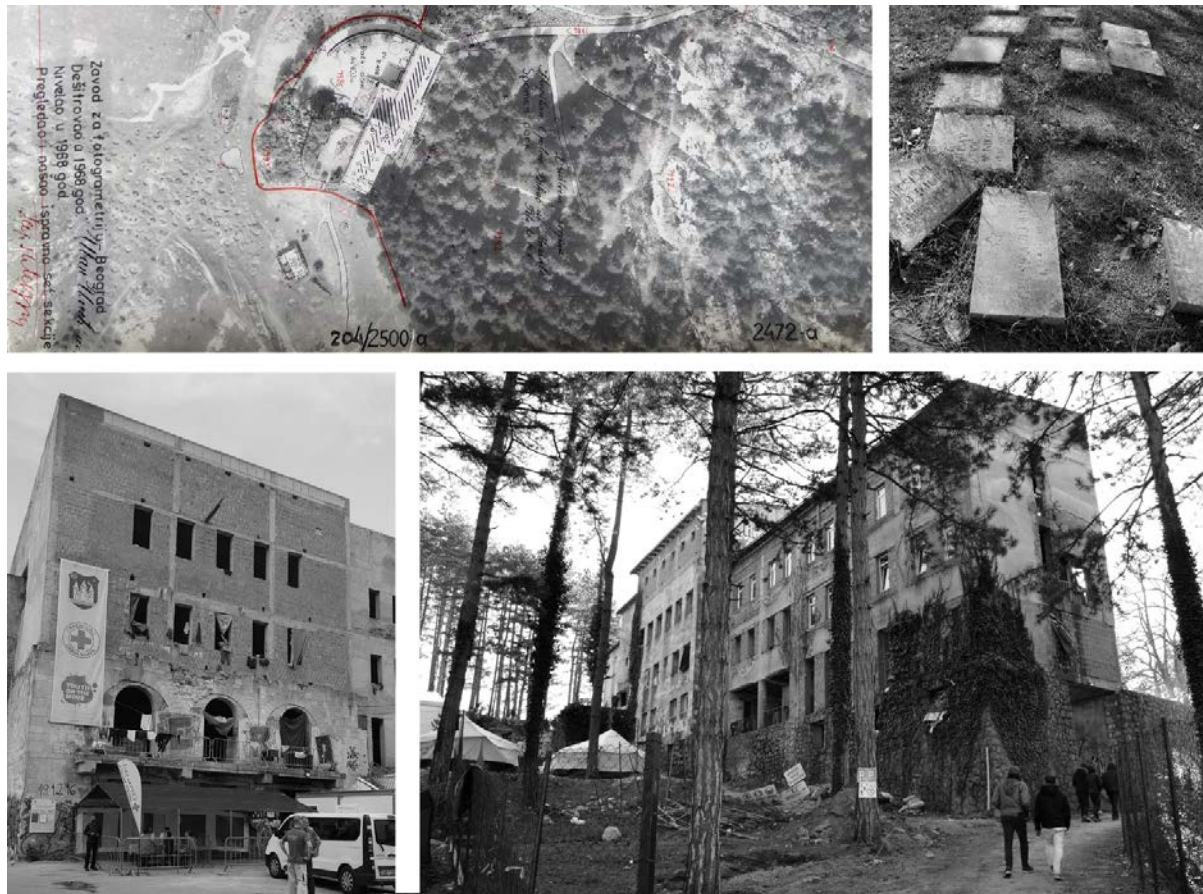


Figure 4. Đački dom Borići (photo Tatlić and Nadarević)

After a period of uncontrolled shelter provision in *Dom penzionera* and provisional tents in local parks, the government hasn't provided any solution to the problem. Local community and its city administration were appealing numerous times to the state government to actuate and to help to deal with an income of 60 migrants per day. (The Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2018) *Đački dom Borići*⁵, another social architecture devastated during a war, after twenty years is in sales procedure. The City of Bihać is selling its property based on an assessment of Department for urban planning and construction (Služba za imovinsko- pravne poslove i katastar nekretnina, 2017) in which dominantly interprets the purpose of the location defined in documents of an old City plan and a new draft of City of Bihać urban plan. In this interpretation of a clear definition of "D1- public and social function" (Urbanistički zavod BiH, Sarajevo, 2010) it is suggested that it is possible to build "radio-television services, political organizations, residential buildings, congress centres,

⁵ Student and pupil's dormitory

educational centres, as even, exceptionally hotels." (Služba za imovinsko- pravne poslove i katastar nekretnina, 2017) During this appropriation of the public property of Borići, under the circumstances of great pressure of the local community, the Mayor of Bihać decided to use it as an improvised shelter for migrants. IOM, UNHCR and the UN Refugee Agency was providing support and started with an adaptation of a building while migrants were living inside. (International Organisation for Migration , 2018) All project documentation and spatial strategies were defined by international organizations. (Auweraert, 2019) During their unconditional stay in Borići local community showed support and concern, later even anger, all in absence of adequate intervention of authority.



Figure 5. *Hotel Sedra* (photo Tatlić)

Hotel Sedra was a first private building rented for migrant families by IOM. It came out as a solution in scarce of space for shelter provision. Hotel was privatized by a local businessman who was a member of different political parties, and who didn't manage to activate its pre-war function and importance. Hotel was built for foreign visitors during socialism, while the local community was using its catering facilities and its open spaces near the river. It's a specific architectural solution in the natural context of river Una and its surroundings, with fragmented volume and hip roof; according to the new owner it caused numerous problems regarding its adaptation. (Bajramović, 2019) Different architectural designs were developed, trying to find investors for building demolition and new construction, (Cazinnet) changing its previous regional and contextual architectural language to an international building that dominates its surrounding. In this gap between the socialist building and future luxury resort for distant tourists, it is provisional home for migrant families- an especially vulnerable group.

Besides accommodation, again provided by international organizations, there are health care centre and children's corner. There is no program for resident's integration nor facilities beside accommodation- *hotel Sedra* kept its primary function of temporal residence showing how even migration of poor and homeless can take advantage in a new capitalist political context.

The social importance of architecture and the role of an architect in ex-socialist context

In the period of socialism each large company had its specialist architect, who would work on forming the project task, and later control and revision of the project. A project would be developed from a specific relationship between the architect from the professional service and the architect as a designer. Only experts would be involved in a spatial problem and its solution. In case of any uncertainties, they would address the competent institutions and higher bodies. Plans were not fully defined, but as the problem appeared, it was possible to solve it by engaging the most competent experts. The policy was deciding which building was to be built, but the experts defined how. (Ćemalović, 2019) The Architectural Association has appointed proven architects in commissions to work together with political and administrative centres on current issues. Decisions were made through dialogue and consensus, while the decision-making process was constantly changing. Relationships were clearly hierarchically formed, within which professional advancement meant greater responsibility and the right to decide. Architecture had a clear system of evaluation and sharing. Experts lived within a coherent community. (Ćemalović, 2019) The architectural firms that existed at that time in the Republic were equally engaged. As well as architects and managers of different institutions cooperated, forming specific plans, projections, and goals. Various projects were discussed much before their competition was announced.

In the case of *Dom penzionera* the project task was clearly defined by the institution- all requirements have already been established with professional specialists within the institution, so at the end, the architectural firm dealt just with design and improvement of requirements. Branko Tadić was appointed as a designer. The architectural project itself, with its capacity, location and design solution, speaks of one big social concern for the inhabitants of the third age. "The transition of the role of the architect is from the role of an artist to the much more complex and responsible role of the architect, who is responsible for maintenance, finances, etc. In the previous system, the review was at the level experts, while now it is at the level of investors and users. Architectural firms were systems within which it was difficult to make a mistake- organized bodies within a society that had all the elements of social protection and concern for the user, and as such dominated the architecture and design." (Ćemalović, 2019) The building of the *Đački dom* in Bihać was built in 1952, with the funds of emigrants from Australia. The building was originally built for war orphans from the Second World War. In the late sixties, Srez founded a high school dormitory in which children from neighbour municipalities of former Yugoslavia stayed. The park was built in the mid-1960s by its home users. The building function didn't change until transition and war. At that time, the house had the most modern laundry and kitchen, dining room, living rooms, dormitories, central heating, sports courts for basketball, football and volleyball. The financing was carried out with the funds of the Municipality of Bihać and user payments. The beneficiaries were secondary school students from the surrounding municipalities, with the priority of the socially vulnerable population and good students. The local community used the infrastructure of the building

(sports halls, terrains, and equipment) and often hosted community-based cultural and sports events. The local population did not have any impact on the dormitory functions. (Delić, 2019)



Figure 6. Residents of *Đački dom Borići* in period of socialism and current migration crisis.
(photo Nadarević, Delić archive)

Conclusion

Presented case studies of architecture, their decision-making process, and user-defined space are demonstrating significant change for the community and user. The abstract space from the socialist period was detached from the user in a form of architectural implementation, but their needs were included in programs and guidelines as the most important decision-making part of a spatial intervention. The architecture was a model of social transformation belonging to the macro and micro level with its design as an individual materialization of different aspirations and interests. Even if it has a small level of participation in the design process it is demonstrating a strong commitment to the community and user. Socialist system provided values while the architect interpreted them in spatial intervention. Today's transitional and post-war use of these architectural remains as shelters in the migration crisis is showing the absence of community and users in the decision-making process. The freedom from norms and standardization is showing the scarcity in shelter provision and ironically demonstrating that participation isn't improving the spatial needs of its user. An unorganized process and non-existing macro perception prevent any application of community interest, manipulating and ignoring any social need. The new social reality of devastated architecture of socialism manifests a systematic inability to answer the need of community and user. Under the circumstances of unfinished privatization and the absence of micro and macro social interest's ex-socialist architecture regain its social function but this time dystopian, witnessing as a monument to a condition of our present social care and our long-time lost abilities.

References

- Ćemalović, H. (2019) The Role of an Architect in transition. 25.01.2019 (I. Tatlić, Interviewer).
- Auweruert, P. V. (2019) The role of IOM in spatial decision making process. 21.01.2019 (I. Tatlić, Interviewer).
- Bajramović, H. (2019) Migrant use of hotel Sedra. 25.10.2019 (I. Tatlić, Interviewer).
- Cazinnet. (n.d.) Cazinnet - Internet stranica grada Cazina. Retrieved 02 22, 2019, from <https://www.cazin.net/vijesti/vlasnik-hotela-sedra-ovo-je-privremeno-rjesenje-sedra-ce-se-rusiti-i-praviti-ce-se-novi#sthash.WSaHHXht.dpbs>
- Cazinnet. (n.d.) Cazinnet - Internet stranica grada Cazina.
- Delić, A. (2019) Đački dom Borići. 23.01.2019 (I. Tatlić, Interviewer).
- Fraser, N. (1990) Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy. *Social Text* (25/26), pp. 56-80.
- Habermas, J. (1987) *The Theory of Communicative Action, Lifeworld and system: A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Vol. 2). Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habraken, N. (1971) You Can't Design the Ordinary. *Architectural Design* , April.
- Haralambos, M., & Holborn, M. (2002) *Sociologija: teme i perspektive*. Zagreb: Golden marketing.
- Hromadžić, A., & Čavkić, L. (2016) Rlikvije buduće prošlosti: Prazni dom penzionera U Bihacu. *Holon* , 77-99.
- International Organisation for Migration (2018) *Bosnia and Herzegovina- International Organisation for Migration*. Retrieved 2019.
- Jusić, A. (2019) Projektovanje Doma penzionera. 15.01.2019 (I. Tatlić, Interviewer).
- Mavridou, M. (2003) *An investigation of the relation of space to society: a discussion on A. Giddens, H. Lefebvre and space syntax*. University College London .
- Putnam, D. (2008) *Kuglati sam, Slom i obnova američke zajednice*. Novi Sad: Mediterran Publishing.

Služba za imovinsko-pravne poslove i katastar nekretnina (2017) Informacija za nekretninu "Đački dom". Bihać.

Tafari, M. (1976) *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The MIT Press.

The Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina. (2018) *Special Report on Situation in the Area of Migrations in Bosnia and Herzegovina*. Banja Luka .

Urbanistički zavod BiH (2010) *Urbanistički plan Grada Bihaća - Izmjene i dopune 2010 - 2030. god.* Sarajevo.

Vreg, F. (1991) *Demokratsko komuniciranje*. Sarajevo: NUB BiH.